

Pope Francis delivered his apology for the abuses suffered at residential schools

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Pope Francis delivered his apology for the abuses suffered at residential schools in front of a group of Indigenous delegates from across the country during an April 1 address at the Vatican.

“Listening to your voices I was able to enter into and be deeply grieved by the stories of the suffering, hardship, discrimination and various forms of abuse that some of you experienced, particularly in the residential schools,” Pope Francis says, as translated from Italian. “It’s chilling to think of determined efforts to instill a sense of inferiority, to rob people of their cultural identity, to sever their roots and to consider all the personal and social efforts that this continues to entail, unresolved traumas that have become intergenerational traumas.”

Pope Francis says all of this made him feel two things very strongly: indignation and shame.

“Indignation because it is not right to accept evil, and even worse to grow accustomed to evil as if it were an inevitable part of the historical process,” Pope Francis says. “Without real indignation, without historical memory and without a commitment to learning from past mistakes, problems remain

unresolved and keep coming back. We can see it these days in the case of war. The memory of the past must never be sacrificed at the altar of alleged progress. I also feel shame, I am saying it now and I am repeating it, sorrow and shame for the role that a number of Catholics, particularly those with educational responsibilities, have had in all these things that wounded you and the abuses you suffered and in the lack of respect shown for your identity, your culture and even your spiritual values.”

Pope Francis says all of these things are contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“For the deplorable conduct of these members of the Catholic Church, I ask for God’s forgiveness and I want to say to you with all my heart, I am very sorry,” Pope Francis says. “And I join my brothers, the Canadian bishops, in asking your pardon. Clearly the content of the faith cannot be transmitted

in a way contrary to the faith itself. Jesus taught us to welcome, love, serve and not judge. It is a frightening thing then, when precisely in the name of the faith counter witness is rendered to the Gospel.”

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum says, on behalf of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Executive Council, that it has taken tremendous courage for the survivors who travelled



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Treaty #3 Elder Fred Kelly speaks to Pope Francis before the Pope delivered his apology for the abuses suffered at residential schools on April 1.

so far to share their experiences at residential schools with Pope Francis.

“Our hearts are with survivors, their families, communities and all the children who never made it home,” Acheneepesumuk says. “For years we have called for an apology from His Holiness for the harm done to generations of Indigenous peoples. I am encouraged that Pope Francis is finally confronting

the suffering inflicted on our people through the residential school system and accepted his responsibility to apologize on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church.”

Achneepineskum says the Executive Council acknowledges and respects that not all survivors may accept Pope Francis' apology.

“For those who do, we hope this

helps them find peace as their healing journey continues,” Achneepineskum says. “Many survivors have waited for decades for these words, and we pray for those who did not live long enough to hear them.

see POPE page 2

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Politics



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Treaty #3 Elder Fred Kelly speaks to Pope Francis before the Pope delivered his apology for the abuses suffered at residential schools on April 1.

Pope apologizes

from front page

We encourage His Holiness to deliver these words in person to our nations as a symbol of the church's commitment to reconciliation.

“We hope these words are followed by action, including a continuation of healing initiatives and activities for survivors and their descendants. It is estimated that more than 10,000 youth went missing while attending residential school institutions, and thousands of unmarked graves are now being recovered. The responsibility for this atrocity must be reflected in any process moving forward.”

Northwest Territories Regional Chief Gerald Antoine, who led the delegation to the Vatican, says the acknowledgment of genocide and the apology offered by Pope Francis is a significant gesture and an historic step to fulfilling the requests of the former residential school students which is supported by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #58.

"The next step is an apology to all our original nation of families in our home, Turtle Island," Antoine says.

Pope Francis committed to a visit to Canada later this year during his address.

"The words 'I am very

sorry' are for my mother who attended St. Anne's institution and all who did not live to see this day, especially our little ones who lay in unmarked graves across Turtle Island," says National Chief RoseAnne Archibald. "This long overdue apology by the Pope is welcomed and we must work with urgency on the next steps on our healing path forward, which includes action on reparations and revoking the Doctrine of Discovery."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says Pope Francis' apology is a step forward in acknowledging the truth of Canada's past.

"An apology by the Pope to residential school survivors and their families delivered in Canada will specifically respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #58," Trudeau says. "I look forward to His Holiness Pope Francis apologizing in Canada at the request of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The government of Canada is fully committed to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action."

"Today, let us all reflect on the part we can play in walking the shared path of reconciliation and charting a new and better path forward – for Indigenous peoples and for everyone in Canada."

Alison Linklater elected Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief Alison Linklater plans to continue her career-long focus on health after being elected by citizens as the first female leader for the seven Mushkegowuk communities. Linklater was elected during a March 23 by-election with 257 votes cast for her, 132 votes cast for Ernest Beck, 74 votes cast for Mike Metatawabin and 50 votes cast for Andrew Solomon by citizens from the seven Mushkegowuk communities: Attawapiskat, Kashechewan, Fort Albany, Moose Cree, Taykwa Tagamou, Missanabie Cree and Chapleau Cree.

"I've always enjoyed helping our people in the area of health and it really instilled a passion in me," says Linklater, a Taykwa Tagamou citizen who was born in Moose Factory and raised in Moosonee. "With COVID-19, how it exposed a lot of gaps within our healthcare system, that really made me think: 'How can I be of help to the Mushkegowuk people.' It instilled a passion in me to really be that person to help our region enhance our healthcare services."

Linklater adds that she is looking to have a regional mental health steering committee for both on-reserve and off-reserve citizens established.

"We're battling with a lot of addiction issues, opioid overdoses," Linklater says. "And especially now with St. Anne's residential school, Fort Albany First Nation will be leading the process starting the search for unmarked graves. It's one of those most notorious residential schools and we're going to need a lot of mental health supports."

Linklater has worked in a variety of nursing positions since graduating with a nurs-



submitted photo

Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief Alison Linklater was elected during a March 23 by-election to finish the term of former Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon, who stepped down last fall.

ing degree from Lakehead University in 2003, including most recently on special projects at the Matawa Health Co-operative.

"I worked (at Weeneebayko General Hospital) for many years at the beginning of my nursing career and I would go back now and then to do some locum nursing or locum management," Linklater says. "I tried many different types of nursing and I've learned a lot throughout my nursing career."

Linklater says it's been a fast couple of weeks since she was elected to finish the term of former grand chief Jonathan Solomon, who stepped down last fall. The next Mushkegowuk Council election is scheduled for August 2023.

“We look forward to doing some strategic planning with the Council of Chiefs in May and then an AGA (Annual General Assembly) at the end of

June,” Linklater says. “But I’m really looking forward to going to the communities — it’s really important for me to involve the grassroots people with our strategic planning as well and also to just get them involved with the different projects that are going on at Mushkegowuk.”

Linklater says she also wants to hear what the Mushkegowuk citizens' priorities are and what they would like her to support them on.

"I really want to see firsthand and I want to talk to the youth, the Elders, the councils and just men and women to see what their priorities are because what can I do at my level to support them," Linklater says. "It's really important for me to be guided by the grassroots people, and it's (from) them that I'll learn what they need — I always say the communities know best."

Linklater says talking to peo-

ple over the phone or having them visit her office is not the same as meeting them in their community.

"I need to go there and listen to them and get direction from them," Linklater says. "I will be adhering to their COVID-19 policies in place. I look forward to travelling to the communities quite soon."

Linklater says it is an honour to be the first woman to be elected by citizens as grand chief at the Mushkegowuk Council.

"It's quite exciting to be the first woman grand chief to be elected by the people," Linklater says. "It's nice to see the women getting into these roles. It encourages our youth, our young ladies to see you can do this. It's happening now and I'm quite excited to see a lot of women in leadership, and I look forward to meeting a lot of them."

Thank You, Airlines!

Your fast, courteous delivery of Wawatay News to our northern communities is appreciated.



Politics

Birth alerts continue, despite direction to end

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Kiiwetinoong MPP Sol Mamakwa raised the issue of reports of ongoing birth alerts on Indigenous newborns in the Ontario Legislature after the Matawa Chiefs Council expressed their concerns on April 1.

"In July 2020, the government directed children's aid societies to stop using birth alerts targeting Indigenous women by October 2020," Mamakwa says during question period on April 6. "A year and a half after this directive was given, we are still hearing from the Matawa Chiefs Council that this practice continues. Now instead of apprehension based on the birth alerts, they are happening through the duty to report. Speaker, birth alerts are a gross violation of the rights of the child, the rights of the mother and the Indigenous community as a whole. Will the premier tell this house how the government has ensured that the birth alert directive of 2020 was implemented?"

Merrilee Fullerton, minister of Children, Community and Social Services, replied to Mamakwa's question by stating in the Legislature that the provincial government is listening and taking tangible steps to combat systemic racism, including in Ontario's child welfare system.

"In 2020 the ministry directed children's aid societies to end the practice of birth alerts, which partners told us disproportionately affected First Nations, Inuit and Metis families and communities," Fullerton says. "No woman should be deterred from seeking prenatal care or parenting supports while pregnant due to fears of having a birth alert issue. Eliminating birth alerts is an important step in creating a child welfare system that responds to the

needs of children, youth and families through prevention and early intervention."

Webequie Chief Cornelius Wabasse says in an April 1 press release that it is distressing to the Matawa Chiefs Council that they are hearing reports that birth alerts are still taking place in Thunder Bay and in municipalities where Matawa women are birthing their babies.

"It is not right and services should be in place prior to/during a birth so that an Indigenous baby is not apprehended at the hospital," Wabasse says. "Our people have experienced our children being stolen during the residential school era — we will not allow that to continue as a result of child welfare."

The provincial government directed Ontario's children's aid societies to stop issuing birth alerts by Oct. 15, 2020 after the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, issued in June 2019, called for an immediate end to the practice of targeting and apprehending infants (hospital alerts or birth alerts) from Indigenous mothers right after they give birth.

"Ending the use of birth alerts is an important step as we shift our focus to prevention, early intervention and improve outcomes for families and their children," says Jill Dunlop, associate minister of Children and Women's Issues at the time, in a July 14, 2020 press release. "This change is part of our government's effort to build a child welfare system that is better coordinated and focused on community-based prevention services that are high quality, culturally appropriate and truly responsive to the needs of children, youth and families."

Dilico Anishinabek Family Care and the Children's Aid Society of the District of Thunder Bay both denied the use

of birth alerts in press releases issued on April 10 and 12.

"Dilico does not have any policies, procedures or practices that involve the use of birth alerts," says Tina Bobinski, director of Mental Health and Addictions at Dilico. "Dilico has a well-established integrated model of care that is focused on ensuring families have a wide range of accessible services to support family unity, safety and wellness."

The Children's Aid Society of the District of Thunder Bay states that they ceased the practice of issuing birth alerts in 2020.

"The discontinuation of birth alerts allows for a more trusting, collaborative relationship from the onset, while empowering parents, their families and their communities to work together to care for their children," says Brad Bain, executive director at the Children's Aid Society of the District of Thunder Bay. "Although we can't undo the harm done to First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, we are committed to restitution of mandate and ensuring that Indigenous children, youth and families are served by either Dilico Anishinabek Family Care or Tikinagan Child and Family Services to ensure the best possible start for children."

The Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre states that they do not participate in the practice of birth alerts.

"We are supportive of the needs of Indigenous patients and families and we are committed to ensuring that the discontinued practice of birth alerts does not occur at our hospital," says Marcello Bernardo, manager of communications and engagement at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, in an April 12 email comment.

Forest management planning highlighted at 2022 Youth STEM Summit

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

An Indigenous Participation in Forest Management Planning presentation by Mariah Nodin, forest technician at NorthWinds Environmental Services, was featured at the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation's 2022 First Nations Youth STEM Summit.

"Through my job I learned that traditional knowledge is becoming very important within forest management planning," Nodin says, noting that NorthWinds Environmental Services is based in Thunder Bay. "We work in partnership with Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation and Whitesand First Nation — some of the projects include environmental and forestry projects, including forest management planning and capacity building with Whitesand First Nation in the Wabadowng Noopmng Forest, formerly known as the Armstrong Forest."

Nodin, a Whitesand citizen and recent Confederation College Forestry Technician graduate, says they also do species at risk permitting at the Wataynikaneyap Power line, forest management and operations support with Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, Kasabonika Lake, Wabauskang, Neskantaga and other communities and forest and species at risk policy analysis and research.

"I do fieldwork, forest management planning, conduct-

ing community meetings and G.I.S., which is global information system, and mapping," Nodin says. "I'm hoping to attend Lakehead University in the near future for their forestry program."

Nodin says a forest management plan must be in place before any forestry activities can take place.

"Preparing and implementing a forest management plan is a rigorous process," Nodin says. "It includes stakeholders, public and Indigenous community involvement at various stages. A forest management plan must ensure sustainability while finding balance of social and economic and environmental values. Forest management plans are prepared by a registered professional forester with input from local citizens, Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public."

Nodin says forest management plans are prepared and approved for a 10-year period and determine how much and where roads can be built and how much forest will be renewed, and include opportunities for public involvement.

"So what does consultation mean in forest management planning — the Ontario government is responsible for ensuring that the public has an opportunity to provide input into decisions regarding the management of Crown forest in the province," Nodin says. "Opportunities for the pub-

lic review and consultation are integral to forestry policy development and to the forest management planning process. Public involvement improves transparency, results in more effective decisions and provides for greater accountability."

Nodin says the take home message for First Nations and Metis communities is if they miss the consultation opportunities, it is OK.

"You can voice your concerns any time," Nodin says. "Write, call or e-mail to the MNRF (Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry) or forest manager yourself, you can talk to the forest auditors. Your input is most effective if you work with the planning team and forest managers to make sure your needs and wants are taken into consideration."

The STEM Summit, which was held on March 30 at Fort William Historical Park in Thunder Bay, also featured presentations by Fort William Elder Rita Fenton on Medicine Wheel Teachings; Danny Deleary, community engagement coordinator for the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario, on the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario Water Pipes Initiative; and Jason Thompson, owner of Warrior Engineering, on Engineering. Kaniehtio Horn, emcee at the Youth Summit, also delivered a keynote youth empowerment speech.

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Commentary



A Spring Mourning



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UNDER THE
NORTHERN SKY

This month has been a sad period for my family and friends as several Elders have passed on. It is sad to lose someone we love and so difficult to imagine all the stories, history and knowledge lost when these special people pass.

My uncle Greg Koostachin was larger than life in our community as he was a well respected and prominent Elder in Attawapiskat First Nation. He grew up on the land on the James Bay coast and he was deeply connected to the history and families of our home community. He married my mother Susan's sister Mary and together they raised their children Margaret, Rita, Mario, Edward, Jackie, Claire, Sylvia, Joyce and Kathy.

Uncle Greg was a great example for all of us as he showed us that our people could be capable of surviving and thriving in the modern world while also still holding to the values and culture of our ancestors. He was the first in our community to grow several successful businesses. Early on he built his successes with his wife Mary in establishing their family general store and later with his children and grandchildren over the years he created other ventures. Through all their hard work and dedication, they gave many in the community an opportunity to gain employment and motivated others to start their own businesses.

Uncle Greg actually gave me my first paying job as a stock boy and cashier at the family store and gas bar. It was a great training ground as my Aunt Mary and Uncle Greg taught so many young people like me through kindness and encouragement. Uncle Greg's life lessons always stuck because he made sure to leave anyone he met with a laugh or a fun story to remember.

We shared in their family grief when they tragically lost their daughter Rita Koostachin in summer of 1988 to a sudden vehicle accident. She was a bright young woman who was ready to do great things. At the time, my sister Jackie was pregnant with her first born and when their baby girl was born,

they named her Rita in honour of our late cousin. Uncle Greg and Aunt Mary were always happy to see her name live on in this way.

All of Greg's children became successful in their own way and they all became role models for others in our community. Their youngest daughter Katherine Koostachin accomplished years of education and built an impressive career in Indigenous law. She now holds the position of Senior Policy Advisor at the Office of the Prime Minister of Canada. Every time I met Uncle Greg, he was happy to say how proud he was of everything his children and grandchildren had accomplished.

In his later years, he became a respected Elder who served in advisory roles for our community and at the regional level with Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN) and Muskegowuk Council.

At the same as losing my uncle, our family also lost our cousin Irene Edwards, the wife of our current Deputy Chief of Attawapiskat Louis Edwards. She was one of the eldest of our generation and she held a strong connection to our Elders who shared with her so many stories and history. Irene was fully fluent in our Cree language. My memories with her are filled with laughter and fun as she shared stories with our large extended family. Her kind way and sense of humour carries on in her children Larry and Pauline.

This past number of days have been so difficult as I was saddened also at the recent loss of Norma Bradley at Iroquois Lodge in Ohsweken. I had come to know her and her family through my partner Mike and his sister Patty. Norma was a well loved and respected Elder of her community in Six Nations who held so many stories and knew so much history of her people. She and her late husband John Bradley Sr were similar to the Elders I knew up north. They headed a grand family of children and grandchildren who all shared the same culture of love and devotion to each other and those around them.

The Indigenous families I am part of and the ones I've come to know all share a common connection. The most important life lessons are always rooted in openness, kindness and love, even in the face of adversity, negativity and hard times. They always shared a powerful example of love and kindness towards everyone and an awareness that we all share this time and this life together as one. These are the memories and legacy that Elders like my Uncle Greg, my cousin Irene and my friend Elder Norma Bradley leave with all of us and this is how I will always remember them. Kee-sah-keeh-tee-nan mee-see-way. (We love you all.)

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Thunder Bay Public Library launches residential school podcast

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL) launched the first podcast of its five-part Stories of Anishinaabe Resilience Podcast series on April 14 through a variety of podcast listening apps. The podcast series is part of the TBPL's Stories of Anishinaabe Resilience (SOAR) project, which aims to increase awareness and commemorate the history and legacy of St. Joseph's residential school while also honouring residential school survivors, their families and communities.

"In this episode we hear from Summer Reilly, who shares fond memories of her (late) grandmother Dolores Wawia, who was the matriarch of her family," says Robyn Medicine, community hub librarian - Indigenous relationships supervisor at TBPL and host of the podcast series. "She talks about the positive impacts that Dolores had on her and her family (and about Wawia) attending St. Joseph's residential school for several years."

Medicine says Wawia had been at the top of the list of people to be interviewed for the podcast series, but she passed away while they were still in the early planning stages of the SOAR project.

"She accomplished so much in her lifetime and made so many contributions to Indigenous education, so I thought it was really important to hear from a family member," Medicine says. "So I contacted her granddaughter, who I knew in the past, and she agreed to be interviewed for this."

Medicine says many of the people involved in the podcast series were interviewed over the Zoom virtual platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"For each person I interviewed, it was a different experience," Medicine says, noting they arranged for the interviewees to have support available due to the information they were sharing about their residential school experiences. "It was challenging to have to do these over Zoom because (not being) able to be there in person makes it hard to support somebody who might be triggered by rehashing a lot of their memories, experiences and some of the trauma."

Medicine says one podcast episode will be released per month, with the four remaining podcasts scheduled for release on the last Thursday of each month from May to August.

"All the podcast episodes are produced by Derek Okeese," Medicine says. "He was recommended to me by Journalists for Human Rights. It was great working with Derek, he is very talented."

Wawia had been at the top of the list of people to be interviewed ...but she passed away while they were still in the early planning stages of the SOAR project...

Medicine says the SOAR project also includes a report by researcher Sarah McPherson that summarizes the existing documentation of St. Joseph's residential school.

"It also includes testimonials and records of survivors and their experiences," Medicine says.

Medicine says she also interviewed people for the SOAR St. Joseph's Residential School Unit Plan curriculum, which

was created by an educator, includes a Teacher's Guide, Student Workbook, Consolidation Card and corresponding powerpoint presentations and is accessible to educators at the local school boards.

"I am getting people to contact me and then I will get them access to the (curriculum)," Medicine says, noting her contact information is posted on the SOAR project webpage at: www.tbpl.ca/soarproject.

Medicine says the artwork of three local Indigenous artists, Quill Christie-Peters, Rufus Moonias and Brian Michon, is also featured in the SOAR project. Christie-Peters' mural will be located at the Waverley Community Hub while Moonias' mural and Michon's outdoor mural and paintings of three St. Joseph's residential school survivors will be located at the Brodie Community Hub.

"The art is our way of honouring the resilience of residential school survivors," Medicine says. "It's important that people, especially people who are from Thunder Bay, should know that we had a residential school here in Thunder Bay."

The SOAR project was funded by Canada Heritage for Commemorating the History and Legacy of Residential Schools.



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Education

Oshki announces new Goyce Kakegamic scholarship

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Oshki-Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute honoured the late former deputy grand chief Goyce Kakegamic on April 14 with the launch of the Goyce Kakegamic Student Bursary and Fund. The bursary was created to ease the financial burden experienced by students and their families while they are attending on-campus programming in Thunder Bay.

“My husband was a great believer in education and he had big dreams, he had visions, he had more plans and ideas and he encouraged all of us to go to university — I even got tricked into going to university,” says Lucy Kakegamic, Goyce’s widow. “I graduated and so did my children, and I know that he encouraged his grandchildren too. Two of them have already finished their university and are on their own with jobs. So I know that he really believed to have education as the way to go, that’s what he always told the students.”

Jonathan Kakegamic, one of Goyce's sons, says the Goyce Kakegamic Student Bursary and Fund is in memory of his father's work, noting that Goyce always stressed the importance of acknowledging and supporting others.

"I'm thankful for this bursary — it's going to keep his work and his ideals going," Jonathan says. "His work was vast, he influenced a lot of people and



Oshki-Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute launched the Goyce Kakegamic Student Bursary and Fund along with his family members and Deputy Grand Chief Bobby Narcisse on April 14.

I'm grateful for that."

Jonathan says his father believed in education as a tool of empowerment and hope.

"Goyce understood from his Elders the importance of gaining an education as a means to elevate from hardship and lack of opportunity," Jonathan says. "Education is a way of embracing life and gaining the confidence to achieve a meaningful livelihood and making a difference. We are happy to help make a difference for students in a way that honours his wishes for our people."

Deputy Grand Chief Bobby

Narcisse says Goyce brought him on as director of social services at Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) in 2013.

"In those early times I could sense the fire and the motivation and the strength of deputy grand chief Goyce Kakegami at the time, his vision for supporting children, youth and families by looking at the unique needs of our remote communities all across Nishnawbe Aski Nation," Narcisse says, adding that Goyce is also remembered as an artist and for his fellowship within his faith and his Embrace Life initiative. "He was

very diligent with education and he was very forthcoming in his vision and his dream to have a specific education system to be developed at the community level, to have our own institutions being bred from our communities, developed from our knowledge keepers at the community level as well and utilizing our strengths within Treaty 5 and Treaty 9.”

Narcisse says Oshki-Wenjackson is a beacon for the future in developing lifelong learning for NAN citizens.

"We need institutions such as Oshki-Wenjackson leading the

way for a pathway for our First Nations children, youth and families to pursue their education especially at the post-secondary level,” Narcisse says. “These bursaries in the name of a visionary such as Goyce Kagegamie are here to help you also to overcome and attain your educational goals and aspirations.”

Lorrie Deschamps, president at Oshki-Wenjack, also highlighted Goyce's passion and dedication to Indigenous education.

"Goyce Kakegamic was a champion of our Institute and

we miss his words of encouragement and gentle wealth of advice he instilled over the years," Deschamps says. "The bursary will help support our students and the potential he truly believed in as they work toward a brighter future for themselves and their families."

The inaugural Goyce Kakegamic Student Bursary award is scheduled to be presented by representatives of the Kakegamic family to a student recipient at Oshki-Wenjack's graduation on Aug. 26.

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Education



submitted photos

Turtle Concepts recently travelled to Kashechewan from April 3-7 to deliver workshops for students in the James Bay community.

Turtle Concepts delivers workshops in Kashechewan

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Kashechewan recently invited Turtle Concepts to bring in an Indigenous fiddler from Michigan and an Indigenous youth from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil along with five other turtles for workshops with students from April 3-7.

"When we brought the young fellow from Brazil, he has South American Indigeneity, they were so fascinated," says Dave Jones, founder at Turtle Concepts. "He told stories about monkey invasions in his school, he told stories about seeing leopards and big snakes in the Amazon jungle."

Jones says Ruby John, an Anishinabe fiddler from Michigan, performed her music for the students.

"She is a renowned fiddler so we jigged like no other, we had adults coming into the gym when they heard the fiddle going," Jones says. "When Ruby John played the fiddle, the EAs (education assistants) and the kids, you could see their toes tapping. We had a jigging contest, it was wonderful."

Jones says the Kashechewan youth also took the turtles out for some sledding and to see the community, noting that Turtle Concepts has been going to Kashechewan for about 25 years.

"We did an amazing race

activity with them after we got them comfortable," Jones says. "We always share our life stories and talk about the successes first and then if there were any challenges, so that the kids feel they can identify with our stories, and they did."

Jones says they also held an exploring post-secondary education session for students who are looking at pursuing differ-

"We had some young high school students come out and just talk about what going away to school could look like — one is looking into fashion design and another one is looking into graphic design," Jones says. "All of our turtles have some kind of

exciting career choice going on. we had a social worker on the team, we had a business student, a fashion designer, a professional fiddler, a professional manager at Fanshawe College and a graphic designer.”

Jones says the community had been preparing for the upcoming spring hunt so they held a goose calling contest and a chicken dance contest.

"You have to give messages of hope and inspiration and school and living a good life and choosing a life," Jones says, noting that they also did activities such as lip synching and fashion presentations to show the youth what confidence can look like. "When you can get Grade 7 and

8s to lip synch with you and you can get Grade 7 and 8s to do a little fashion show to their colleagues, you know you've got in their hearts."

Jones says some of the youth were the children or grandchildren of youth they worked with years ago in the community.

"A lot of the parents will tell their kids: 'You need to go listen to those turtles over there, they really talk good,'" Jones says. "We've known Dave since we were kids."

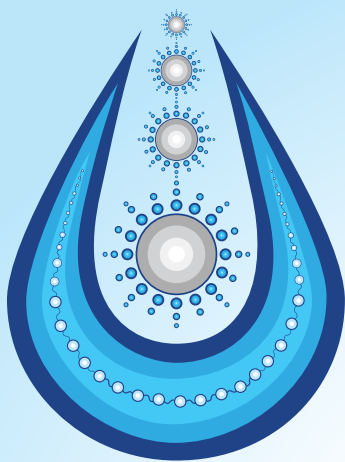
James says he was initially a primary teacher in Moose Factory as well as an Anishinabemowin teacher and outdoor education teacher in his community of Garden River, a

Anishinabek Nation community
located next to Sault Ste. Marie.

"Now I get to teach confidence, teach communication, teach how to overcome shyness, teach how to speak," Jones says.

Jones says his parents wanted their children to become global citizens who were proud of hunting, fishing and other traditional activities.

"We used to tap maple trees and make maple sugar," Jones says. "We had a little barn and we had to cut wood our whole life. My mom always said you have to be proud as Anishinabe but you also have to walk in the big world and be proud of that, so learn two ways, learn both skills."

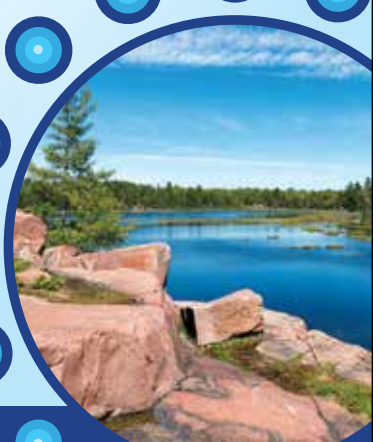


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Education

Westgate students win awards in partnership with Thunder Bay Friendship Centre

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute students Amber Fenton, Matthew Cromarty and Alexa Sagutche-way were recognized with awards and an appointment during an awards ceremony on April 5 in partnership with the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre (TBIFC).

Fenton, a Grade 10 student, was recognized with the TBIFC's Xavier Michon Memorial Award for her academic achievement and leadership abilities. The Xavier Michon Memorial Award is based on Grade 9 academic success in students who self-identify as First Nations — Fenton achieved a 99 per cent final grade in her Pre-workplace Program General Learning Strategies class last year.

"My future goals have to be passing high school, passing college, getting a house and getting my dream job; anything that includes dancing, acting, music and helping others," Fenton says. "And last but not least, having my own family."

Fenton also thanked the TBIFC for recognizing her with the Xavier Michon Memorial Award, the Westgate CVI counsellors and teachers for providing her with knowledge and opportunities, her father, family and friends for supporting her in everything she does and her caregiver for raising her. An athlete on the Westgate

CVI Competitive Cheerleading Team, she has also performed as an actor with Eleanor Drury Children's Theatre and helped build a lodge in the community.

"I've been volunteering a lot," Fenton says, noting that her acting with Eleanor Drury Children's Theatre was fun. "You got to meet a lot of people that helped to change your life."

Cromarty, a Grade 10 student and Wunnumin Lake citizen, was recognized with an honourable mention award for his academic achievement — he achieved a 92 per cent final grade in his Computer Studies class last year.

"It feels really good to be acknowledged for that," Cromarty says, noting that his goal for next year is to get more 90 per cent grades in his classes and be an overall better student. "My dad was really happy and proud that I got an award for that."

Cromarty has also volunteered at Shelter House Thunder Bay and played hockey with the West End Bruins, a Midget Single A hockey team.

"It's really fun to know people and to play sports,"

Cromarty says.

Sagutcheway, a Grade 11 student and Eabametoong citizen, was recognized for her recent appointment as incoming Indigenous student trustee for 2022-2023, with her position effective in August.

"I'm really excited for the position," Sagutcheway says. "I'm a bit nervous for it but it's exciting, it's a big step and I feel like I'm ready to take that."

Sagutcheway, who is currently the co-president of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council, says it is an honour to represent Indigenous youth as the Indigenous student trustee.

"It is critical for Indigenous youth to take on leadership roles because it allows the general public to gain a better understanding of the challenges Indigenous youth face as well as their resilience and accomplishments," Sagutcheway says. "I encourage all Indigenous youth to take on leadership roles and make their voice heard."

Sagutcheway says her goal is to better the education experience for Indigenous students.

Coral Klein, principal at Westgate CVI, congratulated



submitted photo

Westgate CVI students Amber Fenton and Matthew Cromarty were recognized with the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre Xavier Michon Memorial Award and an Award of Accomplishment during an award ceremony at Westgate CVI on April 5.

the students on their achievements on behalf of the school's staff and thanked them for embodying the school's motto: Always, Only the Best.

"Achievements don't hap-

pen by accident," Klein says. "They're the result of dedication and hard work. You are not only very inspiring, you are true role models for your peers."

Fenton and Cromarty also

received a gift bag along with their awards, which included traditional teachings, sage, sweetgrass, a smudge bowl and a blanket.

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Education



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Former Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres executive director Sylvia Maracle speaks about the OFIFC's new book *Finishing the Sweetgrass Braid* that she worked with writer Aleksandra Bergier on during its virtual launch.

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres launch new book

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) launched a new book, *Finishing the Sweetgrass Braid*, featuring a legacy collection of essential knowledge and teachings from the Friendship Centre movement. It was written by Aleksandra Bergier with former OFIFC executive director Sylvia Maracle with the goal of gathering and identifying wise practices and traditional guidance as part of efforts to restore and revitalize Indigenous knowledge. The OFIFC represents the collective interests of 29 Friendship Centres in cities and towns across the province.

"If you go way back in the history of Friendship Centres and urban development, you will find that we were always doing things from a cultural perspective, we just didn't realize it was a cultural perspective, we couldn't articulate it as one," Maracle says. "Li'l Beavers started in the mid-1970s, before half your audience was born, and we were talking about taking care of our children as a collective."

The Li'l Beavers of Ontario Program, which began as an OFIFC pilot project in 1976 and was delivered until 1995, when funding was cut, was an Indigenous, children and youth-centred mentorship, educational and recreation-based program designed to aid in the healthy development of Indigenous youth physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

"(A new program) was born and it was called Akwe:go, it's a Mohawk word that means all of us," Maracle says. "It was about all of us, and that's a cultural approach, accepting responsibility, acknowledging it, accepting it, doing something about it. I think for a long time we did



Sylvia Maracle

things, and in some respects we carry humility too far. We were very humble about doing it so we didn't go around telling people this is what we are doing."

Finishing the Sweetgrass Braid, which was the result of a multi-year research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, explores what Indigenous knowledge is passed down, how it is shared through urban Indigenous communities and its fundamental importance for future generations.

"This work is a profoundly significant contribution to the renaissance and legacy of Indigenous knowledge," Maracle says. "Like the strands in a sweetgrass braid, each person along the path helped make our bundle. We are grateful and honour those who shared these invaluable gifts. Now that the fire has been rekindled, we will continue to tend to it so that our communities can grow and thrive."

The researchers observed and participated in community events and activities, conducted focus groups and interviews and followed specific protocols to credit the knowledge shared by Elders and community citizens.

"This book is the life story of the OFIFC – its history, present and future – about how it transfers knowledge internally and

externally," Bergier says. "These teachings are immeasurably helpful to Indigenous communities, and to society at large, with great potential for reconciliatory education. It was an immense privilege and honour to be part of this community-driven research."

Gertie Mai Muse, CEO at OFIFC, says the book is a window into the passionate work of generations of urban First Nation, Inuit and Metis people, their families, their communities and their efforts in restoring and redefining the interconnectedness of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of urban Indigenous peoples.

"The knowledge shared in this special writing is a sacred gift and blessing," Muse says. "It's a heartfelt testimony to the ongoing dedication to the wellbeing of urban Indigenous communities within the Friendship Centre movement. The OFIFC staff and I are committed to doing our part in finishing the sweetgrass braid. We are humbled, grateful and proud standing on the solid foundations built by Sylvia Maracle and many others, so we can continue to heal, change, grow and thrive."

Finishing the Sweetgrass Braid can be pre-ordered from GoodMinds at: GoodMinds.com.

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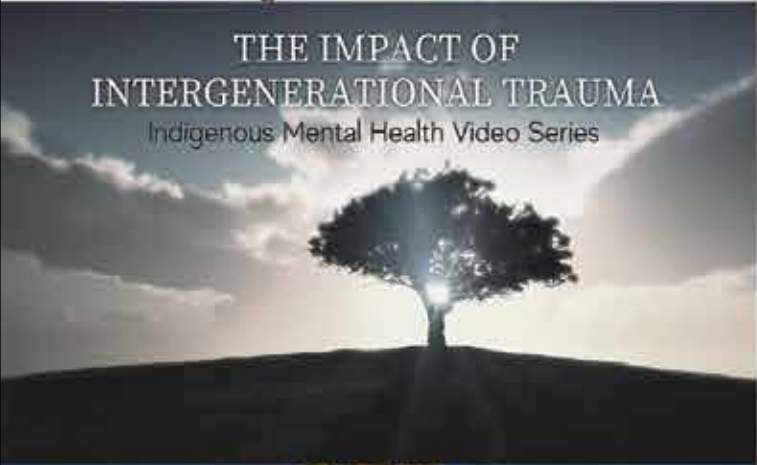
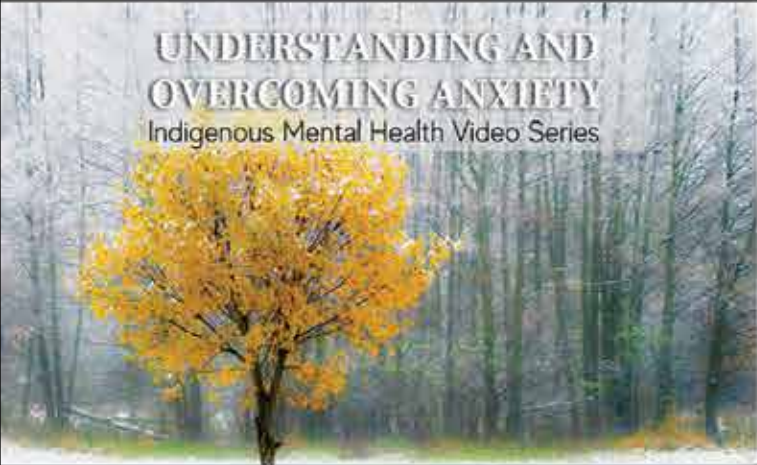
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About the Series

presented by Jasmine Peterson

The Indigenous Mental Health Video Series was designed to provide additional support for Indigenous people who have difficulty accessing mental health services due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, infrastructure limitations (i.e., poor telephone/internet connections), etc.

This video series discusses the impact of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous people and communities and how this has contributed to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, addictions, and anger. This series provides important education and practical coping strategies, presented in a friendly, conversational manner by Jasmine Peterson.

Jasmine Peterson is a mental health professional of Indigenous descent. She has worked extensively with Indigenous clients over the past seven years at our clinic and in remote Indigenous communities. Jasmine works with children, teens, and adults, providing psychological assessments and counselling/psychotherapy.



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Education

Gaagakiizhik and Bimose schools adding new library

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Gaagagekiizhik School and Bimose Community High School students and staff are looking forward to the addition of a new library through a partnership with SchoolBOX and First Nations Industrial Systems.

“(It’s) going to be an Anishinabe library,” says Wendy McPherson, principal at Gaagagekiizhik School and Bimose Community High School in Kenora and Garden Hill citizen from Manitoba. “That’s going to be a place for Elders to come in and do some storytelling, it’s going to be a soft place where we’re going to be able to enhance the language and also the cultural teachings of the area. The objective is to have all Anishinabe artists or writers to be honoured in that library.”

Maryann Swain, a language and culture resource educator at Gaagagekiizhik School, looks forward to the opening of the new 24-foot by 60-foot library, which is scheduled for May or June.

“This is a good idea, the kids need books,” says Swain, a residential school survivor who developed a flash card system for students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 to learn Anishinabemowin. “My job is my therapy. I’m putting back something that was taken from me.”

Sarah Kerr, executive director at SchoolBOX, a grassroots



submitted photo

Gaagagekiizhik School language and culture resource educator Maryann Swain looks forward to the opening of the school’s new library.

charity, is also looking forward to the opening of the new library.

“This is what it’s all about — our small team is working to help make education possible in Treaty 3,” Kerr says. “It is really amazing to work alongside Indigenous educators, youth and contractors to create learning centres for students that address the TRC’s (Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s) call to action for equal education. I can’t wait to see the students in the new library this spring.”

The new library was purchased this past December by SchoolBOX and Gaagagekiizhik School and Bimose Community High School from First Nations Industrial Systems thanks to donors

in Ontario. The Gaagagekiizhik School and Bimose Community High School are guided by the Bimose Tribal Council communities, with students attending from Ochichaagwe’ Babigo’ Inning, Grassy Narrows, Nootkamegwanning, Northwest Angle 33, Iskatewizaagegan, Obashkandagaang and Wauzhushk Onigum.

“Part of the mandate of the school is to make sure that students are getting more of that one-to-one learning and the culture infused into everything,” McPherson says. “The classrooms are already starting to order books to create their own mini-libraries with the intent of moving those into the main library when we get that done, and it’s supposed to be



submitted photo

Tom Cameron, from Cameron Total Homes, Maryann Swain and Wendy McPherson, from Gaagagekiizhik School and Bimose Community High School, and Terri Meekis and Sarah Kerr, from SchoolBOX, are looking forward to the creation of an outdoor classroom at the school.

done by the end of May.”

McPherson says the new library will open up space to add a Grade 7/8 classroom.

“Right now we only go up to Grade 7 (in the elementary school), so we’re missing that Grade 8 classroom,” McPherson says, noting that the high school has Grade 9-12 classes. “So we’re going to be able to create more space in our small building to have that Grade 7/8 classroom.”

McPherson says SchoolBOX has also helped the school to set up an outdoor classroom, which will feature tables and chairs designed by Tom Cameron of Cameron Total Homes

and sponsored by Dina Bell-Laroche.

“I have always envisioned having an outdoor classroom because we’re doing a lot of land-based learning as well,” McPherson says. “We have land that we go out to weekly, so SchoolBOX has helped to create an outdoor classroom. In the spring we’re going to be building a really beautiful wooden fenced-in area where students can go and learn outdoors and learn about the elements, about the trees and have knowledge keepers come in there as well.”

McPherson says the students and staff are “very excited” about the new library.

“The staff are very excited and ecstatic because they’ve been working towards building their own classroom mini-libraries in order to invest into that (new) library,” McPherson says. “The students are going to feel great because once they can move their library books into the larger library, then they’re feeling like they’re contributing to the library as well too. And the staff are really excited to have a space where they can have community knowledge keepers and Elders and artists come in to a place that’s going to be a cozy, warm place to be able to take their students.”

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Health

Sioux Lookout to add more addiction services

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Kiiwetinoong MPP Sol Mamakwa called for more healing programs in First Nation communities after the provincial government announced \$4.2 million in funding to enhance access to addictions treatment supports in Sioux Lookout.

“It’s important to bring services closer to home,” Mamakwa says in an April 8 phone interview. “The healing is within our territories, it’s within our lands because the land heals. I think that we’ve got to utilize that land because it’s so important.”

Grand Chief Derek Fox had earlier called for the creation of First Nation hospitals at the Mushkegowuk Council’s Special Council of Chiefs Meeting on March 28 in Timmins.

“Imagine our own land-base, our own hospitals and maybe one day our own self-government,” Fox states in a March 28 Nishnawbe Aski Nation Facebook posting. “My vision is to plant those seeds in our next generation of leaders.”

The \$4.2 million in provincial funding, announced on March 15, will be provided to the Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord Economic Development Corporation to expand access to a total of 37 new addictions treatment beds, including 15 new addictions treatment beds, 16 supportive treatment beds and six withdrawal management beds, and to help people in Sioux Lookout and the surrounding region to access spe-

cialized addictions treatment.

“This incredible investment in the north not only demonstrates (Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Michael) Tibollo’s commitment to doing the right thing but also doing things the right way,” says Jacob Dockstator, executive director at the Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord Economic Development Corporation. “This partnership between the province of Ontario and The Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord demonstrates the province’s dedication to the empowerment of Ontario’s Indigenous peoples and giving us the tools we need to build healthy communities.”

The Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord, founded in 2017, is an agreement between Cat Lake, Lac Seul, Slate Falls, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and the Municipality of Sioux Lookout.

“Funding that supports facilities, programs and services which address mental health and addictions challenges in Sioux Lookout is critically important and welcomed,” says Sioux Lookout Mayor Douglas Lawrance. “As well as in-community needs, our role as a hub community multiplies issues in Sioux Lookout and underscores that services need to be culturally appropriate. This funding can only improve the opportunity for all of us to live with dignity.”

Mamakwa thanked the partners in the Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord for working together on the addictions issue.



Kiiwetinoong MPP Sol Mamakwa, posing with former national chiefs Matthew Coon Come and Ovide Mercredi and former grand chief Alvin Fidler, is calling for more healing programs in First Nation communities for people with addictions.

“It’s good to see organizations work together to try to address the issue,” Mamakwa says. “Addressing the issues of addictions downstream is one thing, but we want to be able to address the addictions and mental issues upstream as well.”

Studies indicate that opioid-related deaths surged by 79 per cent during the first two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, with rates being three times higher in northern Ontario.

“Our government remains steadfast in our work to provide Ontarians in the north with

access to effective and culturally sensitive mental health and addictions services as close to home as possible,” Tibollo says. “Investing in mental health and addictions services in Sioux Lookout is just one more way our government is continuing to support vulnerable populations across the province with high-quality mental health and addictions care that addresses their unique needs on their journey to recovery.”

The \$4.2 million in funding is part of the provincial government’s \$90 million Addictions Recovery Fund that is being

invested over three years, with \$7.2 million to be invested in 2021-22 and \$41.39 million in each of 2022-23 and 2023-24.

“Our government continues to make significant investments in high-quality addictions care across northwestern Ontario,” says Greg Rickford, minister of Northern Development and Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry and minister of Indigenous Affairs. “Today’s \$4.2 million investment for 37 new addictions treatment beds will allow the Sioux Lookout Friendship Accord to continue the critical work that they do as they

help hundreds of people from communities across the region.”

The Addictions Recovery Fund includes support for about 400 new addictions treatment beds across the province; eight new Youth Wellness Hubs; two new Mobile Mental Health Clinics; three new police-partnered Mobile Crisis Response Teams; support for Indigenous-led land-based healing services; and additional community supports including day/evening intensive treatment, mild to moderate intensive treatment and after-care programs.

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Community

Canadian Ranger instructors train with shotguns to stop bear attacks

Peter Moon
Special to Wawatay News

Most members of the Canadian Armed Forces never fire a shotgun as part of their military training or duties. But Canadian Ranger instructors in the Far North of Ontario routinely carry 12-gauge shotguns when they need to.

"We often encounter polar bears on the coasts of Hudson Bay and James Bay," said Master Warrant Officer Carl Wolfe, a company sergeant major. "Usually the bears are hungry or curious. But they are predators so you need protection if necessary. We also encounter black bears and large wolves. And there's always the chance you may come across a rabid animal."

The military usually uses shotguns for only specialized purposes, such as breaching locked doors or during naval boarding operations.

During the summer months, when polar bears cannot hunt for seals on ice, they wander inland in their search for food. They have been encountered inland as far as Webequie First Nation, which is 260 kilometers from Peawanuck in Polar Bear Provincial Park on Hudson Bay.

time army reservists in 29 First Nations across the Far North of Ontario. Junior Rangers are members of an army youth program for boys and girls aged 12 to 18.

“The Rangers are used to bears,” Master Warrant Officer Wolfe said. “They can tell when there’s going to be an issue. With black bears they generally use a loud whistle, stand tall and look big and loud and the bears go away. A loud shot usually scares them off. But the odd time you’ll get a young, inquisitive bear that keeps approaching.”

Five years ago at a large annual training camp for Junior Rangers, warning shots failed to deter a persistent black bear that kept coming back to the camp at night. The bear kept approaching a Ranger on night bear patrol. He fired four shots with a shotgun, missed with the first two rounds, but killed the bear with two further shots.

On another occasion a young black bear kept encroaching on a Ranger training camp on a remote island. Loud shouting and the banging of pots and pans failed to deter it. It was finally driven off after being hit with non-lethal bird shots.

“Depending on the situation instructors are in they have to be ready to use a shotgun,” said Master Warrant Officer Fergus O’Connor. “It’s very serious and



photo submitted by Sergeant Peter Moon/Canadian Rangers

Canadian Ranger instructors fire shotguns at targets on shooting range.

something that they need to be skilled at because they need to be able to put that slug exactly where they want it to go. Typically instructors are trained in other methods of discouraging wildlife. We train to shoot as a last case scenario."

The Rangers accompanying instructors are the primary method of predator control. But instructors must be able to take action when required.

The instructors of 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, which commands the 600

Rangers of Northern Ontario, recently completed their annual military recertification on shooting ranges at Canadian Forces Base Borden, near Barrie. They qualified, along with the headquarters staff, in the use of shotgun, pistol, the C7

assault rifle, and the Ranger C19 rifle.

(Sergeant Peter Moon is a Ranger with 3CRPG at CFB Borden.)

Canadian Rangers busy aiding remote First Nations in COVID crises

Peter Moon
Special to Wawatay News

Canadian Rangers are actively assisting four First Nations in Northern Ontario that are facing COVID-19 outbreaks that have overwhelmed the communities' abilities to deal with them.

The remote communities asked the Province of Ontario for military assistance. The province asked the Government of Canada to authorize the use of Rangers, who are part-time army reservists, and the Rangers were directed to assist Attawapiskat, Kasabonika, Kashechewan and most recently Deer Lake First Nation.

"Rangers from the local patrols in Kashechewan, Attawapiskat, and Kasabonika are helping their own communities," said Lieutenant-Colonel Shane McArthur who commands 700 Rangers in 29 First Nations across the Far North of Ontario. "We don't have a patrol in Deer Lake so we acti-

vated a Ranger Go Team to go to their assistance. An RGT is a mobile team made up of Rangers from different First Nations that fly to provide help.”

A team assisting Deer Lake First Nation includes soldiers from the 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group headquarters at Canadian Forces Base Borden and Canadian Rangers from Sandy Lake, Lac Seul, and Pikangikum First Nations.

"The Rangers in the four communities assist people who need help in getting around the community," Lt.-Col. McArthur said. "They make sure that those who are ill and in quarantine get access to food and water. They cut and distribute firewood. They liaise with the local chief and council and provide crucial support.

"There are currently about 450 COVID cases in the four communities. The number of cases goes up and down," he said. "Depending on test results there could be 400 one day and 600 the next. The total of four



photo submitted by Canadian Rangers

A soldier and a Canadian Ranger organize emergency supplies for distribution in Deer Lake First Nation.

communities we are assisting now is down from the seven we were helping a short while ago, when we were also monitoring two other First Nations so that we could respond quickly if they got overwhelmed.”

The Rangers have been aid-

ing overwhelmed First Nations across Northern Ontario since the pandemic began two years ago. "They continue to do a remarkable job when they are called on to provide support for communities with serious COVID situations," Lt.-Col.

McArthur said.

The next key task for the Rangers is conducting flood watches on many of Northern Ontario's major rivers during the spring break up. In the past, several communities on the James Bay and Hudson Bay

coasts, as well as in other parts of Northern Ontario, were evacuated because of flooding.

(Sergeant Peter Moon is a Ranger with the 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group at CFB Borden.)

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A cartoon by Mark Bly. Two men are sitting on the ground in yoga-like poses. The man on the left has a large, bulbous nose and is speaking, with a speech bubble saying "AT PEACE". The man on the right has an extremely long, thin nose and is looking at the first man. To the right, a sign on a stand reads "YOGA TODAY".

A black and white cartoon by Lindsay Cote. On the left, a man with a headband and a sad expression looks towards the right. A large, empty speech bubble originates from him. On the right, a man with a very long nose is sleeping, indicated by several 'Z's floating above his head. The cartoon is signed 'LINDSAY COTE' in the bottom left corner.

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