Eagle staffs to gather

By Nathan Wright

POKAGON – The Seventh Annual Eagle Staff Gathering will be held on the Oct. 11-12 weekend hosted by Pokagon Potawatomi Nation in Dowagiac, Michigan. Co-host for the gathering is the Sault College Native Education Department.

Respected Anishinabek teacher Doris Boissoneau provides the guidance for this event, based on a recurring dream she had of these staff gatherings. Doris followed her vision to help bring strength to warriors, and all Anishinabek nations on both sides of the artificial Canada-U.S. border.

Eagle staff carriers provide teachings about their staffs and the gatherings honour our past, present and our future as Anishinabek. The staffs represent a celebration of our strength in maintaining our language and culture. As the staffs and people gather, “we stand for unity.”

A majority of eagle staffs usually represent a specific nation in some manner and are carried by veterans.

Eagle staffs include a long, red, felt-like rectangular cloth attached typically to a cedar or white pine pole four to seven feet in length.

Anishinabek will test all federal candidates

NIPISSING FN – First Nations could have a greater impact in the Oct. 14 general election than ever before, says Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, in announcing two strategies designed to advance the Anishinabek political agenda.

“First of all we have to ensure that our citizens participate in the election process so that our issues become Canada’s issues,” Beaucage said, re-introducing the First Peoples Vote initiative unveiled by the Anishinabek Nation in the 2007 Ontario election. The plan, including a website and flyer distribution, encourages the estimated 100,000 eligible First Nation, Metis and Inuit voters in the province to make their voices heard before the upcoming federal election, and to cast their ballots strategically on Oct. 14.

Beaucage said the eligible First Peoples voting population is significant enough – five per cent of eligible voters -- in ten Ontario federal ridings to have a direct bearing on the Oct. 14 outcome. He identified seven of these ridings as Anishinabek territory: Thunder Bay-Superior North, Sarnia North, Peterborough, Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing, Nickel Belt and Sault Ste. Marie.

The Grand Council Chief also released a White Paper on Election Issues, identifying five priorities on which Anishinabek Nation leaders are seeking commitments and support from candidates and parties in the federal election: elimination of poverty through implementation of the Anishinabek Economic Blueprint; enhancing education and training opportunities to enable Anishinabek youth to enter the skilled workforce; a treaty implementation process that includes provision for resource benefit-sharing; promotion of First Nations languages and the establishment an Anishinabek Language Immersion Institute; and adopting and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Questionnaires will be sent out to the political parties and relevant research of party platforms will be added the firstpeoplesvote.com website.

“We must ensure the candidates of all political parties know what’s important to us,” Beaucage said. “They need to understand -- as members of parliament and in a government -- their roles and responsibilities in the process of ensuring the health and prosperity of the First Peoples in Canada.

“A day doesn’t go by that there isn’t a national news report or legislative debate dealing with our concern: a land claim being settled, a treaty right taken to the courts, a First Nation challenging the rights of corporations to unilaterally harvest resources from their traditional territories,”’ said Beaucage. “We’re definitely on the agenda...and we are seeing political parties making our issues an essential part of their platforms.

“We are at a place where First Nations can be incredibly influential, not only with regard to the political agenda, but to the outcome of elections.”

Election Day – October 14, 2008

firstpeoplesvote.com

IN BRIEF

Court rejects casino split

TORONTO – An Ontario court has ruled that Mnijikane First Nation is not entitled to 35% of Casino Rama net revenue by virtue of being the casino’s host community. A dispute over the casino’s revenue-sharing formula was the subject of a lawsuit lodged by the Ontario First Nation Limited Partnership on behalf of the other 133 First Nations in Ontario who share casino proceeds.

Largest trade show

NIAGARA FALLS – the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC) is staging the 13th annual edition of Canada’s largest First Nation technical conference and trade show Oct. 7-9. Guest speakers include National Chief Phil Fontaine.

Photo by Rick Garrick

Carrying the Eagle Staff

Glen Hare, Deputy Grand Chief of the Anishinabek Nation talks with former Long Lake #58 chief Veronica Waboose, her husband Ervin Waboose and pow-wow organizer and Binjiitwabak Zaaging Anishinabek (Rocky Bay) councillor Mike Esquega during the Binjiitwabak Zaaging Anishinabek Pow-wow held Sept. 5-7. Deputy Grand Chief Hare accepted six summer invitations to carry the Anishinabek Nation Eagle Staff, and “let people know we are Anishinabek, always have been, always will be.”

Bryant shuffled

NIPISSING FN – First Nation leaders were surprised by a Sept. 18 provincial cabinet shuffle in which Brad Duguid replaced Michael Bryant as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Anishinabek Grand Council Chief John Beaucage said “Our office will do whatever we can to help bring him up to speed so there are no delays in the momentum that began with the creation of this ministry on the recommendation of the Ipperwash Inquiry.”
Don’t First Nation leaders also have duty to consult?

Consultation could save a lot of misinformation, frustration and disputes over First Nations. A recent situation in Wasausking First Nation is a perfect example of what happens when bands and councils don’t keep citizens fully informed about their plans.

Wasausking’s Chief and Council have been drawing up a design brief for the development of a water treatment facility. That’s a good thing. But instead of informing community members about the project to hear feedback and concerns, the process proceeded on what appears to be a “rush-hush” basis.

Two years ago, says John Rice, a member of council approached his mother, Rev. Aileen Rice, then 75, to ask permission to install a water intake pipe on her property, which is also adjacent to Town of Parry Sound property. Mr. Rice says his mother did give the initial go-ahead to the request, but did not get proper information about the project’s implications for her beachfront lot.

For example, she did not know that installation of the intake pipe would preclude any future development on the Georgian Bay waterfront property her family has lived on for several generations.

She recalls the band councillors telling her to keep knowledge about the water project to herself.

Rev. Rice, a respected Elder in the community, has willed the property to her grandchildren for their future enjoyment. Although she does not have a certificate of possession, her son John says the family’s continuous use of the property is in keeping with the community’s traditional land practices.

John Rice says the family didn’t find out about the water treatment project or council’s decision to approach his mother until last spring when the family improved the road to his mother’s property, resulting in an angry response from the band office.

He says band staff told the family in mid-August that his mother’s property was no longer under consideration for installation of an intake pipe. However, three lines were clear-cut in the bush to the beachfront while Rev. Rice was in hospital for tests.

He says surveyors ceased activity on the property after he requested that council provide a formal letter respecting his mother’s land and outlining plans for the water treatment plant.

He says Wasausking is operating with an outdated land-use policy as a result of not approving an updated plan 30 years ago.

Chief and Council formally responded to the Rice family concerns following a Sept. 2 community-council meeting, issuing a written assurance that the water treatment project will not encroach on Rev. Rice’s land, and pledging to draft a Band Council Resolution to that effect.

At press time, Wasausking council members were unavailable for comment and the Rice family were waiting for word about the status of the promised BCR.

First Nation leaders have been in the news this year for demanding that governments and corporations observe their legal obligation to consult about proposed development on traditional territories. Some Northern Ontario council members served time in jail to defend that principle.

But don’t First Nation leaders also have an obligation to consult about their own citizens and community members about their plans?

By Rick Garrick

THUNDER BAY – Steve Baranyai discovered just how important Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuw’s traditional territories are to them during his visit to the remote fly-in community.

“When you live in the city, you don’t understand what the land means when it’s your grocery store,” Baranyai says. “They need that lake, the fish and the geese. I saw how dependent they are on the land.”

The Serpent River First Nation citizen walked 2,100 km from his home in St. Catharines to Pickle Lake, the northernmost point on Ontario’s highway system, and then continued his journey on to KI by plane to give support to the K6, the community’s chief and five councillors who had been incarcerated due to contempt of court convictions for refusing to allow junior mining company Platineux to drill on their traditional territories which they derive much of their livelihood from.

“It was excellent,” Baranyai says. “We caught pike on just about every cast.”

Baranyai also witnessed the community’s excitement as they watched geese flying overhead and began preparing for hunting and fishing trips on their traditional al sturgeon fishing grounds.

“That was the big excitement,” Baranyai says. “All the geese flying up north.”

During his journey to KI, Baranyai stopped in Thunder Bay to meet the K16, who had just been released from jail a few days earlier, and to participate in a May 29 National Day of Action walk. KI Chief Donny Morris even added his signature to many others Baranyai had collected on the K1 flag he was given by the community to carry along on his journey.

Now that Baranyai is back home in St. Catharines and looking after his two-year-old son Ethan while his partner Shannon is at work, he remembers the five KI women who walked with him from Marathon to Pickle Lake and the friendly people that he met in KI.

“The community is interesting in the way that they all have their first language ... and are mostly Christian,” Baranyai says. “There isn’t anyone to teach the drum or the traditional ways.”

On his first evening in the community of about 1,350, he was invited out on the land by Edward Anderson to do some fishing and duck hunting during his week-long stay in the community of about 1,350.

“It was excellent,” Baranyai says. “We caught pike on just about every cast.”

The next few evenings.

Steve Baranyai

MILLTOWN

2x4

Meet K16, who had just been released from jail a few days earlier, and to participate in a May 29 National Day of Action walk. KI Chief Donny Morris even added his signature to many others Baranyai had collected on the K1 flag he was given by the community to carry along on his journey.

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Georgina prof on Simcoe committee

By Christine McFarlane

GEORGINA ISLAND – Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, an anthropologist and social work professor at the University of Toronto, has been appointed to a newly-formed committee that will address environmental pressures, on the Lake Simcoe watershed.

“Having our voices involved in the process will teach us all to be role models so that we can teach our children and future generations what needs to be done to protect our lakes and water,” says Wesley-Esquimaux, who sees her role being “to infuse the process with indigenous knowledge, bring the voices of the Elders in through interviewing them and getting their recollections of what the lake used to be like.”

“We need to inform those who do not live on the lake what impact their activity can have on the lake and its future.”

Earlier this year when she was approached by the province of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment about joining the Lake Simcoe Science Advisory Committee, Wesley-Esquimaux says she was happy to be a part of something that will help her community and the lake surrounding it.

“This is a chance for all First Nations people to engage with the general population and the government and have our voices heard.”

The committee was formed to address environmental pressures, identify priorities and to figure out the best course of action to preserve Lake Simcoe.

Wesley-Esquimaux identifies some of the biggest threats to Lake Simcoe as human activity, invasive species such as zebra mussels and other invaders that were introduced by fishermen as live bait, and high levels of phosphorus.

“The phosphorus come from urban and rural run-off that comes into Lake Simcoe from the rivers and streams throughout the entire watershed and too much phosphorus is an imbalance of life in the lake.”

Wesley-Esquimaux says the committee’s challenges include working together and coming up with proposals that will be tough enough to reverse environmental damage in the lake and acceptable to all Lake Simcoe users.

Contest

In conjunction with the Anishinabek News, The Moose FM Parry Sound/Timmins is pleased to announce the first annual songwriting and poetry contest winners.

1st Place ($2500 prize) – “Bird Song” by Lilablabobondung (Wasausking First Nation)

2nd Place ($1000 prize) – “Where you at yo...” by Dwayne Mapajemow (Shawanga First Nation)

3rd Place ($1000 prize) – “Dream Maker” by Charlotte Tackoney (Pic Mobert First Nation)

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Medicine program up in air

By Kathleen Imbert
WIKWEMIKONG – Hazel Fox-Recollet’s election campaign that won her the Chief’s job of the largest Anishinabek Nation community called for a return to traditional values in managing Wiky’s affairs.

Her pledge was put to the test on the day of her swearing-in ceremony, which took place concurrently to a farewell party to honour Ron Wakegijik, leaving his position as Traditional Medicine Program manager.

In 1994 Wakegijik, a six-term elected chief of Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve and descended from four generations of hereditary chiefs, was the founder of the Medicine Lodge at Nahnadhewëch Tchigehgamig (place of healing) – the first one of its kind in North America.

The Anishinabek Nation Lifetime Achievement honouree was a casualty of the First Nation’s mandatory retirement policy at age 65, and, with the community election approaching, neither band council nor clinic administration responded to Wakegijik’s proposal to continue offering his services on a part-time basis.

“If Ron Wakegijik has offered a part-time basis, I would hope that council would consider his offer,” said Chief Fox-Recollet after unseating two-term chief Robert Corbiere in August’s election. “He can be a guide to chief and council.”

Chief Fox-Recollet, 41, has a working background at the Wikwemikong Development Commission, and served as a councillor for five terms. She says her immediate priority is to outline her goals and submit a work plan for her two-year term that “builds on what is working” in community programs and services.

She says she wants to strengthen the unity of Wiky using traditional approaches such as medicine bundles for each program. “In the bundles there will be items for ceremonies to help the community come together, reflect on the past and improve for the future,” she says.

As for the future of Wiky’s traditional medicine program, the new chief says it’s more than an issue of mandatory retirement. She promises to explore “different possibilities” to continue a role that is “not like an ordinary job that you can advertise or apply to.”

–Photo by Jerome Imbert

Under the ‘E’ for Elders

An estimated 550 seniors representing 19 First Nations turned out for this summer’s Elders Picnic in Aundeck Omni Kaning on Manitoulin Island. Activities included Bingo, a Hat Parade with a pioneer theme, entertainment by the Funky Groove Dance Crew, Hardy Pettier and Mason Dixon Line. Bingo numbers were verified by Greg Sutherland and Chief Patrick Madahbee.

–Photo by Alice McLeod

Westmont double donors

Angela Johnston and some North Bay staff of Westmont Properties dropped by the Union of Ontario Indian offices in August to present the Anishinabek Nation 7th Generation Charity with a cheque for $10,000. From left: Ruth St Phard - General Manager, Best Western; Jake Lacourse - Director of Sales & Marketing, Best Western; Angela Johnston - Regional Sales Manager, North Bay & Northern Ontario, Westmont Hospitality Group; Damoni Tomatuk, Fire Chief, Moose Factory team, from left: Phil Sutherland, Damoni Tomatuk, Fire Chief Chris Alisippi, Ted Nolan, Captain Michael Delany, Eldon Cheechoo -- holding Alanna Cheechoo -- and Drake Tomatuk. Seven First Nation teams -- Garden River, Moose Factory, North Caribou, Orenda, Sagamok, Sandy Lake, Six Nations and Walpole Island -- took part in the conference and competition, which honoured the memory of the Late Rick Nolan, former Fire Chief of Garden River First Nation. A plaque naming the Garden River fire hall in Rick Nolan’s memory was unveiled by his widow Lorraine.

–Photo by Margaret Hele

Shop Industrial
4x3

Golf champ

The Union of Ontario Indians now has a gold-medalist golfer as its head receptionist.

Karen Commanda, Nipissing First Nation, took first place in women’s masters competition in this summer’s North American Indigenous Games in British Columbia.

Commanda’s duties vary from answering phone calls, taking messages, greeting visitors, providing information about staff and the UOI, keeping track of mail, faxes, packages and maintains office supplies.
My vacations always turn out to be a learning experience for me — thankfully, usually for the better.

This past summer during one of three visits to the Niagara area I discovered that the first person to survive a plunge over the mighty Horseshoe Falls was a woman — Annie Edson Taylor — a schoolteacher from Bay City, Michigan. On Oct. 24, 1901 — Annie’s 46th birthday — her first words after being picked out of her barrel were: “Nobody ought ever to do that again!”

Like most people, I am drawn to such daredevil stunts since among the riskiest thing I do these days is ride my bicycle without a pant clip.

As I stood listening to the roar of the Falls one evening, I tried to picture the largest-ever assembly of North American Indians at Niagara Falls — historians say at least 2,500 of them — that took place somewhere nearby in late July, 1764. During that summit Britain’s representatives presented wampum belts to the chiefs of the 24-nation Western Great Lakes Confederacy to seal a treaty of peace and friendship. That ceremony reinforced the previous year’s Royal Proclamation, in which the British Crown recognized that the First Peoples of North America were nations, and that they were to live “un molested in their lands.”

Then I wondered long it would have taken all the chiefs and headmen to get through the lineup at the 175-foot-high Ferry wheel that overlooks the Falls. The Anishinaabe called Niagara Falls “the crooked place,” but maybe they were referring to the two casinos that operate there.

One of my summer visits was to participate in the third annual meeting of First Nations economic development officers. Dawn Madahbee and her Waubetek Business Development Corporation crew from Birch Island played a key coordinating role in an event which attracted 150 participants from across Ontario.

The conference opened with a presentation by Whitecap Dakota First Nation, a 490-acre community located 26 km. south of Saskatoon. Whitecap is a textbook case of what First Nations can achieve when they use good governance and visionary leadership to build up a firm cultural foundation.

Leveraging partnerships with neighbouring First Nations and corporate interests, Whitecap operates the Dakota Dunes Golf Links, casino, and hotel complex that attracts 1.4 million paying customers into the community each year. Not bad for a First Nation with an on-reserve population of just 308!

The creation of an $80-million economy and 700 jobs has resulted in unemployment diving from 67% to 18% in the past 15 years. In 1993 there were 87 social assistance cases in the community; today there are 20.

In this kind of economic environment, residents don’t object to paying property taxes for their private-ownership homes.

One of my vacation highlights was a chance to sip in public near Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Browsing in the Peller Estates Winery gift shop, I decided to purchase a highly-recommended bottle of “Ice Cuvee” — they’re not allowed to call it Champagne for fear of another French Revolution. I wanted to have some idea of what it tasted like, but I’m a teetotaller.

No problem, said the polite young gentleman pouring free samples at a kiosk in the centre of the shop. He offered me a flute glass full of the chilled bubbly, and a sterling silver beaker. I swirled a mouthful, then discharged it into my shiny spittoon.

For some reason this ritual reminded me of former U.S. president Bill Clinton. He confessed to smoking marijuana; I will admit to drinking wine without swallowing any.

Speaking of politicians, most of us across North America are in the midst of one of those silly seasons we call election campaigns.

I urge you to get involved — research party platforms, pose questions to candidates, vote early and vote often!

Richard Wagamese is a citizen of the Mississaugas of Alderville First Nation. He serves as director of communications for the Union of Ontario Indians and editor of the Anishinabek News.

LIVING TO THE BEAT OF A SOUNDTRACK

Richard Wagamese

As a young man I worked a lot of manual labor jobs but there was ZZ Top, Bruce Springsteen, Van Morrison, Dusty Springfield, Elia Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday to make my nights eventful too.

Later, I found symphonic music, folk, opera and the wonderful world of instrumental jazz. I was divorced, unemployed, homeless, on welfare and scrambling for an identity through the years but the soundtrack of my life always got me through.

Now, I’m almost fifty-three. Whenever I go back down memory lane I hear the soundtrack of my life in every recollection. Music has charms to soothe the savage breast. I don’t know about that — but it’s made this one native life more livable.

Richard Wagamese is Ojibwaysin Wabasseenoong FN in Northwestern Ontario. His new novel Ragged Company and his collected memoir One Native Life are in stores now.
Grandparents need funds to raise kids

I am a 41-year-old grandmother who with my husband Peter has the honour of raising our three grandchildren. We have been raising them for almost three years for reasons beyond our control.

Betty Cornelius is the founder of CANGRANDS Kinship National Support, a national grassroots organization providing information and support to the 62,500 kinship children being raised by grandparents and other kinship family members. In 1980 Betty’s mother was beaten to her death by an ex-spouse. Betty is the mother of two grown boys, one is multi-handicapped and her older one is missing in his addictions for nearly 10 years. Betty is denied access to her first grand-daughter and for the past 11 years has been raising her second grand-daughter, who is 14.

CANGRANDS (www.cangrands.com) has two Internet support groups, plus 30 chapters across Canada. Its aim is to promote, support and assist families in maintaining or re-establishing family ties between grandchildren, grandparents and extended families and for those denied kin children.

This past July I had the opportunity to attend the organization’s 7th annual conference and camp, which was held in Sutton, Ontario. It was a week-long event where the whole family was invited. The grandparents and kin parents stayed in cabins and attended various workshops throughout the week.

We were lucky enough to have my First Nation Sponsor us for our first family trip since we became a kinship family.

During the last day of the CANGRANDS conference, we had a workshop with Betty and she got into some of the facts of First Nations children and if we had any children that were of First Nation descent that we should look into it because there was more help if the children were status Indians. She also mentioned that she was of First Nations ancestry on her grandfather’s side, he was Cree, and that she is looking into her family tree.

I am writing because we as grandparents feel that Federal and Provincial governments have left us to fend for ourselves because we love our children and grandchildren. Because we fall under the Kinship Family category, we no longer qualify for moneys that they would so willingly pay foster families hundred and sometimes thousands of dollars to raise our children. And this is what I want to do — try to get as many businesses, organizations, programs, chiefs and councils and politicians to write a letter of support for these people.

Ivy Tabobondung, Wasauksing First Nation

George Carlin on Indians

“There’s nothing wrong with the word Indian. First of all, it’s important to know that the word Indian does not derive from Columbus mistakenly believing he had reached India. India was not even called by that name in 1492; it was known as Hindustan.”

“Moreover, the word Indian comes from Columbus’s description of the people he found here. He was an Italian, and did not speak or write very good Spanish, so in his written accounts he called the Indians, “Una gente de Dios” — a people of God. In God. In Dios. Indians. It’s a perfectly noble and respectable word.”

“I’m glad the Indians have gambling casinos now. It makes me happy that disinterested white people are losing their rent money to the Indians. Maybe the Indians will get lucky and win their country back. Probably wouldn’t want it. Look at what we did to it.”

By Lynn Gehl

I was happy to read in the June edition of Anishinabek News that the Anishinabek Nation has appointed Jeanette Corbiere-Lavell as the citizenship commissioner, where her task is to facilitate the creation a citizenship law for its 42 member First Nations.

I am happy because as a non-status person I am not an official member of my grandmother’s First Nation and this process of establishing a citizenship criterion could potentially be beneficial for myself and others in the same situation.

As a non-status person, I continue to live a particular kind of exile, an exile created through processes of colonization.

The reason I am a non-status person has to do with the old Indian Act, in particular Section12 (1) (b) which enfranchised Indian women who married non-Indian men. My great-grandmother married a French man and as a result she, her husband, and her children had to leave the reserve at Golden Lake. When the Indian Act was amended in 1985, my grandmother and father were instated as status Indians.

I, though, continue to be denied because I do not know who my grandfather is or possibly was. The Registrar of Indian Affairs assumes that my grandfather was a non-Indian person and thus designates me a non-status person. Many know that I have been working for several years with Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto challenging this continued discrimination.

Although I am happy to learn that Jeanette — who has personal experience with the limitations of the Indian Act and many of its consequences — is heading up the process, and I am very happy to learn that the confines of status registration will be re-thought in the process of establishing a new citizenship code, I am concerned.

I am concerned that discussions and the decision-making process will be limited to First Nations citizens who do not have the experience of being a non-status person. I am also concerned that discussions and the decision-making process will only involve people who are currently registered with the Department of Indian Affairs. Should not people like myself be involved in the decision-making process?

While I am equally happy to learn that the goal is to achieve a consensus on this matter, I feel it is critical to understand that consensus alone does not constitute a practice of good governance and we therefore must not reduce it to that. Drawing from the Anishinabe Clan System of Governance, practices of good governance requires the establishment of a process that is balanced in terms of gender, individual skill sets, and individual power or location in the community/nation hierarchy.

In the case of establishing criteria for citizenship that operates outside of the limitations of the Indian Act, I also stress that it means involving Anishinaabe peoples who continue to be non-status and have the lived experience of the continual exile. The experiential knowledge these people hold is particularly critical to all discussions. In essence to exclude them is simply not good governance.

Lynn Gehl, Algonquin, is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Indigenous Studies program at Trent University. She can be reached at lynngehl@trentu.ca
Treaty process part of economic plan

As we know, First Nations poverty continues to be one of the major social issues for all Canadians. But there continues to be an imbalance in the rights and benefits obtained by the Treaties. For example, the Treaty right to income tax exemption is limited to those few people who are fortunate enough to live and work on-reserve. These opportunities are few and far between. Over 60 per cent of our people are forced to live and work off-reserve. The Ipperwash Inquiry brought forward a number of recommendations that highlight the need to improve relationships based on the Treaties, including calling for the establishment of a Treaty Commission in Ontario.

The Crown’s historical role in Treaty-making was one-sided and dishonourable. Further, their role in resolving land claims, historical grievances, and facilitating First Nations’ Treaty rights has made us poor and kept us poor generation after generation. This fundamental unfairness and ignorance of the Treaties must come to an end in order for First Nations to overcome poverty, establish self-sufficient economies, and thrive under self-governing Nationhood. First Nations are entitled to their historical, modern and future share of the wealth generated from the Treaties through the sharing of our traditional territories.

The Anishinabek Nation is currently working on an initiative to restore the balance in the Treaties. The Anishinabek Nation is calling for the establishment of a new, modern Treaty Implementation Process for Ontario that would include provisions enabling Resource Benefit Sharing, which would include the negotiation of an Ontario-Wide Revenue Sharing Agreement, similar to the Ontario-First Nations Gaming Agreement; this would also include negotiation of a Treaty-Based Revenue Sharing Framework.

We must look toward sovereignty, success and self-sustainability. These are the keys to true self-government and true self-determination.

In April, I had the pleasure of introducing the Anishinabek Nation Economic Blueprint, our 10-year plan to establish local and regional economies. This 10-year Economic Strategy will develop a practical and measurable “master plan” or “blueprint” for Anishinabek Nation Economic Development. Key recommendations encourage all members of the Anishinabek Nation to make economic development a priority; our communities to seek ISO Certification to demonstrate good governance; and our leaders to develop and implement our own tax policies.

Our Anishinabek Nation Economic Blueprint, and our five-point plan to establish a new, modern Treaty Implementation Process are instrumental in our overall goal to eliminate Anishinabek Nation poverty in 20 years. Building Bridges and Opportunities Conference, Timmins, June 17.

Chief Beaucage says the Anishinabek Nation is well aware of the pressures being faced by the forest industry illustrated by mill closures, job losses and dwindling profit margins. However, he says that “First Nations are poised to enable a new way of doing business in the forest industry through community-based forestry operations.”

“‘There are still many challenges to overcome, namely the sustainability of the forest sector,” said Beaucage. “These negotiations will look at new ways of doing business. The big-business monopolies of the past need to make way to enable small business and community-based opportunities.”

Forestry framework in place

UOI OFFICES – First Nations in Ontario are embarking on a new process to build their economies by negotiating a new forestry deal with the Government of Ontario.

On July 30th the Anishinabek Nation announced the establishment of Forestry Framework Agreement negotiations with the Ministry of Natural Resources that will enable their 42 member First Nations to have better access to forest allocations as well as stronger involvement in forest management planning, opportunities for economic development and capacity building.

“Our goal is to be a more active participant in the resource-based economy bysolidifying our involvement in forest industry,” said Grand Council Chief John Beaucage. “These forestry negotiations mark a significant milestone for our Anishinabek Forestry Commission and the development of a sustainable, First Nations economy.”

The concept of a Forestry Framework Agreement was the brainchild of the recently established Anishinabek Forestry Commission, which was mandated to provide recommendations to the Grand Council Chief and the 42 First Nation Chiefs of the Anishinabek Nation on all matters related to forestry policy, forest management and economic matters related to the industry. The Commission consists of First Nation representatives from each of the four regions of the Anishinabek Nation territory.

“Through this negotiation process we will ensure that we protect and implement our treaty right to the forest resources, ensure we obtain benefit in the forest industry and ensure our policy proposals and alternatives are implemented within Ontario’s forest management regime,” said Chief Commissioner Wilfred King, who is chairperson of the Anishinabek Forestry Commission.

Grand Council Chief Beaucage says the Anishinabek Nation is well aware of the pressures being faced by the forest industry illustrated by mill closures, job losses and dwindling profit margins. However, he says that “First Nations are poised to enable a new way of doing business in the forest industry through community-based forestry operations.”

“‘There are still many challenges to overcome, namely the sustainability of the forest sector,” said Beaucage. “These negotiations will look at new ways of doing business. The big-business monopolies of the past need to make way to enable small business and community-based opportunities.”

Anishinabek Chiefs to consider police protocol

By John Younnou

TORONTO – The Anishinabek Nation has taken the first step in assisting the province’s Special Investigations Unit (SIU) in fulfilling its mandate to independently investigate the actions of all police officers in Ontario.

Grand Council Chief John Beaucage has announced that the SIU’s earlier precedent-setting operational protocol with the Nishnabewa-Anki Police Service (NAPS) will be on the agenda of the Leadership Council scheduled for this fall. The protocol sets out the process by which NAPS notifies the Chief and Council of the community involved while providing for the exchange of information necessary for the SIU to conduct its investigations.

While the SIU investigates the actions of regional and municipal police officers and members of the Ontario Provincial Police that result in serious injury or death (including all allegations of sexual assault), it does not have the legislative authority to investigate First Nations Police Officers.

Commenting on his meeting earlier this year with James Cornish, Director of the SIU, Grand Chief Beaucage said: “It was an extremely productive discussion, and the beginning of a relationship I would like to continue with the Special Investigations Unit.” Director Cornish wholeheartedly agreed with those sentiments. At that session held on June 25th during the Grand Council Assembly on Whitefish River First Nation, Beaucage met with Cornish to discuss issues common to both organizations.

Joining Cornish on the trip were two SIU investigators – Dean Seymour and Denis O’Neill – both of whom act as First Nations Liaison in the SIU. They have the mandate to assist in investigations involving people of First Nations ancestry, conduct outreach for the SIU in the First Nations communities throughout Ontario and arrange for cultural sensitivity training for the members of the SIU. At the assembly, they answered questions about the role of the SIU and explained various outreach activities they have undertaken on behalf of the agency.

Both Beaucage and Cornish agreed that a “cultural exchange” would be important as a way of moving forward, together.”

Executive Director, James Cornish, enhanced mutual understanding: “I have agreed to participate in the SIU’s next training session in Mississauga,” Beaucage explained, “while Mr. O’Neill will be invited to attend our Special Fall Assembly.”

John Younnou is the Communications Manager with the Special Investigations Unit, Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General.
Lake Huron Chiefs developing own treaty commission

By Marci Becking

Over the next year, Lake Huron Treaty Commissioner Chief Isadore Day will be gathering information from Robinson-Huron Treaty First Nation citizens and Chiefs about the development of the newly-created Commission whose mandate will be to identify a meaningful way to implement the 1850 agreement in a modern context.

The Serpent River Chief sees reasons for both hope and concern in the Ipperwash Commission’s recommendation and for a single Ontario Treaty Commission.

“We need to be cautiously optimistic with this because the government has built an entire ministry that is focused on how to create effective policy and response to our concerns.” Day says treaty implementation under the auspices of Ontario’s newly-created Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs may prove to bring challenges rather than opportunities for First Nations.

“Our Treaty Commission’s primary role for the first year will be to establish a sound mandate that is based on what First Nations see as a meaningful approach to implementing the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850” says Chief Day.

The commission could offer assistance in developing treaty-based approaches to First Nations issues such as harvesting rights which can be impacted by commercial activities such as mining or forestry.

“One part of the Treaty Commission mandate could be to advocate and pressure government to honouring the Treaty ensuring that we have access to a meaningful part of resource benefits so that there is a much greater chance for success in making these processes work,” said Chief Day.

“The majority of the work that will be done in our first year will be getting out there and consulting with our citizens and we will be asking them what they see our Treaty Commission becoming. I’m sure our citizens don’t want the mandates. We have to make our own decisions and put forth our own ideas and discussions. It is critical that we not be pulled into an Ontario Treaty Commission that is based on government policy solely dealing with unresolved specific land claims.”

“We need to have a very specific process that complements and gives strength to the work that the Union of Ontario Indians has done such as Restoration of Jurisdiction, the Anishinabek Economic Blueprint, Matrimonial Real Property law, and Citizenship Law.

On May 15-16 Lake Huron Region Chiefs met and passed a resolution to draft a Lake Huron Treaty Commission Framework, and on June 25 the Anishinabek Chiefs-in-Assembly supported the Lake Huron Region Treaty Commission by unanimously passing resolution 2008/13 Chief Isadore Day Winzdawtegwinnim, was named its first commissioner. Chief Day has been given a one-year mandate to report on progress to the next Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly.

Kerry new coordinator

Longtime journalist Kerry Asisnie was named the Union of Ontario Indians staff as Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator for the Intergovernmental Affairs department.

The Anishinabek-kwe from Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve will use her extensive communications experiences to coordinate Anishinabek relations and working partnerships with various levels of government.

Asisnie has studied print journalism at Sudbury’s Cambrian College and went on to work as reporter/anchor for CTV affiliate stations in Sudbury and Kitchener. She has also been a freelance writer for Spirit Magazine, Ontario Birchbark, Northern Life and the Anishinabek News.

Most recently, she served one year as a national director of public education and communications in the Ottawa office of the National Centre for First Nations Governance.
Washing plates helps

By Kathleen Imbert

WIKWEMIKONG – The Taking Care of Mother Earth – Naagdaawenmaak Shkakamigmama – booth at the entrance of the 48th annual Cultural event in Wikwemikong welcomed visitors to the pow-wow grounds over the August Civic Holiday weekend.

In planning her display, Heidi Manitowabi demonstrated that she had taken her Keeper of Mother Earth teachings to heart.

Instead of using disposable – and environmentally unfriendly – styrofoam containers for Indian tacos and other pow-wow delicacies, booth patrons paid a $2 deposit for blue plates which were returned at the end of the day for washing by a group of youth volunteers. The deposits were also returned.

Heidi is the Lands Environmental Research Trainee in Wikwemikong and is active in promoting environmental awareness. “We can all do our part to reduce waste” she said.

Casino Rama funding was invested in the plates, environmentally-friendly products, and posters to help give this year’s cultural event a cutting edge environmental look, and a new voice to youth trying to cope with consumerism’s by-products.

Heidi’s goal was to raise awareness about waste production and protect our environment and she reminded hominy corn soup lovers that we can all do a little to protect Mother Earth.

Heidi has already organized an Earth Day Pow-wow and erected a billboard at the entrance of her First Nation. Her diverse projects have included creating community environmental groups that encourage recycling and composting and recruiting volunteers to assist.

The Wikwemikong Heritage Organization also believes in her projects and supported her Naagdaawenmaak Shkagamigamama booth.

In September, Heidi will be attending Fleming College in Lindsay in her first year of the three-year program in Natural Resources and Environmental Studies.

Her diploma will be another step on her journey to live as a “Keeper of Mother Earth.”

Youth committed to water

By Kelly Crawford

WHITEFISH RIVER FN – Anishinabek Youth Council Southwest Regional Representatives expressed their commitment to water at the Anishinabek Traditional Water Retreat that was held June 20th at Rainbow Lodge.

“Water is an important issue. Youth recognize the importance of the environment,” said Sandra Albert (Chippewa of the Thames), Anishinabek Youth Council Southwest Regional Female Representative. She is confident that Anishinabek youth have the environment as a priority. “Youth want to get involved.”

Albert’s purpose as a youth Council Representative is clear, “To help motivate the youth and strengthen their voice. It is always good to be involved and invited to share ideas.”

Arnold Norman Yellowman (Aamjiwanaang First Nation) is the Anishinabek Youth Council Southwest Regional Male Representative. He noted the importance of learning and understanding, “Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council just held a Youth Symposium on the environment. This enabled youth to get a better understanding of issues and concerns in their First Nation.”

Leadership Forum discusses treaty intent

By Arnya Assance

Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, Deputy Grand Council Chief Glen Hare, Minister of Natural Resources, the Hon. Donna Cansfield, as well as the four Anishinabek Nation Regional Grand Chiefs met on August 27 to discuss common issues related to natural resources within the Anishinabek Nation and the Province of Ontario.

The Regional Chiefs presented a number of proposal briefs to Minister Cansfield and her senior staff responsible for specific program areas. A common theme among the proposals is how to ensure the Spirit and Intent of the Treaties are upheld, as the Rights-Based and Policy issues are separated.

- Lands Conference – to consult with Anishinabek communities with respect to impacting case law, public lands dispossession, and other land related issues.

- Inter Territorial Harvest Gathering – four-day forum to discuss harvesting, gathering, fishing and enforcement issues.

- Water Forum – to ensure that Traditional Knowledge encompasses water resource awareness.

- Forest Tenure Conference – to ensure Anishinabek communities have the opportunity for access to forest economic ventures.

The day began with a sacred pipe, and a traditional opening prayer asking the Creator to watch over deliberations designed to ensure resources-based livelihoods for Anishinabek citizens.

The Leadership Forum sanctioned by the Letter of Intent, creates an opportunity for Anishinabek Leadership to discuss natural resource issues with the MNR. This annual engagement is built on a partnership of a durable long-standing relationship that has opened doors and opportunities for both the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Anishinabek Nation.
Anishinabek commercial fisheries highlighting challenges facing Id the new day and the participants.

Presentations included: Building Capacity Through Education for Resource Management, Community Based Fish Habitat Assessments, Community Fisheries in the Maritimes, Community Based Harvest in the Mackenzie Delta, Northwest Territories, Native Fisheries Management in P.E.I., Social Identity in Kwakwaka’wakw Clam Harvest, Elders, Fish Harvester, Chiefs and community members from across the North Shore of Lake Huron also met at Keteguanzeebee on April 18 and 19, 2007 to discuss and frame the vision of the Anishinabek North Channel Fisheries Authority.

This project will engage the Robinson-Huron First Nations in the process of developing a Fisheries Authority Model for the North Channel of Lake Huron, including the necessary related instruments such as policies, guidelines and laws, and the model for a central administrative/coordination unit. This project will serve as a basis for the Anishinabek to improve their environmental governance and decision-making capacities and to more actively engage in the management of the North Channel fisheries.
Main points in the draft final Governance Agreement

The current negotiations with Canada on basic governance issues fit with the overall strategic direction set by the Chiefs Committee on Governance (CCoG) to achieve comprehensive self-government. For example, some goals and initiatives set-out by the CCoG that are directly related to items being discussed at the governance negotiation table are:

- Anishinabek Nation synchronized election processes
- An Anishinabek nation-level government
- First Nation and Anishinabek Nation constitutions
- Regional and Anishinabek Nation appeals and redress systems
- Anishinabek Nation citizenship law

The following is a brief review of the main points in the draft, final Anishinabek Nation Agreement with Respect to Governance.

The draft Final Agreement on Governance discusses sections 8-14 and sections 74-80 of the Indian Act. These sections deal with matters such as Band Councils, notice of Band lists, inquiries, protests, and Chief and Band Council elections.

For those First Nations that eventually ratify the draft Anishinabek Nation Final Agreement on Governance, sections 8-14 and sections 74-80 of the Indian Act would no longer apply. Instead, Canada would recognize Anishinabek law-making powers over leadership selection, language and culture, citizenship, and management and operations of government.

Among other items, a Final Agreement on Governance would provide for:

- The establishment and recognition of two levels of government - one at the First Nation level and one at the Anishinabek Nation government level;
- Law-making powers for First Nations and the Anishinabek Nation to preserve, promote and develop the use of Anishinabek culture and language;
- Law-making powers for First Nations and the Anishinabek Nation to select their leaders;
- Law-making powers for First Nations to determine its citizenship;
- Law-making powers for First Nations and the Anishinabek Nation with respect to the management and operation of our governments;
- The development of constitutions at both the First Nation level and the Anishinabek Nation government level;
- The application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to each Participating First Nation Government and the Anishinabek Nation Government;

The Anishinabek Nation Final Agreement on Governance will not limit or take away any Aboriginal or treaty rights of our First Nations. Further, this agreement is not intended to be an interpretation of our inherent right of self-government. The fiduciary relationship between Canada and the First Nations will continue and the First Nations must agree to any change to the fiduciary obligations of Canada.

The Framework Agreement on Governance was signed November 26, 1998 and the Agreement-in-Principle on Governance was signed February 16, 2007. The AIP on Governance guides the negotiation of the draft final agreement. The AIP on Governance was not legally binding when voted on and accepted by the Anishinaabe people in community referenda.

Capacity Development Workshops 2008/2009

- September 24 & 25, 2008 – Magnetawan First Nation
  Drafting Membership Codes
  Tel: (705) 497-9127 Fax: (705) 497-9135 Toll Free: (877) 702-5200 E-mail: rester@anishinabek.ca
  Deadline for submissions is 4:00 p.m. Friday October 3, 2008

- October 29 & 30, 2008 – tentatively Kettle & Stony Point First Nation
  Drafting Membership Codes
  Tel: (519) 882-3351 Fax: (519) 882-3352 Toll Free: (877) 702-5200 E-mail: rester@anishinabek.ca
  Deadline for submissions is 4:00 p.m. Friday November 14, 2008

- November 25 & 26, 2008 – tentatively Garden River First Nation
  Drafting Membership Codes
  Tel: (705) 497-9127 Fax: (705) 497-9135 Toll Free: (877) 702-5200 E-mail: rester@anishinabek.ca
  Deadline for submissions is 4:00 p.m. Friday December 5, 2008

For more information contact:
Terry Restoule
Capacity Development Coordinator
Union of Ontario Indians
P. O. Box 751,
North Bay ON P1B 8J8
Phone: (705) 497-9127 Ext: 2270
Fax: (705) 497-9135
Email: rester@anishinabek.ca

Conference and Workshop Notice

Call For Proposals
2008-09 Capacity Development Workshop Facilitators
Anishinabek Nation Restoration Of Jurisdiction
Capacity Development Project
The Union of Ontario Indians is seeking a Facilitator for one workshop entitled Contracting and Tendering. The workshop will be presented at a conference being planned for February 24, 25, 26, 2009 in Sault Ste. Marie Ont.
The facilitator will deliver the 1½ day workshop twice during the three day conference. Workshop Facilitator Proposal submissions must include the following information: Facilitator biography, Workshop Title and Detailed Agenda, Workshop content, including resource material, equipment requirements i.e. laptop computer, power point projector, TV, flip charts, etc. Total cost of facilitation of workshop.
Deadline for submissions is 4:00 p.m. Friday October 3, 2008
Please send your submissions, attn: Terry Restoule, Capacity Development Coordinator to: Union of Ontario Indians, P.O. Box 711, North Bay, Ontario P1B 8J8

Restoration of Jurisdiction upcoming events
Governance Negotiations, Aundeck Omni Kaning, Oct. 21-22
Governance Negotiations, Toronto, Nov. 26-27
Anishinabek-Canada Governance and Education Joint Tables Meeting, Toronto, Nov. 28
The Chiefs Committee on Governance tabled its report at the June 2008 Grand Council Assembly on the implementation of a strategic plan to achieve comprehensive self-government. The report highlights governance, citizenship, economic development, and communications initiatives that will move the Anishinabek Nation toward its self-government goals. The plan’s acceptance was solemnized by a pipe ceremony to seal the Anishinabek First Nations’ solidarity and commitment to the vision, initiatives, and timelines outlined in the plan.

1. Governance
   2. Citizenship
   3. Economic and Community Development
   4. Communications

Our plan represents a common vision and a strategic approach to implement our inherent right of self-government. We can no longer accept the regulation of our inherent rights and our lives by flawed government policy. This new approach to regain Anishinabek Nation comprehensive self-government efficiency must include a new, sustainable approach to fiscal relations.

In our consultations with leaders and citizens over the past several years, Anishinabek were very clear on this one point: our governments must be adequately funded through revenue-sharing, transfer payments and equalization payments in the same manner as provincial and territorial governments.

We are embarking on a solution-based approach and the solutions to our problems must come from us. No First Nation can effect the needed changes on its own. Unless we work together toward our common goals and vision, this plan will be ineffective. We must focus and commit to our plan and our timelines. Responsibility falls on each First Nation to implement the required initial changes.

All Anishinabek communities are encouraged to strive and prepare for change. We must help one another. Those who can lead in all communities that have the capacity to move forward more quickly must continue to set the example.

Let us mark the beginning of fundamental changes in our Nation. As we move forward together, remember, we are not Indians. We are Anishinabek.

Message from Chief Madahbee, Chair, Chiefs Committee on Governance

Over the past two years, the Chiefs Committee on Governance has developed a strategic plan called A Course of Action – A Critical Path. Central to the plan was the identification of four priority areas in which we need to move ahead on now:

1. Governance
2. Citizenship
3. Economic and Community Development
4. Communications

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Message from R. Martin Bayer, Chief Negotiator

It is of fundamental importance that we understand the linkages between good First Nation governance and gradual improvements to the socio-economic conditions that define our communities.

The populations of our First Nation communities, particularly the on-reserve populations, are growing faster than any other population segment in Canada. In January 2008, Statistics Canada reported that between 1996 and 2006, First Nations population increased by 29%. Our population is also much younger than the non-Native population. Children and youth aged 24 and under make up almost one-half of First Nations people.

Between 1996 and 2006, the Non-Registered population of First Nations people increased 53%, more than twice the growth rate (24%) of the registered (status) population. These growth patterns may be in part related to provisions of the Indian Act governing the transmission of registered Indian status to children. In Ontario, the province with the largest number of First Nations people, 70% lived off-reserve.

What Are the Governance Implications of this Growth?

(a) Economic Development and Job Creation Must be the Number One Priority

Our young people need access to education, housing, and jobs, or they will continue to leave the reserve in record numbers. The national unemployment rate is 6.1% versus 25% and higher for many of our communities. These disparities will not change for the better by relying on more government funding; the challenge will be to create and attract jobs that do not depend on government funding.

(b) Better Housing Conditions

Housing shortages and repairs to existing houses continue to be a challenge. The other important challenge in housing is to note the linkage between the construction of new homes and ensuring that the family living in the new home has decent employment and the financial ability to meet a mortgage payment.

(c) Better Community Infrastructure

Having proper water treatment plants and sewer treatment systems in our communities is an important health consideration and an important variable in attracting investment. We need to find creative ways of building and financing water treatment plants and sewer treatment systems in our communities in order to attract investment and meet the demands of population growth.

(d) Expect Better Results for Education Dollars

With the amount of money our communities spend on education, our children and students should expect much better results than what we have achieved to date. The population increases and the increases particularly in the youth population will place greater pressures on already tight education budgets. Our challenge is to take greater control of education so we can achieve better education results.

(e) Improved Health Care

Far too many of our citizens suffer from three main illnesses: diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Mental health also continues to be a major illness that strains health care budgets. With the recognition of our own law-making powers in education, we could enact educational laws that improve health such as mandatory physical education and banning pop machines and other harmful foods in schools.

The challenge is to create better living conditions so our band members enjoy longer and healthier lives. Economic development is an integral component of this strategy.

Four factors have proven to make a difference in turning things around:

1. Our own recognized law-making powers.
2. Having the capacity to pass and enforce our own laws makes a huge difference for communities. The alternative is to constantly react to and attempt to live under other government’s laws with no real opportunity to shape these laws. We will determine our future and make laws that meet our needs.
3. Effective and stable governing institutions. In order to create a better climate for business relationships and attracting business, we need more stable and effective governing institutions. This means four things:
   - Stability and certainty in the “rules of the game”, election rules should be stable;
   - Management decisions should be separated from political decisions;
   - Effective dispute resolution tribunals; and
   - Well-trained staff.

Effective and objective dispute resolution tribunals contribute greatly to a business’s decision to locate and invest on reserve, yet few of our communities have effective dispute resolution tribunals in place.

3. Governing institutions that match our culture and people.

We need to build governing institutions like First Nation community constitutions, election laws, and dispute resolution tribunals that match our culture. This way, our people and businesses will trust them and are more likely to do business with us.


The development of a long term strategic plan (20-30 year plans) contributes significantly to improving conditions in our communities. A strategic plan needs to be very specific, yet realistic. Without a long term strategic plan, we are forced to rely on other governments to plan for us. “Self-government” means just that: we decide what we would like our communities to look like in 30 years. If other governments can help with the implementation with their laws and programs, that’s great, but we won’t wait around.
Citizens’ involvement key to Michipicoten land claim success

The community of Michipicoten First Nation recently completed a land claims process that involved a number of claims and three different chiefs.

“A lot of the process started with Chief Sam Stone,” says current Chief Joe Buckell, noting that the chief elected between him and Stone continued the process when he was elected chief, he also continued the process. “This is my third term. The whole process took about nine years with the research.”

On Jan. 12, the community of about 700 on and off-reserve citizens voted 97 per cent in favour of their largest land claims settlement, the Boundary Claim with Canada and Ontario, with 499 members casting ballots. Buckell and the band council then passed a resolution authorizing the signing of the settlement agreement.

Michipicoten originally submitted the specific land claim in 2000 to Canada and Ontario that the Gros Cap Indian Reserve #49 as surveyed in 1899 did not reflect the 1853 agreement regarding the boundary of the reserve. Canada accepted the claim for negotiation in late 2003 and Ontario agreed to enter discussions in early 2005.

“It’s been a long process,” Buckell says. “Originally we had 12 claims.” The First Nation followed a cooperative non-confrontational approach to settling the land claims through the Michipicoten Pilot Project, which realized the settlement of six of their claims in about 10 years, including the Algoma Claims Settlement between Canada and Michipicoten in 2003.

“We got away from the adversarial approach,” Buckell says, noting that the band’s negotiating team included their lawyer, a researcher, two band councillors, one on a regular basis and another rotated among the other band councillors, and himself. “It took the political will to go ahead and get it done. Our community is a little different than most; only 70 people live on our reserve. Any important decisions that we made were brought to meetings here on the reserve and in Sault Ste. Marie.

The First Nation also held meetings in Chapleau and Toronto and other communities which have significant numbers of citizens.

“We tried to cast a wide net to get people involved.” Buckell says, noting that the vast majority of the community voted during the ratification vote and only eight of those voted against the settlement. “It was a vote of confidence — they were pleased with our work.”

William Swanson Sr., a councillor for the past four terms, is pleased with the progress Michipicoten has made during his four terms on council.

“It was a long going,” Swanson says. “Now we have the Boundary Claim settled, which involves all the land that was taken away from the people here at Michipicoten.”

The Boundary Claim settlement includes financial compensation from Canada and the addition of about 3,000 acres of provincial crown land, for a total of about $58.8 million.

The community plans to establish a trust fund from the settlement to provide ongoing benefits for band members over the next 100 years.

“We were looking for some seed money to kick start some of the development plans that have been sitting on the back burner,” Buckell says. “One is a run-of-river power generating station.”

Other possible plans include the development of the moss-agate deposit in the community and another look at wind power development.

While the community currently enjoys zero unemployment due to agreements with local industry such as a nearby gold mine to employ band members, the band is looking at developments which will keep the community’s quality of life at its current level.

“We have everyone working at good paying jobs — they’re buying trucks and snowmobiles,” Buckell says. “It’s really a change to have a good quality of life. I think that’s the key to everything.”

Buckell is currently looking into a few other initiatives to “help us on our road to sustainability.”

Swanson adds that the community is also planning to look into the development of a subdivision on land near Hwy. 17.

“A lot of our band members live elsewhere,” Swanson says. “A lot of them want to come back.”

Pikwakanagan enforces laws for sustainable harvesting

The Algonquins of Pikwakanagan have developed their own harvesting law to ensure a sustainable hunt for the future.

“This law has worked excellently since it was first put into force,” says Jim Meness, band councillor and past member of the Algonquin Wolf Advisory Group. “The first law was established in conjunction with the first hunting agreement that was signed between the Algonquins and the province of Ontario.”

The Algonquins philosophy states that they are the caretakers of the creatures and plant life on Mother Earth, and that it is their responsibility to maintain a healthy balance between mankind and nature.

“By monitoring, managing and enforcing our Laws and Management Plans we can ensure that the conservation and sustainability of the moose, deer and other wildlife populations will be maintained for our future generations,” Meness says. “The goal is so we will have a set of rules in place so we will have this harvest for the next seven generations.”

In order to enforce their laws, the band hires enforcement officers during the main harvest season, from the fall to the following spring.

“We try to hire First Nations people to enforce our law,” Meness says. “For the past two years we hired two enforcement officers from September to March. The majority of our hunt is from Thanksgiving to Jan. 15.”

The community has also partnered with neighbouring communities and the Ministry of Natural Resources to develop a stewardship program for the walleye population in Golden Lake and implemented a five-year closure of the fisheries from 2002 to 2006. During this closure, re-stocking efforts were done in the lake and the Algonquins developed a Walleye Management Plan for the re-opening of the fisheries.

The Algonquins of Pikwakanagan Earthwalkers Stewardship Ranger Team, a small group of youth from the community and the local area, was developed as part of the stewardship program with the goal of giving youth an opportunity to work together during an eight-week program on community-based projects while also providing them with work experience, education, and training in the natural resources sector.

In addition to keeping the youth busy over the summer, the Earthwalkers program also developed an interest among two of the team members of potential career opportunities in the natural environment fields.

The community also has a section in their law that prohibits the hunting of the Algonquin wolf, which research has discovered is a distinct species closely-related to the red wolf.

“We did a workshop on the Algonquin wolf,” Meness says. “It has some genes that are unique.”

Meness adds that the Algonquin wolf is important because it is a part of the ecosystem of the park and should remain part of the park.

“There are no natural predators in the park,” he says. “Man is the only predator.”

Algonquin Law states that “No Algonquin shall injure or kill any fauna that is protected under the Ontario Endangered Species Act.”

Algonquin belief also holds that the hunting of wildlife species shall be limited to game normally taken for food and shall exclude rare, threatened and endangered species as well as wolves and loons.

The community has also developed a Harvest Management Plan for the Mustard Deer Hunt in and around Algonquin Provincial Park.

Meness says the moose harvest has been managed exceptionally well, with the Algonquins working in conjunction with the MNR in order to agree on the sustainable population of moose that can be harvested for the season.

A tagging system has also been developed for the harvest and a monitoring program is in place to ensure no over-harvesting of moose occurs.
Anishinabek Governance

**Anishinabek Governance**

**Aundeck Omni Kaning Gchi Naaknigewin (Constitution)**

Aundeck Omni Kaning has been developing its own Constitution over the past two years in order to assert jurisdiction and empower its citizenship.

“IT'S home for me there,” he says. “There's a lot of things we can do there.”

Chief Patrick Madahbee says. “We want to be proactive, rather than reactive.”

Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinabek is happy about the development of their own custom election code.

“We have a modern election code,” says Chief Paul Gladu. “We've done an extensive process.”

The community began their election code process about seven years ago through the formation of an election code committee, which was made up of Chief and Council and a group of six community members, and Elder and Youth committees.

“The community voted to stick with the Chief and Council,” Behm says.

While the community chose to keep its Chief and Council election format, changes to the Constitution laws have been suggested, such as a change in the Custom Election code to be more inclusive by giving off-reserve citizens an opportunity to participate, a change in the Membership Code to conform to modern laws, and a change in the Matrimonial Real Property law to include people in same-sex relationships.

It’s better that we develop our own laws rather than someone force something upon us,” Madahbee says. “We want to be proactive on these issues.”

“It only stands to reason,” he says. “There is also a fair appeal process if people don’t agree with the election process,” Borsyewicz says.

Once the draft election code was completed, it was then sent to the Elders and Youth committees to review.

“It was a pretty important decision,” Jessica Stewardson, also a former youth committee member says. “It showed us that our opinions did matter.”

After it was reviewed by both committees, the draft election code was brought to the attention of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Fred Bellefeuille, legal counsel of the Union of Ontario Indians.

When the election code was finalized, it was brought before the community membership for ratification.

The ratification process took about eight to 12 months, employing the same process Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinabek used on their very detailed Land and Larger Land Base ratification, and involved:

• notifying community members about the new election code through an advertisement in the Band Newsletter;
• searching for all member’s postal addresses;
• mailing out ballots to all known members.

The new election code process was implemented after the community vote, and the first election under the code was held in 2005, with Chief Paul Gladu and Councillors Leona Clarke and Laura Airns being elected for the first four-year term.

Elder Esquega is pleased with the new election code, noting that he first inquired about moving back to Sand Point in 1968 and is looking forward to the final signing of the land this coming year.

“It’s home for me there,” he says. “There’s a lot of things we can do there.”

Chief Gladu adds that there are now 11 Union of Ontario First Nation communities with four-year election terms.

“In the near future, I would like to see all 42 First Nations within the Union of Ontario Indians and the Grand Council Chief have their elections held at the same time,” Gladu says.

“This is one of the initiatives we are all working towards right now.”

Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinabek Chief Paul Gladu and artist Benjamin Morisseau pose in front of one of Morisseau's paintings in the Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinabek office in Thunder Bay.
Kettle and Stoney Point’s constitution and ISO process

Kettle and Stoney Point has rebuilt most of its organizational structure, beginning in 1999 when Tom Bressette again became Chief after a stint with the Chiefs of Ontario.

“He was concerned when he returned,” says Lorraine George, the First Nation’s manager. “We were on the verge of third-party management.”

The restructuring was so successful that Bressette was recognized with an award for the vision that he and council carried out to bring financial stability to the community of about 2,000 on and off-reserve citizens.

“We started by identifying some of the areas of weaknesses,” George says. “Although there were fiscal policies in place, they weren’t consistent with accountability.”

So the community worked to build a governance model focused on financial and human resource development, with a strong focus on accountability.

The community first implemented an immediate freeze on discretionary spending and salary adjustments and developed long-term sustainable strategies, such as an analysis of the benefits of in-house legal counsel versus contracting on an as-needed basis.

“There are budget controls now,” George says. “Money can’t be spent without tracking it.”

The community then amalgamated the roads, water and waste management departments to establish cost efficiencies in 2002; created the Financial Management Bylaw in 2003, a framework for self-governance that allowed the community to focus on community needs for services and infrastructure, economic development and social harmony, rather than simply following funding criteria; and established a new human resources policy, also in 2003.

“We haven’t had a labour dispute payout in five years,” George says. “Everybody is treated fairly. We’re labour code compliant.”

The council also mandated restructuring of its businesses and corporations in 2003, and applied to Canada Customs and Revenue Agency for an Advance Tax Ruling, which eventually lead to an exemption from corporate tax for the band and its on and off-reserve businesses.

In 2005, the band signed on to the First Nations Lands Management Act; they began planning the development of a business park on a piece of land which the band purchased about 20 years ago, which was recently added to the reserve through the Addition to Reserve process; and they began developing a Community Constitution, which is scheduled for a vote in June.

“The main benefit is that we excel,” says Laura Owl, acting director for planning and technical services. “And (we provide) quality service and exceptional management to our membership.”

Sagamok Anishnawbek was awarded the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) designation on July 13, 2007 after three years of fine-tuning their quality management system, with every department within the community taking part, including the band office, school, health services and planning and technical services. They were just the second Indigenous community in the world to achieve the ISO designation, a standard which is held by many of the top companies in the world.

“We’re trying to make a better quality of life for everyone in Sagamok Anishnawbek,” says Anna Marie Abitong, director of education and a band councillor, explaining that achieving the ISO designation level required the school to ensure that its policies and procedures were in place, that students and parents were being provided with the services they need, and the community’s needs were being met. “It’s just a way of being accountable to this community and the wider community. You say what you do, and do what you say.”

When Sagamok Anishnawbek began their 10-year healing and community development plan in 2003, part of their goal was to achieve ISO designation as part of the community’s governance initiative and development strategy.

“Our council wanted to have a quality management system in place for our administration,” Owl says, noting that the community of about 2,400 on and off-reserve citizens had to work on improving their existing standards in order to meet ISO designation standards. “We improved on our standards each year. Our goal was to make a commitment to quality of service and management.”

ISO is an international standard-setting body composed of representatives from the national standards institutes of most of the countries in the world. Founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1947, the organization promotes world-wide industrial and commercial standards.

“We didn’t take standards from ISO,” Owl says, explaining that ISO does not impose standards on the community.

The community developed all of its own policies, standards and processes to improve its services and management, which were then looked at by the Quality Management Institute and approved as meeting the best of international standards. To maintain its standing, Sagamok Anishnawbek has committed to undertaking an annual internal audit during the month of June every year.

“We have annual work plans,” Owl says, noting that each department identifies their own objectives and timelines. “Which are measured on a quarterly basis and indicate a department’s performance.”

Owl adds that although the community didn’t understand at first how they would benefit from the ISO designation, they have now come to realize that striving for the ISO designation has improved overall service to the community.

“They are in their second year and they seem genuinely satisfied,” Owl says. “They have enhanced services.”

Owl also sees the development of business opportunities in the future for Sagamok Anishnawbek.

“I see Sagamok Anishnawbek creating a lot of partnerships with companies,” Owl says. “Through standardization, the community can optimize our operations and make us more attractive to businesses around the world.”
Respected Anishinabek Nation Elder and longtime Aamjiwnaang chief Ray Rogers passed into the Spirit World Tuesday, Aug. 26. He was 74.

Surrounded by his family members – including Carolyn, his wife of 50 years – Ray had battled various illnesses in the past few years, including complications from diabetes.

At the time of his passing, Ray was the Southwest Regional Elder for the Anishinabek Nation. He had served on the Anishinabek Nation Leadership Council and Union of Ontario Indians board of directors for many years, holding portfolios for health, social services, finance and veterans affairs. In 2001, he was a recipient of the Anishinabek Nation Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ray served in France, Germany, and North Africa with the 50th Fighter/Bomber Wing of the U.S. Air Force, and as President of the First Nations Veterans of Canada Association, he contributed greatly to a heightened awareness about the contribution and sacrifice of First Nations Veterans. He participated in Canadian delegations overseas paying tribute to fallen comrades, and devoted a considerable amount of time and effort in the planning and promotion of the first-ever Spiritual Journey of Aboriginal Veterans, Elders and youth to the battlefields of Europe.

“He was a knowledgeable and passionate spokesperson on Veterans issues,” said Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief John Beaucage. “We will miss his wise counsel and warm smile.”

Ray was a current member of Aamjiwnaang First Nation council, a position he held for 40 years, including 16 years as Chief.

The life of William Ray Rogers –“Niijikiwnzii” (The One I Walk The Earth With) - was celebrated at the Maawn Doosh Gumig, Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

Ray Martin, founding co-chair of the Anishinabek Nation Economic Blueprint process, passed into the Spirit World, Monday, Aug. 25 following a battle with cancer. He was 56.

A citizen of Nayashiingaming (Cape Croker), he resided with his wife Janice in Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

Ray worked with the Anishinabek Nation in a number of capacities over the years. He served as chairperson for a number of recent Grand Council Assemblies. During the 1980s he served as the Executive Director of the Union of Ontario Indians, a position he also held with the Southern First Nations Secretariat.

Ray had been manager of the Indian Hills Golf Club at Kettle and Stony Point, and a supporter of the Ted Nolan Foundation.

Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief John Beaucage said “Ray exemplified the teaching of humility as an outstanding behind-the-scenes leader who was sometimes reluctant to take credit where credit is due. He lived his life with a smile on his face, no matter the adversity. He was a true friend to everyone who knew him.”

Interment in Aamjiwnaang Cemetery.
Walkers raise FASD awareness

*By Patricia Migwans*

M’CHIGEENG FN – The community’s Early Childhood Development Program used their feet to raise awareness about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD).

On Sept. 9, designated as FASD day, the program coordinated a 12 km walk-a-thon from Mindemoya Red Cross Hospital to the M’Chigeeng Community Complex. Six M’Chigeeng residents who started the walk were joined by four students from Lakeview School and two M’Chigeeng Health Centre staff.

Out walker, born with FASD, completed the walk from Lakeview School.

The most inspired walker was Ricky Joseph Karac Debassige, 23, diagnosed as Globally Developmentally Delayed. Ricky completed the entire 12km to the delight of his mother Francine, and sister Grace – a health centre staff member – who accompanied her brother on his first walk-a-thon.

During a presentation at Lakeview School, only two of 49 students in Grades 6-8 had ever heard of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and participated in a contest to produce an essay and poster. Jazmyne Antoine’s essay earned her a new iPod, and Chelsea Antoine won a digital camera for her poster design.

We had hoped for more encouragement by teachers for student participation in the contest and the walk-a-thon.

Putting out information regarding FASD is a challenge. Some people mistake its effects for Attention Deficit Disorder, and many of our children and community members do not know what Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder is. The Early Childhood Development program distributes information and encourages all community members to attend our workshops.

Our program wants to say Chi-Migwetch to the walkers and people who supported them with pledges totalling $174.31, as well as the UCCM Police and Little Current OPP detachment for ensuring the highway safety of the walkers. Thanks also to the M’Chigeeng Family Resource – Healthy Lifestyles department and Noojimowin Teg Health Services – New Beginnings program.

Patricia Migwans is facilitator for the Early Childhood Development program at M’Chigeeng First Nation Health Centre.
Professor searches for her otter roots

By Kelly Crawford

M’CHIGEENG FN – Darlene Johnston is a law professor at the University of Toronto who has spent the past 15 years trying to determine the meaning of an otter drawn beside her great-grandfather’s signature.

“When people drew these marks … what were they trying to represent?” Prof. Johnston asked participants in an Aug. 21 presentation at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation about her historical, cultural and legal research of the Anishinaabe clan system.

“My grandmother never told me she was Chippewa; she told me she was Otter,” said Johnston, originally from Neyaashiingaming (Cape Croker First Nation). On this basis Johnston was determined to prove that her people were on the land before European contact.

“I started with what my grandmother told me and what was available to the public,” she recalled. After finding the picture of an otter next to her great-grandfather’s name and his given English name the connection began to unfold. “Was that his otter? We need to understand what they meant when they put a picture.”

Johnston is confident she will be able to prove that her ancestors were pre-Contact “Nikikouek” – otter people.

During the 1870s was the last time someone drew an otter in my community,” she says.

Noting that the French were the first Europeans to reach Georgian Bay, she says the biggest mistake researchers can make is relying on printed material in English. She seeks out documents handwritten in French, such as Jesuit letters. That’s where she found references that say “this is what these people call themselves.”

“Lots of families do not know their dodems, she said, inviting participants to examine signatures of chiefs on treaties, which were usually made side-by-side with dodems.

“When you know who you are and where you come from then you know what your responsibilities are,” said Johnston, who served as a land claims researcher for the Chippewas of Nawash, and presented a research paper on Aboriginal Burial and other Sacred Sites during the Ipperwash Inquiry.

Professor Johnstone’s first book will be published by UBC Press this spring.

Art camp grads now teachers

WHITFISH RIVER FN – Students aged 11-15 took part in the five-day Anishinaabe Summer Art Camp offered by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation at the pow-wow grounds in Sunshine Alley Aug. 18-22.

“The plan was to get five students from the three different areas – the North Shore, Manitoulin Island, and the Highway 69 corridor,” said coordinator Alan Corbiere. “This is a chance for people with common interests to make lifetime friendships.”

This is the second year for the camp, which in the 1970s and 80s attracted such fledgling artists as Leland Bell. “The alumni are now teaching the younger ones,” said Corbiere, whose program included a trip to Bell’s gallery in Wikwemikong.

Other activities included workshops on printmaking with Ahmoo Angeconeb, sketching and painting with Mark Seabrook, Anishinaabe storytelling with Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, a performance of “The Gift” by De-ba-jeh-mu-jig theatre group, a hike up Dreamer’s Rock, canoeing, swimming, and fitness in the sun. Each morning began with a traditional ceremony.

Algoma Chrysler

6x6

Halford Hides

4 x 4.5
Sister became parent

By Kelly Crawford

NORTH BAY – Sarah Blackwell, originally from Aundeck Omni Kaning, is committed to offering continuous support to her entire family.

Blackwell has taken care of two of her sisters while raising her own family. She was the legal guardian to one sister and fostered the other. “It doesn’t matter that I am her sister; we have a parent-child relationship. That was and continues to be the most challenging thing to parent her. I am not her sister; I am her parent.”

Most recently Blackwell and partner Fred Bellefeuille fostered her younger sister. They were required to go through the foster care program as her sister was a Crown ward at the time. Sarah describes the process as stressful and intrusive.

“It was very hard on me and on everyone in my family. We were very respectful to the process and went along with everything that we had to do. I can see how some families would just give up, even if it was for family.”

“The process that we went through is not culturally-appropriate,” says Blackwell.

At the age of 19 Sarah quickly became “big sister” to six younger siblings.

At the age of 23 when she was moving to Toronto for a job, Sarah agreed to her mother’s request to take her eight-year-old sister with her.

Sarah says the support and connection with her First Nation has been essential.

“I found that even though we live off-reserve I still feel that they are very supportive. We have that communication. It is important that the community, the chiefs, the counsellors, and whoever is involved at the band are aware of family members that are living with siblings, aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas. Those families need a lot of support. These families are the ones that are keeping our kids out of care and that’s critical.”

Foster home now open

By Nikki Jo Mattinas

PIKWAKANAGAN – The Algonquins of Pikwakanagan celebrated the Aug.12 grand opening of Kokomis Gamik “Grandmother’s House” with prayers and drumming.

Provincial approval came two years after completion of the building, and seven years after the community launched plans to provide a foster care home base.

“It’s a wonderful lodge, beautiful home, now that the children are living in the house, it is now a home,” says Heather Green, a foster mother who began accepting clients in the centre in June. “I am very blessed that I can do this work, my goal in life is to give back to people so they can heal healthy.”

Hilda Tennisco of Pikwakanagan Child and Family Services estimates that five percent of Anishinabe children live in foster care, “which is why it is mandatory to keep children within our community. We believe that the best people to ensure Anishinabe children receive care that respects their cultural and spiritual differences would be Anishinabe people.”

Recent grad gets new job

Ahnee, Adrienne Pelletier, ndizhinikaaz.

I am a citizen of Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve. I am very honoured to be hired as the Union of Ontario Indians new Social Services Director. I am also proud to announce that I have recently graduated from Nipissing University acquiring my Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Welfare. Perseverance is always a good thing and the rewards are great when you accomplish your goals.

My work will focus on providing advocacy, consultation, and representation on policy issues with the respective ministry for our member first nations. My focus will be Social issues including, but not limited to, Child Welfare, FN Welfare Administration, Early Childhood Education, Family Violence, Poverty, Disabilities, Community Development and Social Housing.

I believe that it is important to support our Anishinabe brothers and sisters when life gets difficult, it’s important to help one another. We all have the potential to achieve great things and I chose this field of work to help those who need some support, whether it is help with mental health issues, child welfare, child care, sexual abuse, addictions, or assistance for those with disabilities. The first step to healing is asking for the help! There are programs in many of our communities, our family members, friends and elders to help us heal and become stronger families, communities and a strong Anishinabe Nation.

I can be reached by calling 1-877-702-5200 ext.2335 or by email at: adrienne.pelletier@anishinabek.ca

Nogojiwanon Friendship Center
The job interview

Nokiiwin nda-kendimigowin

Shirley Williams

A manager had the task of hiring someone to fill a job opening. After sorting through a stack of resumes he found four people who were equally qualified. He decided to call the four in and ask them only one question. Their answer would determine which of them would get the job.


They came and as the fourth sat around the conference room table, the interviewer asked, “What is the first thing you know of?”


Acknowledging the first man on his right, the man replied, “A thought. Itjust pops into your head. There’s no warning.”


“That’s very good!” replied the interviewer. “And, now you sir,” he said to the second man.


“Hmmm...let me think. A blink! It comes and goes and you don’t know that it ever happened. A blink is the fastest thing I know of.”

“Himmm... Nga-ke nni naagigiee/’endam! Jiibingeewtai! Biyaamigad miinwaa nii-iiaamig miinwaa gii-giizhendee gii-giizhewak. Jiibingeewtai mi wii memoonji giizhiimagak e-kendi-maa.”

“Excellent!” said the interviewer. “The blink of an eye is a very popular cliche for speed” He then turned to the third man, who was contemplating his reply.

“Nishii!” kido sa aw e-giigoozidw. “Jiibingeewtai shki-zhooj gii memoonji shiigeeidagak kidang gii-giizhi-kaagik.”

“Well, out at my dad’s ranch, you step out of the house and on the wall there’s a light switch. When you flip that switch, way out across the pasture the light on the barn comes on in less than an instant. “Yep, turning on a light is the fastest thing I can think of!”


Old Bubba replied, “After hearing the previous three answers, it’s obvious to me that the fastest thing known is diarrhea.”

Gekhaan Bubba gii-skweetam. “Shkkwaa nnoondima nii nwi nkwee-dakwennanan, iw genii memoonji giizhiibidg ekendimaa, miiw jiiaa-baakziiwin.

“Ooh sure”, said Bubba. “You see, the other day I wasn’t feeling so good. And I ran for the bathroom, but before I could think, blink, or turn on the light, I had already crapped my pants!”


Children like language ‘sponges’

By Rick Garrick

By Rick Garrick

SAGAMOK FN – Nelson Toulouse is concerned about the state of Ontario’s 13 First Nation languages. “Lumängeew is in trouble,” says the chief commissioner of the Anishnaabemowin, Mushkegowoowin and Onkwehonwena Language Commission of Ontario (AMO) as he describes his deep concerns about the future of the Delaware language. “There are only four Elders who still speak fluently in the Lunaa-pew eew language. One of those Elders is 89 years old.”

While Toulouse and the 11 other AMO commissioners from all across Ontario are trying to raise awareness among each community on the future of their language, he said, “In the fly-in communities across the north the language is still pretty strong.”

“Every time we spoke the language we would be hit with a ruler or Bible,” says Toulouse, an Ojibwe language instructor with the York Region District School Board and Lakehead University’s Native Language Instructors Program (NLIP). “Back then, that’s when I realized that our language was important and that we can’t lose it. Both my parents went to residential school, but they chose to keep the language and bring us up in the language.”

Toulouse has since earned a degree in English in the playground. Now it’s the opposite – now you don’t hear any Anishnaabemowin.

Toulouse is looking at the path the Maori in New Zealand have followed to regain their language fluency after failing to a low of five per cent of the population who were still fluent about 20 years ago. “Their story is very inspiring,” Toulouse says. “Within a 20 year period they managed to change that around – 60 per cent are now fluent. Their philosophy is that you have to be as fluent in Maori as you are in English.”

Toulouse explains that the Mao-ri brought about change by focusing on the Maori language in their educational institutions so that stu-dents are now able earn degrees up to a PhD while studying in their own language. The Maori also hold lexiconology conferences each year to decide on which new words will be used for recent technological and scientific discoveries, with about 500 words being developed each year on average.

Toulouse wants to focus on en-couraging the Maori strategy of be-ing as fluent in the language as in English among the younger children with some support for their parents. “They are like little sponges,” Toulouse says. “They pick up the language pretty fast. Their parents also need support because their chil-dren don’t have anyone to talk to in the language.

Toulouse also sees a need for community language planning, for which the AMO is developing a community language template that will allow each community to implement their own unique ideas.

The former chief of Sagamok Anishnawbeek west of Sudbury, and deposition chief of the AMO for the Anishnabek Nation says that he and his gen-eration are among the last people to be brought up in the language first with English as a second language.

“Our foundation is Anishi-nabemowin,” Toulouse says. “We still think in Anishnaabemowin.”

The AMO, which is based at an office in Six Nations and located at www.amoelo.ca on the web, is incor-porated as a non-profit charitable organization in 2007 and is now actively fundraising to support lan-guage strategies.

“We want to raise money and not have to rely on grants,” Tou-louse says.

Language did get him somewhere

By Rick Garrick

THUNDER BAY – Although Isa-bi Toulouse was told in residential school that his Anishinaabek language would get him nowhere, his language skills have actually taken him around the world.

“Every time we spoke the lan-guage we would be hit with a ruler or Bible,” says Toulouse, an Ojibwe language instructor with the York Re-gion District School Board and Lakehead University’s Native Language Instructors Program (NLIP). “Back then, that’s when I realized that our language was important and that we can’t lose it. Both my parents went to residential school, but they chose to keep the language and bring us up in the language.”

Toulouse has since earned a de-gree at Trent University and plans to work on a book in-progress on the beach in Hawaii, visit with friends in the small community of Pi’e da la Questa near Acapulco, Mexico, and present his research on Indigenous languages at the World Indigenous People’s Conference on Education in Melbourne, Australia later this year after finishing the NLIP this summer.

“My goal is to promote the lan-guage, to keep it alive, and bring about more flourishment among the speakers,” Toulouse says.

In addition to teaching Ojibwe and researching indigenous lan-guages, Toulouse has also produced Kilowenan, an Ojibwe language in-truction book and tape, and served as an organizer of the annual Anish-naabemowin Teg Anishnabek la- nguage conferences and as a translator at Union of Ontario Indian confer-ences and assemblies.

During an evening gathering of NLIP students and instructors at Lakehead University’s Bora Larkin Building, Toulouse and translator colleague Shirley Williams laughed about some of the funny incidents that have occurred during their trans-
Aboriginal Ontario
www.aboriginalontario.com
Open for Business
A Special Report on Economic Development

Custom coffins works of art

By Denise Desormeaux
MOUNT BRYDGES – Two Feathers Coffins & Caskets pledges to honour the lives of deceased First Nations people in a culturally-appropriate and artistic way.

“What these are is a tribute from a family, to their loved ones,” explains Norman Partridge, of Waasaunking First Nation, who handpaints and wood burns designs in coffins and caskets sold by Jen and Pat Gray-Findley of Muncey Road from their newly-opened business located just off Chippewas of the Thames territory. “We are really celebrating someone’s life.”

Created from a choice of pine, spruce, maple, birch, hickory, or elm, the signature coffins and caskets are designed to represent those lives being honoured, as they complete their earthly journey.

The unique, hand-painted and upholstered coffins and caskets are designed to symbolize a person’s individuality. “It makes me feel good knowing that somebody is being buried surrounded by something in regards to their history, culture, and background,” says Partridge.

The environmentally-friendly coffins and caskets are made from fully bio-degradable materials, non-toxic paint, and have all-cotton linings. The one-of-a-kind pieces range in price from $1,000 to $3,000.

“We got tired of seeing everyone we knew buried in the blue box called lambskins,” says owner Jen Gray-Findley, who officially launched the business with husband Pat on July 19. “There the cheapest ones start at $1,500.

Hand-decorated coffins decorated with clan symbols range in price from $1,000 to $3,000. The highest-priced lead-lined ones run about $20,000. They are mass-produced in a factory and are very impersonal.”

In honour of Jen Gray-Findley’s Six Nations ancestry and Pat Gray-Findley’s Anishinabe roots, they decided to use their products to pay tribute to the clans and symbols of their clients.

The Gray-Findleys say they will accommodate anyone’s financial needs and offer free delivery within a 50km radius. Their shop just down the road from Nimkée Nupigawaagan Healing Centre is open by appointment, and the owners have already added new product lines – cedar feather boxes, cedar regalia boxes, urns, handmade wooden caskets (made out of cane), and eco-pods – shaped similar to a bob-sled, or kayak and made out of recycled pressed paper.

Custom-made coffins or caskets can be completed in 48 hours. For more information, contact www.twofeathersxplornet.com, or (519) 933-6922.

Long Lake women win mentoring

TORONTO – Two women from Long Lake #58 First Nation were among the First Nation entrepreneurs chosen to participate in this year’s Project Beysick.

Art gallery owner Louise Thomas and community educator Keri Lynn Cheechoo participated in the summer mentoring program which provides job-shadowing opportunities with mentors in the Toronto business community.

During August, participants gained culture-based business skills, training and mentorship in partnership with faculty, First Nations Elders and MBA students from Trent University Indigenous Studies Program, Ryerson University, Students for Free Enterprise (SIFE), Dale Carnegie Training and Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

Practical business skills training from First Nations and mainstream perspectives is followed by job shadowing and mentorship in the public and private sectors of Toronto with senior level executives.

Algonquins continue birch bark tradition

By Rick Garrick
PIKWAKANAGAN – Jacqueline Sarazin and her sons Greg, Tom and Henry renewed their family birch bark canoe-building tradition this summer.

“We come from a long line of birch bark canoe builders,” says Greg Sarazin, a citizen of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan. “We’re looking to continue those traditions. We all built birch bark canoes with our father over the years.”

Greg believes his father Stanley, who passed away two years ago, produced well over 50 birch bark canoes after building his first in 1957, and his grandfather Daniel Sarazin likely produced even more, although the family does not have any records.

The Sarazins were contacted by Omaminiwinin Pimadjiwowin to work on the project, which is the first phase of a partnership between the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan and Parks Canada that aims to engage Canadians in the rich Aboriginal history of the Rideau waterway and to revitalize, regenerate, enhance and protect the cultural traditions, customs practices and heritage of the Algonquin Nation.

“For this particular project, we recounted everything our father taught us, from collecting birch bark to collecting cedar,” Sarazin says. “We created all the elements to build the birch bark canoe.”

The Sarazins began working on the canoe building project – which also involves the production of a video detailing the construction of the canoe for Parks Canada and a number of interpretive events on the Rideau Canal to promote the project – in early June and are scheduled to be finished by Sept. 20.

“It’s pretty close to being completed now,” Sarazin said in early September. “This year was not an ideal year for peeling birch bark.”

Sarazin explains that four days of sunny weather are required to get enough sap running between the inner and outer layers of the birch bark so the bark will peel easily.

“It wasn’t until July that we got two or three sunny days together to peel the bark,” Sarazin says.

The Sarazins also had to travel over 100 miles to find birch trees that had enough good bark for a canoe.

Anyone interested in having a canoe built can contact Sarazin, who notes that the last canoe his father built sold for $8,000 five years ago.
Talking to kids about sex

There is a lot of concern by parents about when, where and how to talk to their children -- not just about sex -- but also about respect for their bodies.

Many of them tell me they are concerned that if they waited too long (into the teens) to talk about sex, it might be too late. They also worried about the influence of the media on their children’s sexual well-being.

I thought about providing some statistics about pregnancy and STD’s but after some research I realized that the concern for a child’s sexual health needs to deal with more than possible negative consequences.

We actually start teaching our children about sex and sexuality when they are toddlers. We discuss body parts, the differences between boys and girls and even differences between children and adults. We pass on our sexual beliefs and values when we talk and don’t talk to them about love, sex, relationships, babies and religion.

There are many excellent resources available online, at the library and through your local health centres/units that can help parents address how to discuss sex and sexuality with their children, but let me offer some ideas:

Be open. If you are uncomfortable your children will be uncomfortable. Do some research and have reliable information available in your home.

Make sure information is age-appropriate. Too much information or information they can’t understand might scare children away from asking questions.

Don’t rush things; set aside time to talk.

Know and set your boundaries. Only share what you are comfortable sharing when it comes to your sexual health and relationships.

If you don’t know, don’t make it up. Set aside time for you and your child to find the correct information together.

Ask for help from a family member, friend or professional if you need support.

Your children should know about safe sex – it can save their lives.

Holly Broadhagen, Dokis First Nation, holds a Masters of Social Work degree. Questions or comments can be directed to her by e-mail at askholly@gmail.com.

‘There’s a big cup of coffee on my screen!’

By Christian Hebert

“Christian – there’s a big cup of coffee on my screen!”

“That’s your Java application, Mom.”

So it began.

About six months ago, I gave my mother my old laptop – formatted and loaded with basic software. I even threw in a printer.

There was one condition: if there was a problem, I would NOT solve it over the phone. That might sound selfish; but it was to maintain some degree of sanity. If you’ve ever tried to guide someone through the process of connecting a VCR or a DVD player over the phone, and the person is not, shall we say, technically savvy, you know what I’m talking about.

I think it’s great that people from my parents’ generation tackle the new technology. It takes a bit of courage to adapt from micro-fiche to Microsoft. For those grasping at a keyboard for the first time, it can be a little overwhelming.

“Christian – how do I send an e-mail?”

“Mom, it’s like writing a letter – you need an address.”

There are other concerns about the new technology. During the Nipissing pow-wow I heard some Elders talking about a possible new computer purchase. They were more worried about the possibility of someone walking off with their expensive new equipment than about learning how to use it. Remember, they are of a generation that believed if you spent a thousand dollars on a machine, it better have wheels, seats and a motor!

“Christian – how do I get on Martha Stewart’s website? Her show says she has a blob on there.”

“A blob? Oh Mom! You mean a BLOG!”

For someone logging on for the first time, the Internet is like winning the lottery, with Google’s search engine providing free tickets to a wonderful new world of free information. In her first week alone, my Mom signed up for as many contests as she could find, was recognized as a frequent listener by her favourite radio station and gets her daily weather reports e-mailed to her.

But to be fair, she’s also in touch with a lot of family members through e-mail, can research information on her own about topics she’s interested in and is starting to be more comfortable using her computer to navigate hyperspace with some degree of confidence.

Among Mom’s rewards is receiving “personalized” messages from Martha Stewart herself, memos that begin: “Dear Friend”. You’ve come a long way, baby.

Christian Hebert, citizen of Dokis First Nation, lives with his partner and their son in Sturgeon Falls. His mother will most likely be calling him – instead of e-mailing him – about this article.
**IN BRIEF**

PHOENIX, Ariz – Top American Indian and First Nation hoop dancers from the United States and Canada are set to compete for the prestigious title of world champion during a weekend of competition at the Heard Museum on Saturday and Sunday, February 7 & 8, 2009.

Dancing hoops

North Bay Mayor Vic Fedeli, Anishinabek Nation Deputy Grand Council Chief Glen Hare, Chief Marianna Couchie’s great-niece Katie Closs, West Nipissing Mayor Joanne Savage and Callander Mayor Hector Lavigne listen to Nipissing First Nation Chief Marianna Couchie address the crowd at Nipissing First Nation’s 20th Anniversary Traditional Pow-wow.

- Photo by Priscilla Goulais

Nipissing celebrates 20th pow-wow

By Marc Becking

NIPISSING FIRST NATION – Goki Majii Nishinaabendaa – Return to the Language – was the theme of Nipissing First Nation’s 20th anniversary traditional pow-wow held Aug. 30 & 31 at the Jocko Point Tradition-al Grounds. Over 3,000 people attended the pow-wow, which has become one of the largest cultural events in the area.

“The community has always felt that it was important to honour the language carriers,” says Bob Goulais, the pow-wow’s master of ceremonies. “The leadership have supported the efforts of our Elders and language programs in Nipissing. This is a theme that is important to all our people.”

The pow-wow provided an opportunity for Nipissing to honour long-time educator Muriel Sawyer for her efforts over 30 years to revitalize Anishinaabemowin – the Ojibway language. “Muriel was integral in establishing a language program within the local school board,” says Goulais. “She has been a language teach-er at Our Lady of Sorrows and at the Nbisiing Education Centre where she also served as Principal and Vice-Principal. Today, we have a number of certified language teachers who have established various language programs over the years.”

During the pow-wow, it was announced that a “Native-as-a-second-language” program will be offered at Canadore College this fall.

One of the pow-wow highlights was Laura Liberty “coming out” with her jingle dress. A dream of dancing in a jingle dress became reality after Liberty was diagnosed with breast cancer. Friend and co-worker Laurie McLeod-Shabogesic helped create the traditional healing regalia.

“Laurie and I sewed the jingle dress at the end of May,” says Liberty. “It weighs eight pounds and has 390 jingles on it. I hung it in the teaching lodge on the life pole for four days at Midewiwin ceremonies in Bad River, Wisconsin.”

Liberty completed the dress’s ornate bead-work during the course of her chemotherapy treatments.

“My dress and beadwork is covered with strawberries,” she says, “the only thing I ate during my yucky chemo days. I sewed up until the night before the pow-wow.”

McLeod-Shabogesic received the 390 jingles by donation from a woman in Michi-gan and sold them for two dollars each to de-fray the cost of making the dress. Messages and prayers to Liberty were attached to the jingles.

“I placed all the prayers in a bag and danced out with them,” says Liberty. “I had five requests to dance for other breast cancer survivors. I also danced for Mary Switzer who is still continuing her cancer battle. She was so encouraging to me during my treatment.

“Five years ago I had a dream that I was dancing in a jingle dress that was forest green. In the dream women were encouraging me to dance the double diagonal. I didn’t recognize their faces and I didn’t quite know what that meant until now,” says Liberty. “The double diagonal describes the first dance I did at the pow-wow. Both feet travelling on a diagonal across the grass! They call it the ‘side step’ at pow-wows and I don’t remember seeing it used at a dancer’s coming out before. So I was really surprised when the drum called for it.”

**Pow-wows empower urban Native**

By Christine McFarlane

TORONTO – Pow-wows give people who are not familiar with First Nations cultures a chance to see how rich they are, and can empower those who grew up outside of their culture a chance to connect with it.

Pow-wows are empowering for me; they give me a sense of belonging to something that I felt was lost. As a child, I grew up without knowing my culture, traditions or language because I was adopted into a Caucasian family and was not allowed to experience anything that was remotely attached to my identity as a First Nations person.

In growing up without my culture, and never knowing my reserve or what it is like to live on a reserve, I have essentially become an urban native. What I have had to learn about my culture has come through my studies at the University of Toronto and the services and events that are offered in the city of Toronto.

My journey into learning about my culture began when I walked through the doors of the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto to five years ago. I volunteered every week and was surrounded by people who immediately helped me feel at ease by their willingness to teach me what they knew. They helped me to not feel afraid if I did not understand a teaching or protocol around an event.

In going to a pow-wow I love the sound of the drums, the images of those who dance and I feel a strong sense of community that brings a sense of pride that is hard to explain. When a pow-wow is held in the city, it does a great service for those First Nations who have only known the city.
Cwichan games represented over 125,000 volunteer hours

By Steve Carey
Times-Colonist

DUNCAN, B.C. – The closing ceremonies of the 2008 North American Indigenous Games held awards, entertainment and a few tears as members of 23 competing teams said goodbye to the community that had been their home for a sunny August week.

Held at the Quw’utsun Centre grounds in Duncan, the 2008 games played host to 5,000 athletes and an estimated 5,000 spectators a day between Aug. 3 to 10. It was also the first games hosted by a First Nation – Cowichan – rather than a city, and an event four years in the making.

“This is the largest international multi-sport games delivered in Canada on an ongoing basis,” said Rick Brant, the chief executive officer of the Cowichan 2008 event. “We have almost 10,000 participants between sports and culture.”

Christine Bruno and her family chief Lydia Hwitsum introduced the Cowichan Tzingauw dancers, who performed several dances. One speaker from Wisconsin remarked that the Duncan population was down three people because he’d stashed his three favourite volunteers in his suitcase to help with the 2011 games, to be held in Milwaukee.

The end of the event marked the beginning of the spontaneous hugs and handshakes between everyone involved. After two straight weeks of work, the 50 staff and more than 2,000 volunteers -- who worked a total of 125,000 hours -- are looking forward to some sleep, Brant said, but also toward something greater.

“In terms of social legacy,” he said, “the next question is ‘What is this community going to do now that we’ve created these positive relationships across cultures?’”

Hockey camp for ‘girlz’

By Pamela Naponse-Corbire

WHITEFISH LAKE FN – “Skills, Culture and Confidence” was the theme of the first annual Aboriginal Girlz Hockey Camp July 18-20 in Atikmeksheng Anishnawbe, formerly known as Whitefish Lake First Nation with the support and assistance of the community.

Eleven girls ages 10-15 came together for a weekend of culture, hockey and health, participating in dryland training, camping, on-ice training, and sharing circles with elders.

Serene Porter from Six Nations talked about goal-setting and Elder Julie Oswagwagosh shared teachings about respecting themselves as young women.

Chuck Petahkogeese and Serene’s partner Aaron served as on-ice instructors.

Bus driver Jeff Naponse, chef Dolores Naponse, camp coordinators Pam Naponse-Corbire, Lisa Naponse, and Paula Naponse all volunteered their time to the camp.

Sponsors included Andy’s Convenience, R&J Fuels, Lakeview Variety, Community Credit Union, Whitefish Lake First Nation, Battistellis YIG, Skaters Edge, and Northway Bus Lines.

Feast contributors were Brenda Nebenionquit, Lisa Wabejigijj, Sharon Wabejigijj, Julia Pegahmagabow, James Bob and Jennifer Smith.

Lester Mianskum on cue

By Alice McLeod and Marci Becking

NORTH BAY – Lester Mianskum recently returned from Las Vegas with championship trophy in hand after competing in the Annual Can-Am Snooker Challenge.

“Confidence is the key,” says Mianskum, the Moose Factory First Nation pool shark who picked up his first cue in 1977. “My mind is one hundred percent positive I will make that shot.”

Mianskum’s pool-playing prowess often takes him away from wife Samantha of Nipissing First Nation and three-year-old daughter Georgia.

“I make every effort to stay on top of my game, but that keeps me away from my family,” says Lester. “It’s a vicious circle. Bottom line is I have to put food on the table.”

Mianskum wears glasses, not contact lenses. “It’s not a fashion show; I really don’t care how I look; it’s how I play my game,” he says, but sometimes appearances do count.

“I also own a tuxedo,” Mianskum notes. “Each league has its own dress code.”

Mianskum says snooker’s small pockets on a nine-by-twelve-foot table make it “a tough game to pick up.” That’s why lounges and bars offer their customers more of the smaller six-by-eight-foot tables with larger pockets for playing 8 or 9-Ball.

Anisa O’Nabigon, 14, Long Lac #58, was on Ontario’s silver-medal 4x400 relay team that clocked a time of 5:20.64. She also participated in the 400m, 800m, shot put and cross-country.

Erinn Baptiste, Algonquins of Pikwakanagan, competed in 100 m, 200m, 400m, 1500m, 4x100m, cross-country, and the 4x400 relay event where she and Team Ontario teammates won bronze with a time of 6:05.68.

Sheila Madahbee, Wikwemikong, won the gold medal in the Senior Women’s Bowhunter Open and husband Raymond Madahbee, Shaguanian FN, took the silver medal in Senior Men’s Bowhunter Fingers.

Bruce Marsden, 41, Beausoleil First Nation competed in senior categories, winning bronze medals in discus – 23.96 metres – javelin – 34.67 metres – and shot put – 10.07 metres. He also competed in the 4x100 and the 4x400 team relays.

Theresa Cass, 12, Beausoleil First Nation, was a member of Team Ontario’s silver-medal 4x400 relay team that clocked a time of 5:20.64. She also participated in the 400m, 800m, 1500m, shot put and cross-country.
By Stephanie Matchiwita

DUNCAN, B.C.– On a sunny August 3, the opening ceremonies got under way for over 4,500 athletes participating in the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG).

It started with the parade of nations, all of the athletes and cultural participants walking through the downtown streets of Duncan being cheered on by the community, family and friends of the athletes. This was followed by welcoming messages from Chief Lydia Hwitsum from nearby Cowichan First Nation, various dignitaries and national anthems by Carey and Marion Newman. There were performances by Swil Kantin, Red Power Squad, M’Girl, Karen Commanda represented Nipissing First Nation and won gold in Senior Women’s golf at the Cowichan Golf and Country Club. “The course had tight fairways and very quick greens,” says Commanda.

The weather was a big factor with temperatures close to 35 Celsius each day. I was so happy we started at 9:00 A.M. and were off the course before it got way too hot.

Commanda says that golf runs in her family. “My dad, Edward Commanda, was a caddy at the French River Golf Course in the early 60s. I started to golf when I was pregnant with my first son and broke 100 with his help about six weeks before he was born.” This was Commanda’s fourth time competing at NAIG – her first time winning Gold.

My personal journey brought me to NAIG on a last-minute basis since I missed the opportunity to compete at the preliminaries in Thunder Bay last summer. I accepted an e-mail invitation from Team Ontario and, after working through a muscle strain in my thigh, was off to Victoria on a redeye for my first NAIG! I was fortunate enough to receive generous funding from family members for flight and accommodations.

One of the biggest surprises was how friendly everyone was regardless of how they placed. Everyone was there for one another.

I ran with a woman in the 1500 metres who had a baby only three months earlier and it was such an inspiration to see her finish the race. I was blessed enough to have a guardian angel guide me to my victories, a coach by the name of Rodney who gave me pointers before and after each race about how to improve my technique. It wasn’t until my last day there that I realized that he was a coach for Team Alberta!

I placed first in the 400-metre dash, five seconds separating myself and the runner up. The following day I was one tenth of a second behind winner Katrina Lee from Team Arizona in the 1500-metre final, and received my medal from federal NDP leader Jack Layton.

Running is very much a mental sport and I made the mistake of reading Katrina’s profile, learning that she had won the last three Arizona State runs. “Rodney” realized this and told me before my final 800-metre run that I was going to win gold. With that tenth of a second in my mind, the next day I beat Katrina by two seconds in the 800 final. Without Rodney’s guidance, I wouldn’t have been able to prove him right!

In the end, Team Ontario’s athletic team walked away with 79 medals, 23 gold, 30 silver and 26 bronze and I am proud to say that I was able to contribute two gold and three silver.
Native studies summer school

By Sharon Weatherall

MIDLAND – At 38 years of age Cathie Williams never dreamed she would be back in a classroom.

The Midland resident is one of nine aboriginal women who were on a mission this summer to improve their quality of life through taking Native Studies and Native Language courses. Having an opportunity to achieve her Grade 12 means many different things for Williams.

“When I had the opportunity to come here I was very excited. I wanted to attend to show my six children that it doesn’t matter how old you are to finish school. My oldest two don’t have Grade 12 so I hope they will see me as a role model,” she says.

“The Native Studies course is interesting and I am having fun learning at the same time. The work is hard but my self-esteem will go up as well as my courage to look after issues that have been a barrier in the past. In the end I hope to get a half decent job.”

The special summer program is funded through OFIFC-GREAT Initiative (O-GI) with a special partnership involving the Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA), the Georgian Bay Native Women’s Association (GBNWA) and The Simcoe-Muskoka District Catholic School Board (SDCSB) which funds the teachers.

The Native Studies and Native Language courses – each four weeks in length – were hosted at St. Theresa Catholic High School in Midland. They are worth two full credits and give Native studies students credits toward their Grade 12 diploma. Babies of the women a better understanding of their own culture. Participants range from early 20’s to late 40’s and come from a variety of backgrounds. Added benefits include a free babysitting service and transportation which has made it much easier for them.

Native Studies teacher Denise DeCourcy said each of the women has different needs.

“Many of them have been through Adult Learning Centres but were unsuccessful in achieving their Grade 12 diploma so this is program is another means for them to reach that goal,” said DeCourcy.

Native Studies course rekindled Michelle Stoyko’s interest in her native culture and background. Having dropped out of school to have her first child, the single mother of three stayed home with her babies for the first few years. Now that they are older she says it’s time to get on with her life.

“I am finding the course very interesting. I have been to native ceremonies and know many of the traditions and so this course is helping me to learn the background of how we lost those things and the importance of it coming back to the people,” says the 24-year-old.

“For our youth and young adults the teachings are like an awakening and they are eager to bring them back. I am teaching it to my own young ones because it is who they are and something to be proud of.”

Stoyko hopes to continue her education this fall through on-line courses.

“Through the e-learning program everyone goes at their own pace and at their own level. I would be interested in continuing my schooling this way because having my Grade 12 will enable me to get a better job to support my kids,” said Stoyko.

According to Annemarie Sanford at the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre (GBNFC) the summer courses followed a spring “Building Your Bridges to Success” workshop for Native women.

“These courses are phase two of that workshop and they came about very quickly. Many of the women who attended have moved on to upgrading. This is the first time this type of program in partnership with the GBNWA and the ONWA,” said Sanford.

“The program has been so successful that application has been made to O-GI for more funding so similar courses can be offered throughout the year.”

Gloria King of Beausoleil First Nation taught the August Native Language course – a program worth one high school credit for which babysitting and transportation are also supplied. Both summer courses have been geared to assist the women (most of whom are young mothers) making it easier for them to achieve credits.
MASINAIGAN/BOOKS

CHRISTIAN’S READING ROOM

Chicken soup for Anishinaabe souls

By Christian Hebert

When I first heard that Richard Wagamese was releasing a compendium of his many articles written over the years, I was very excited. While I’ve only had the pleasure of reading his pieces from the past two years, I greatly enjoy Richard’s work; his words are as earthy as the land which is so very dear to him.

His sense of humour also appeals to me and I haven’t read any of Wagamese’s articles published monthly in the Anishinabek News without cracking a smile. After reading through “One Native Life”, I’m happy to report my anticipation was justified.

The collection is divided into tales associated with Earth, Fire, Water and the Universe and Wagamese’s alluring prose captures the reader’s imagination from the first page. He pulls no punches and conceals little in his stories.

“Stories are meant to heal”, he says, and there is much healing of body, mind and spirit to be found here. Ojibway from Wabassemooming First Nation in Northwest Ontario, Wagamese lived in a foster home as a child and later struggled with the demons of addiction. He has faced and conquered many obstacles in his journey toward self-recognition and peace, obstacles that plague our people today. Richard’s accounts give hope as well as healing.

‘Rabbit’ gets rave review

By Christian Hebert

The Rabbit and Bear Paws graphic novels by Chad Solomon – excerpts of which appear each month in the Anishinabek News – have received glowing reviews from the U.S. book review blogger Mama Sparkles.

“I recently had the pleasure of reading volume two of The Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws: The Voyagers by Chad Solomon and Christopher Meyer. Their latest graphic novel follows the hilarious misadventures of Ojibwa brothers Rabbit and Bear Paws as they embark on an all important journey. This time they get to experience what it’s like to be a Voyageur, by helping to transport Furs from Lake of the Woods to Montreal.

“I thoroughly enjoyed the witty characters and lightheartedness of the book. I was also impressed with how much material is packed into this 32-page volume. It’s suspenseful, educational, fun, inspirational and introduces eight year old Joseph Brant (who will later become Chief of the Mohawks.)

“I absolutely love how each book is based on the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers. These teachings are basic principles to use as a guide to how to live your life.”

KTEI Education job posting

6x6

Carmix

4x4.5
Advocates for Master’s program

By Kelly Crawford

SUDBURY – “I always planned on coming home and doing the work that needs to be done,” says Agnes Kanasawe, Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve.

Kanasawe graduated from the Native Human Services Bachelor of Social Work Program at Laurentian University in 2003, but had to travel to Toronto to pursue her Master’s.

Kanasawe is a strong supporter of the creation of a Masters program within Laurentian’s School of Native Human Services. “It would be great…awesome,” she explains. “Right now I am working in a mainstream organization and I am the only Native worker in my specific field.” She currently works in Sault Ste Marie as the Aboriginal Sexual Assault Crisis Counsellor for the entire Algoma District.

Celebrating 20 years

By Kelly Crawford


“We have 196 grads and this program is a direct result of determination,” says Sharon Corbiere-Johnston, who served as chair of the reunion committee. She credited Lisa Demers of Laurentian’s Alumni Relations office for assisting in coordination.

Guest speakers for the reunion included alumnae Marian Jacko, Carol Hopkins, and Minnijean Brown Trickey.

The Native Human Service began as a Native Social Work Project that involved the Robinson-Huron First Nation communities, the Laurentian University School of Social Work and the University of Sudbury’s Department of Native Studies.

Graduate committed to service

By Kelly Crawford

SUDBURY – Michelle Lavoie says Laurentian University’s Native Human Services program is an ideal option for students looking to give back to their First Nation communities.

“There are so many different options and doors that it opens for you…it is just incredible,” says Lavoie, a recent program graduate whose family roots are in Dokis First Nation. “If you do not know what you want to do but you want to help people then this is probably the best choice.

“My ultimate goal was policing, so I wanted something that I could start off with and/or fall back on later which is Social Work, and I wanted to have the Native aspect because of our community. I thought I knew about the history and a lot of things that happened until my first year. I was shocked. But it made me want to learn more and keep going.”

Lavoie is committed to back to her community. “I am currently working at a homeless shelter for girls,” she says. “I have been trying to get into Children’s Aid.”

Before entering the program Lavoie says she was “terrified”: “I had no idea what to expect,” she recalls. But once her studies began, she says she quickly felt a sense of belonging.

“IT was very comfortable. I got to know all of the faculty. If I ever needed anything I could go to them; they made it very easy to go and get help if we needed it. Teachers and staff were there for both academic and personal help.”

A mother of three, Lavoie says her classmates “all adopted each other into a little family.”

She says the Native Human Services Bachelor of Social Work Program provides an excellent opportunity for students to gain valuable hands-on experience.

“I did my placement and found out what it was actually like. I was in the First Nations Rural team with the Children’s Aid Society.”

Lavoie is very confident that this program will explode as there is a great demand for graduates.

“It is going to be enormous. I think people will be coming from everywhere to take this program. This is the place to be.”
Native Studies Page - colour
Adolphus shared ‘yarn’

By Adolphus Trudeau

SAULT STE. MARIE—“Looks good on yah mate”—was a saying in Australia which means, “You’re representing yourself and your people well.”

My recent trip to Noongar Boodjar (Nyungar Country) in Western Australia was a great experience learning another culture and language, but also gaining an understanding of the importance of political representation for First Peoples.

We, as Anishinaabek, have political advocacy at three levels—the Assembly of First Nations, Chiefs of Ontario and the Union of Ontario Indians—a structure which has helped us enjoy many amenities. In Western Australia, no such structure exists.

I am very fortunate to have met and visited a lot of, not only Noongar Elders and people, but five other Indigenous cultures from Australia. But one in particular who shares the same passion as I do.

Darren “Capes” Copewell is from the “Malgana People”, and his passion for his culture and language is one of the best guides I have met such a passionate Anishinaabe, as I am, who shares the same passion for his people, like I do and also working towards self-determination for a people who has lived and practiced, to this day, their 40,000-year culture, heritage and speak the language.

I will never forget that unique special moment as long as I live.

School celebrates Anishinaabe culture

By Joanne Rivers

SAULT STE. MARIE—H. M. Robbins Public School held its first-ever Aboriginal Celebration May 16, 2008.

All the students listened to “Oh Canada” in Ojibwe, and Principal Bodnar escorted the East View Public School student choir to sing the Canadian anthem.

Rodney Elie erected a teepee on the grounds, thanks to the generosity of the Rankin band council. Alongside the teepee was a Sacred Fire built by Cliff Waabooso and Robert L’Estrange.

Willard Pine ranked band council. Alongside the teepee was a Sacred Fire built by Cliff Waabooso and Robert L’Estrange.

Student advises AFN

By Michael Ward

SAULT STE. MARIE—For decades, the painful legacy of Residential Schools has cast a shadow over Canadian history. It has only been very recently that progress began towards achieving a respectable and equitable resolution for the survivors of the residential school experience.

Helping to forge that resolution is Joanna Nahwegahbow, a third-year Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) student at Algoma University. Joanna is a member of the Assembly of First Nations Indian Residential Schools Survivors Advisory Committee, a group that is also involved with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Committee has helped advise the AFN National Chief, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSC), and Service Canada on how to best serve the interests of survivors.

Being involved with the Advisory Committee is personally meaningful to Joanna.

“On my father’s side we have a history of residential school
Dianne Musgrove will be the Conservative party's candidate for the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing in the Oct. 14 federal election.

Anishnabe-kwe from Whitelash Falls, Musgrove says she is not solely representing First Nation’s concerns, but also such issues as jobs, care of elders, the well-being of children, health care and education.

“The government should be there to serve the people, not vice versa,” she says.

She promises a campaign “focused on honesty, accountability, and encouraging everyone to come out to vote, especially the youth, and those who have never voted before.”

Lorraine Rekmans

Rekmans runs for Greens

Serpent River First Nation citizen Lorraine Rekmans will be the Green Party candidate for the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing in the Oct. 14 federal election.

Born in Elliot Lake, Rekmans has been married to Gerry Rekmans for 25 years. They have two adult sons.

The candidate has a background in journalism. She published an Aboriginal newspaper in Northern Ontario, and has also worked as a reporter at the Elliot Lake Standard.

As the former Executive Director of the National Aboriginal Forestry Association (NAFA), Rekmans worked on national and international forest policy.

She is currently the Aboriginal Affairs Critic in the Green Party Shadow Cabinet, and divides her time between her duties in Ottawa and her involvement in the local area.

She is also the co-editor of This Is My Homeland, a book which captures the experiences of members of the Serpent River First Nation and the impact on their lives from uranium mining at Elliot Lake.

Rekmans was involved in developing the first Aboriginal-owned forestry co-operative in Canada and has supported sustainable non-timber forest product development in Northern Ontario through research, writing, advocacy and organizing, regional and national conferences.

She has assisted in writing a number of international declarations dealing with both uranium and forestry, and attended the World Uranium Hearing at Salzburg, Austria, as a witness to the effects of uranium mining on the environment. She also co-chaired a dialogue between non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and nation states at the United Nations Forum on Forests.

“I want the north to be vibrant with healthy ecosystems and healthy communities,” Rekmans says. “Many of us make our living from farming, fishing, tourism, mining or forestry.”

Lorraine Rekmans

Carole Hughes

Musgrove runs for Conservatives

Dianne Musgrove will be the Conservative party’s candidate for the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing in the Oct. 14 federal election.

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Dianne Musgrove
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