



Community Update

Elder's age estimated at 111

Clara Ashmugeesha, a diminutive and cheerful Elder, is clearly at home in the forest summer camp of her family. Her age is estimated to be 111 and she has outlived all but three of her 14 children. She also has 6 grandchildren, 26 great grandchildren, 50 great great grandchildren and 2 great great great grandchildren.

Clara insists on sleeping on the tent floor with only a thin mattress for a bed. Her age can't be proven, but when she was registered in 1921, she already had two children and she has memories of Chief Missabay, wearing a cowboy hat made of birch bark, before he went blind. He was blind when he signed Treaty 9 in 1905.

Clara, interpreted from Ojibway to English by her granddaughter Harriet Sabko, said she was orphaned at a young age. David Lawson, traveling to various camps to find survivors of a devastating sickness, was about to set fire to a teepee near Savant Lake, which he assumed had only dead bodies inside, when he heard a noise. It was Clara, then called Kananna, nursing at the breast of her dead mother. She was one of three children found alive in the camp.

Clara was in a traditional wrap, cut off just below the knees, to keep her from getting too far if she walked off. "I walked slowly, like a penguin," said Clara. Her early childhood memories are dismal, at best. Clara was given to a woman who treated her like "a slave." She was beaten and remembers sometimes eating raw fish guts and even dirt, just to survive. She was tied to a tree to prevent her from running away and Clara remembers having to sleep outside, wearing only a shirt, in the cold and rain. "She would have visions of somebody coming to her, protecting her, covering her so she wouldn't get wet. She would be warm. That's how she survived," said Harriet. "The spiritual people, she used to see them. She used to cry all the time but then she would see them and that's how she survived. That's why she's here right now."

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Clara Ashmugeesha, 111, sits in comfort on the forest floor while chatting with her granddaughter, Harriet Sabko.

Help needed for VideoCom project

Kerri Gibson wants the help of the people of Mishkeegogamang to write a paper on the use of technology in the community. Participants do not have to put pen to paper or even fingers to computer keyboard to help with the work. They can if they want to, said Gibson, but she will be satisfied just to hear what they have to say. "We are prepared to do the bulk of the writing, but we want the community voice to be present," she said.

Gibson was in Mishkeegogamang with VideoCom in the spring time to collect information on the community's use of technology. She was able to interview 17 people in regards to how people use technology now and how they see it being used in the future.

Communities in North Western Ontario are already using technologies such as broadband to share human resources and to connect across

regions. Gibson's work with VideoCom is to conduct research and outreach to enable expanded use of the available technologies. The ultimate goal, said Gibson, is to work together to support community development. Partners in the project include Keewaytinook Okimakanak, Atlantic Canada's First Nation Helpdesk, The First Nations Education Council, The National Research Council and the University of New Brunswick.

"How can these different technologies really benefit the lives of people living in rural and remote communities such as Mishkeegogamang?" she asked. "People had some really great ideas when we came here in the spring. We want to work together with the good information we have, to develop a paper that is meaningful to the community."

Gibson thinks the new technology can also support traditional and land-based

activities as well as health and wellness. She is excited about using technology for activities such as connecting Elders to speak their language and to see each other without the difficulty of travel.

Because remote and northern communities often lack basic education opportunities and health services, this research aims to help communities learn how to adapt technology, such as two-way and multi-participant videoconferencing and online video sharing, to help support community goals.

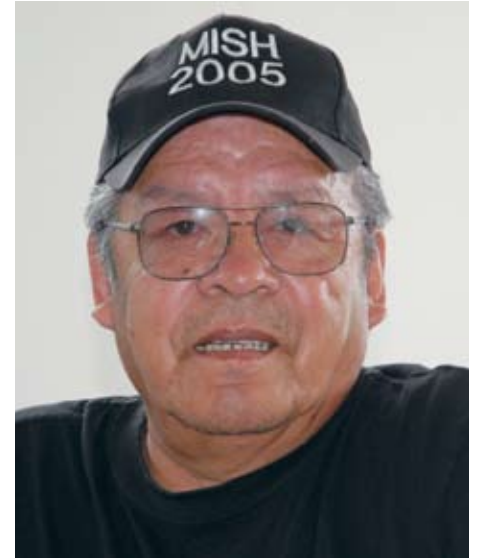
"We have a lot of information," said Gibson, "and now we want to engage more people in the community in the next steps of the process."

Gibson will be set up in various places around the Reserve from September 14 - 16 and will be looking forward to connecting with community members and asking for input. Refreshments will be served.

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Message from newly elected council member



Bobby Briskett was re-elected to the Mishkeegogamang Council after a seven-year absence.

Greetings to one and all. I would like to acknowledge the Mishkeegogamang band membership and thank all the people who have given me the opportunity to work for you again.

I must admit that I had doubts in the beginning. However, getting selected to be on council gives me a kind of a rush. After a seven-year absence it gives me a new outlook and it creates a big question mark. The game is somewhat different but there are very few different faces in the political players' field.

I've rekindled old friendships and made new ones. Being in a senior age bracket does not affect my many intentions, but, instead, it motivates me into wanting to do more.

Today is the time our youth should look into their future...tomorrow will be too late. In my life I've had a few ups and downs but now I look at my many past experiences as my teachers of years gone by. So this is for everyone who cares about their future and the future of their loved ones: "Be cool... stay in school."

I am a residential school survivor whose road was not paved...but a rough and potholed road. I've had some bad trips on this road but I fought to come out alive. A very good friend of mine said to me, "You were once a greenhorn...pass along your experience."

Whatever path you choose for the rest of your life has to be the right choice because you will be the one to live it.

Community Update

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Phone 807-928-2414

Researched and written by
Marj Heinrichs Communications

Email marjh@gninc.ca

Marj Heinrichs at
204-746-8208 or 204-746-5959

Contribute to the Newspaper

Everyone is welcome to submit an article, photo or write a letter to the Mishkeegogamang Community Update. Share your opinion or idea with other readers. Editors reserve the right to edit for clarity and length.



MishAdventure camp included a giant game of snakes and ladders.

Mishadventures in Mishkeegogamang

A promise is a promise. Four years ago, Karen Ward, First Nations program coordinator for Feed The Children (FTC), made a promise to a little boy in the Missabay School and determined to keep it. As a result, she directed the fourth year of Mishadventures in Mishkeegogamang this summer.

Karen had been sent up to Mishkeegogamang by her father, president of Feed the Children, to check out the possibility of having children's camps in the far north. She went to the school and asked children what kind of activities they'd like if there was a day camp. One little boy didn't want to say anything and the teacher explained to Karen that "so many people make promises and then they don't come." Karen went to the little boy and promised him she would return. Then he told her what he wanted to do at camp was learn to fly a kite. A few months later Karen returned, kite in hand, for her first Mishadventure day camp.

"I just love it here. I feel like this is another home for me," she said.

This year, in partnership with An Eagle's Cry Life Centre from Thunder Bay, Feed the Children brought 13 staff for a three-week day camp in July for ages 4 - 14. There were 75 children registered and of those about 50 showed up daily for the activities.

Mishadventure activities include crafts, sports, cooking, games and even an "it's everybody's birthday" day. Karen's daughter, a lifeguard with the Canadian Lifesaving Society, taught swimming lessons.

"We had a beach day and couldn't get them out of the water," said Karen. "They were so well-behaved in the water."

Karen said the camp is more about relationships than religion. When asked why she does what she does, Karen is ready with her reply. "Because I love Jesus and Jesus loves you and He wants you to know it." She said there is no preaching at the camp. "The absolute main reason I come here is I want to give the kids love and boundaries. I have a great relationship with God and I want to love them like He does."

Before she came to the north, all Karen knew about First Nations was what she had learned in Grade 7. It wasn't much. She spent a couple of months researching before her first trip. "You can't believe how much being here does for us," she

said. Her staff agrees. Recruitment for next year's camp begins in the midst of this year's activities. Most staff are college or university students and many have raised at least part of their support to spend time at camp. They are paid for their work, but for most that is not the incentive to return. "They fall in love with the kids and can't stand not coming back," said Karen.

Karen has become an advocate for First Nations people when she returns to Toronto. "We need to find a way to open eyes," she said. "People need to know that it is different than the media reports they hear."



Swimming lessons were a summer hit at the MishAdventure camp.



Sky (Tataquason) Hedrick joined the MishAdventure camp this summer.

A life changed

Mish Adventures day camp had never seen this many youth show up on a regular basis. Part of the draw for sure was a guy named Sky.

Sky (Tataquason) Hedrick was born in Winnipeg in 1967 to a drug-addicted street person. He was dropped off at the Children's Aid Society by a stranger and adopted by two unemployed Americans. When he was five, Sky got drunk for the first time on a stolen beer. When he was seven, he was sexually abused and that year he was smoking and burned down his dad's barn.

"I grew up with an identity problem," said Sky. The only native kid in his school, Sky learned to fight by Grade Four. His dad was in ministry, reaching out to drunks and alcoholics, so, in hindsight, Sky says he "turned into what my dad was paying attention to."

Sky's on good terms with his adoptive parents now, but they went through some rough times. Sky is a big guy and played hockey until he sold his hockey equipment to get booze when he was 17. He also got a football scholarship, but he sold his books and eventually his hockey gear to support his habits. He got a criminal record when he turned 18 and had drug dealers living in his house.

"I racked up the charges. I was an angry guy," said Sky.

One night, Sky's wife Angie was out all night. When she came home in the morning, she started to pack her bags. She could have left because he was abusive towards her, said Sky, but what she said was, "I won't watch you kill yourself." Three days later he was sober.

"I got my speech back, my smell back, my hearing back. I could hear the birds," he said. "What a feeling!"

A week after he sobered up, Sky got a job driving a truck for \$18 an hour. He found out they were expecting their first child and was thrilled that his children

would never see him doing drugs.

Two years later, after hearing a former crack addict, a Puerto Rican minister, speak, Sky "found the Lord." It was then that his wife told him when she was out all night she had been with his parents, praying for healing for Sky. "I was totally honoured. I believe personally in real healing for our people," he said.

Sky's healing journey took time and wasn't always easy, but eventually he and Angie re-dedicated their lives to God and said they would serve Him. It was at the Gathering of Nations, that they found their true calling. "I walked into this place and there was drumming and dancing and native people worshiping God with regalia. [I felt as though I heard God say] 'This is who I created you to be. Don't be ashamed.'"

Sky felt free at last. Doors started to open for him. He sold everything to pay for Bible School. He had a dream that his people came out of darkness to be healed. He felt the Lord calling him and his family to Thunder Bay and so they moved. "People thought we were nuts," he laughed. "We had nothing. No furniture

- we slept on an air mattress."

Sky was at a missions conference when he saw hundreds of booths for all kinds of missions, but not a single one for his people. "I started to cry," said Sky, and that's when the name "an Eagle's Cry" came to him. "The eagle's cry is the cry the Creator has for our people," he said.

And so the Eagle's Cry Life Centre for families and youth was born. "Nobody's a client in our centre. Everybody is a brother or a sister." The centre offers practical life skills such as parenting, conflict resolution and cooking. There are family movie nights with popcorn, juice and candy. "Our heart is to be a safety net for people coming in from the north," said Sky. It is through the centre that Sky met high school students from Mishkeegogamang as well as families from the reserve staying in Thunder Bay.

Sky first came to Mishkeegogamang a year ago. "My heart was really broken for these people. This community is really seeded in my heart," he said. "Our vision is to branch out and have life centres in other communities. I see restoration. I see God restoring."



A wrestling crew with a message about abstinence from drugs and alcohol was at the school in May.

Elder has seen a lot in her lifetime

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Clara married Elijah Ashmugeesha, a medicine man. Well over six feet tall, Elijah towered over his tiny wife. He was known as a healer in the area. Harriet said in 1968 her grandmother was diagnosed with cancer and was slated for surgery to remove her womb. Elijah and Clara disappeared into the bush for the entire summer, returning two months later, without a trace of the cancer to be found. Harriet said another story about her grandfather involved a missing man. Asked for help, Elijah told them where to look for the body of that person and they found it, exactly where he told them to look.

Harriet also witnessed shaking tent ceremonies as a child. Her grandfather would enter the shaking tent and get information on the upcoming weather, sicknesses and other questions the people had for him. The shaking tent would be taken down afterwards and Harriet recalls seeing a spiral on the ground where it had been.

Clara prefers life in the camps to life in town, where she spends her winters. Growing up in the forest with only a few people in the camp and eating what the land provided makes living in a community with lots of people and eating store-bought food a challenge for the elderly woman. "I like traditional food because I'm Anishinabe. I don't feel full when I eat store-bought food. When I eat traditional food I feel full," said Clara.

Clara will still eat squirrel, rabbit and chickadees during the spring and fall hunt. She is not afraid of the forest or the animals that live there. She once woke up, uncomfortable, but unafraid, with a snake in her bed, and has come face to face with wildlife such as bears and even Gochai (Sasquatch). Six years ago she was camping in a quiet spot with her daughter Marjorie when they heard the sound of someone approaching. They also heard a sound, "HmMMM, hmMMM, hmMMM." Marjorie went to the tent door to see who was there and quickly summoned her mother. Gochai was standing about 12 feet away. "He was standing. His legs were short and he had a long body and long arms. He was hairy and the only thing I noticed is a lot of horse flies around him," said Marjorie. When Clara came to the door, Gochai turned around and left, so they followed him to a place of sacred ground where pow-wows used to happen and Gochai disappeared into the forest. Neither woman was afraid. "He wasn't threatening," said Marjorie. "If I would see him again, it wouldn't bother me."

Bears are common in the area and Marjorie said if she comes across one while picking blueberries, she just talks to them. "I tell them we're not here to bother you," she said. "They can tell by your heartbeat if you are afraid." Once a bear came into their cabin via the front door and left out the back. That memory makes all the women laugh out loud.

Clara does have one fear though, perhaps a result of her difficult early years in the forest. "I'm afraid of thunder," she said.

Photos by Chris Friesen

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Mervin Masakeyash demonstrates a game remembered from his childhood where he and his friends would rub moss in between their hands, aim them to the sky, and "push the clouds around". • *Marjorie Spade listens to the sounds of the forest. She is one of five generations currently living in the serenity of Metcalf for the summer.*

• *A goalie waits for the play to return to his end of the field during a high-paced soccer game on the main reserve.*



I've always been a strong believer that you can never give an honest opinion of a place until you've actually experienced it for yourself.



Chris Friesen

Before I arrived in Mishkeegogamang, I had never spent any amount of time on a reserve. So any pre-conceived notion I may have had, based on no personal experience, was about to be corrected. I discovered on the nine-hour drive that of all the sights and sounds I was preparing to experience, the ones provided by nature would be the most breathtaking. I had no idea about the people I was about to meet, and how the interactions with them would transpire. But I did know that the beautiful landscape of the Canadian Shield could not disappoint.

After the first day on the reserve, meeting the chief, some of the council, and many other warm and interesting individuals, I began to understand how people are a product of their environment and what that really means. I began to understand that beyond the struggles we face with our own personal demons, in spite of how these struggles may be reflected in the shape and functionality of our communities, that there will always be resilience and hope that we can see and hear – just like the natural environment around us.

I was able to see the beauty and the serenity of the landscape manifested in the people I was meeting every day. I saw it in the 15-year-old girl explaining what she learned about the traditions of her people at a recent youth conference she'd attended. She spoke of how she writes poetry to battle through the hard times rather than choosing a more self-destructive lifestyle. I saw it while sitting in the bush with five generations of family spanning 100 years, hearing them speak to each other in a language I've never heard, and telling stories – first hand – of times I've only read about. I also saw it while watching all the young adults having fun playing soccer in what looked like a field of mud and water.

All of these things were incredibly inspiring, showing me that regardless of the conditions of their environment, the passion and heart can still thrive in the people.

WITH RESPECT AND GRATITUDE, CHRIS FRIESEN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Autumn Neekan recalled traditional teachings from a recent youth conference. Reciting poetry she had written, she explained how she chooses being creative to cope with hard times. • A boy swims in the lake at Metcalf where his family camp is set up for the summer. • Players line up and shake hands after a competitive game of soccer. • On the way to see well-known places such as Kokum Island and Indian Lookout. • A counsellor and a young, blue-tongued girl pose outside the school during a barbeque for the Feed the Children day camp.



Summer Youth Conference a good experience



Autumn Neekan learned a lot at the youth conference.

Autumn Neekan and Kayla Chickekoo believe that what they learned at the Mishkeegogamang Youth Conference this summer will be a springboard to more and better activities for the young people on their reserve.

The morning sessions of the five-day conference included teaching the youth how to promote activities for the youth. They learned how to organize rallies, write open letters and petitions. "We learned how to convince [leaders] to make a favourable response when we make a request," said Autumn.

The afternoon sessions were set aside for teachings on traditions and culture. "It makes me feel good that I'm learning where I come from," said Autumn. The seven or eight participants of the conference learned about rocks – "rocks have spirits too" – and about the traditional circles, four directions and colors.

"Yellow is for the sun, white is the moon, green is for the earth and blue is for the sky," said Kayla. They also learned that

there are colors for people as well, including the yellow, red, black and white peoples. The teachings included discussions on the animals, the four directions, and the four sacred medicines (sage, tobacco, cedar and sweet grass).

What they learned at the summer conference re-enforced what some youth have been picking up from their grandparents and traditional teachers both on the reserve and off. Autumn said her grandmother teaches her some things about her culture and she realized, sitting and listening to her cousin's grandparents, that she understands more Ojibway than she thought she did. "I thought I didn't understand until I started to concentrate and then I understood," she said. She has also learned a lot during her high school requirement to do 40 hours of community service. For Autumn, most of that service has been done at pow-wows and around the elders where she enjoys the calming drumming and sometimes stories and legends from a long time ago.

The story of the fainting skunk

The Creator, before he put natives on the world, He told the animals and the animals said they would help us. They would teach us how to survive and hunt. They were discussing who would have medicines and who would be killed [for food] for us to live. The skunk raised his hand and asked if we would eat him. Yes, they told him. He fainted. He asked again and again they said yes, and again he fainted. When he asked once more if natives would eat him, the other animals said no they wouldn't eat him. He would have the medicines. When they were deciding which animal would take care of us, the dog said 'nope, I want them to look after me.' That's why dogs aren't allowed at ceremonies and pow-wows.

The story of the eagle and the white feather

Because everyone was going out of their ways and being sinful, the Creator said they would burn from the sun. The eagle asked the Creator if He would spare the world if he could find one person still living as the Creator intended them to live. The Creator agreed. The eagle flew for four days. The sun was starting to heat up a bit, but he finally found one couple, living in their tent in the traditional way they were supposed to live. He turned around fast, flying back to tell the Creator. The couple wanted him to stay, but he said he couldn't. But the eagle dropped a white feather in their tent. The eagle made it back in time to tell the Creator he found two people going back to their ways. They kept the feather to help them to be strong.

Stories told by Autumn Neekan

Long time radio host still going strong

It is no wonder that Theodore Mishenene looks so cool behind the microphone. He has been in the radio business since he was just a kid. Theodore remembers being about 12 years old when he started "fooling around with electronics and how they work." One can only imagine a room strewn with radio and other equipment parts as he tried to take apart and reassemble things. "There were times I almost got shocked," he laughed.

When he was about 15, Theodore would work with tapes, overlapping music and practising disc jockey skills. A couple of years later, he started volunteering on the local radio, located in the Mishkeegogamang band office near where the garage is today.

In those early days, the radio station operated during the band office hours, usually from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Theodore would play country music in the mornings for the older folk and then more 70s and 80s rock and roll later in the day. In his early 20s he bought his own DJ equipment and music and started running community dances.

"That's when we started dancing, the Christmas of 1992," he said. "Most of us didn't know how, but there were elders that led our way." It wasn't long before the regular Monday night dances were crowded with people of all ages as people got together to square dance in the old community hall.

"It was a good work-out," recalled Theodore. "I think people miss it, but I don't know what happened."

Whatever happened, things have changed. Theodore was elected to council in 1993 and took over the communications and recreation portfolios. He used the radio for that work and continued speaking on the radio on a volunteer basis after his term was up.

These days, the prime radio time is mostly on in the evenings. It is used



Theodore Mishenene started working with electronics when he was 12 years old.

for public announcements, such as public meetings, workshops and sports tournaments. Sometimes the radio is used to convey messages to people that don't have access to a telephone. "It's a valuable community resource," said Theodore.

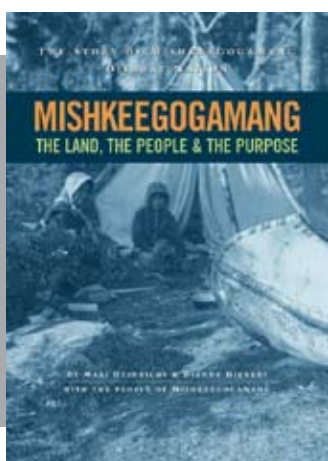
Theodore was hired as radio station manager in 1999. He enjoys evening radio shows featuring some of the community's "older guys" like Norman D. Wesley who, before he left the community, could keep a show going past midnight, answering questions and telling stories. Ronald Roundhead is another regular and Theodore has a list of four or five others willing to participate on the radio. Sometimes, when a person calls with a question, the guest doesn't know the answer so they ask others to call in with what they know on the topic.

Theodore has a large music collection and, although he doesn't download music as often as he used to, he likes to play something new every couple of weeks or so. One of these days the music you hear on Mish radio might be performed by Theodore himself. His dream? "I want to learn to be a musician."

Autumn Neekan, 15, won a literacy award for the following poem:

For My Sister

In her eyes you could see the pain
 In her voice you could hear the depression,
 In her scent you could smell the fear,
 In her touch you could feel the torture
 In her past she had gone through a lot
 In her present she's going through more
 In her future she's hoping for good
 In her life she's been trying real hard
 But she will never be alone, she'll always have me, no matter what,
 to the very end.



Mishkeegogamang: The Land, the People and the Purpose

Read all about the history of Mishkeegogamang; learn the wisdom of the elders.

Copies of our history book are now available at the band office.

\$40.00

High risk marriages

According to Ann Evans, president of the BC Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, "No marriage is over until both parties say it is. At the same time, many marriages should end but the partners keep on living in extremely unhealthy situations." According to Evans marriage is at serious risk when any of the following behaviours occurs.

1. One partner is physically or emotionally abusive of the other.
2. One or both parents are physically or emotionally abusive of their children.
3. One or both parents engage in substance abuse.
4. Sexual or emotional infidelity is occurring. Such marriages can be saved if:
 - Both partners agree to seek professional help. Even if only one is willing to do so, it can kick-start the healing process.
 - The partner engaged in harmful behaviour ends that behaviour and is willing to enter therapy.
 - Each learns to forgive.
 - Both partners are willing to admit being wrong some of the time.
 - The wronged partner is willing to analyze his or her own behaviour in the marriage.
 - The couple has a supportive and caring network of family and friends.

Delay in project

The new community complex is experiencing some delays due to funding requirements. The band is required to have 25 per cent of the funding, or \$1.3 million in place before the federal and provincial partner funding is provided. Chief and Council will keep the membership informed as details become available.



Mike Bottle arranged for summer activities including a popular evening soccer league.

Report showcases a young, growing and unemployed community

A recent report highlights the fact that Aboriginal communities in Ontario are younger, growing populations with high levels of unemployment. The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario. They based their report on information from Statistics Canada.

The report, Aboriginal Communities in Profile: Ontario highlights that:

- The province's Aboriginal communities are younger and growing at a much faster rate than the overall population. About half of all First Nations and Inuit people are under the age of 25.
- Lower educational attainment, employment and income levels pose major challenges to the communities' well-being. Aboriginal peoples are, however, completing college at rates comparable to the general population.
- Knowledge and use of Aboriginal languages are at risk.

The report notes that between 2001 and 2006, the number of Aboriginal people

in the province increased by 28.8% (to 242,490), while the general population increased by 6.6%. It also found Ontario's Aboriginal communities are becoming increasingly urbanized. As of 2006, 70% of First Nations people in Ontario lived off-reserve and eight in 10 live in urban centres, particularly in Ottawa, Greater Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor and London. One in three Inuit people in Ontario now live in the Ottawa area.

About half of all First Nations and Inuit people are under the age of 25 years - proportionally more than in the general population where one-third are under 25. Unemployment in Ontario's Aboriginal communities is nearly double that of the general population. While unemployment decreased between 2001 and 2006, at 12.3% it remained nearly double that of the total population (6.4%). Inuit (14.9%) and First Nations (13.8%) people face even higher rates of unemployment.

Aboriginal people earn much less in annual income than non-Aboriginal people. Despite slowly rising incomes,

in 2005 the gap was on average \$12,000: The average income for Aboriginal people was \$25,963, compared to \$38,318 for non-Aboriginal people. One out of three Aboriginal children under six years of age in Ontario is living below the low-income cut-off, compared to one out of five for the general population.

Educational attainment levels for Aboriginal people in Ontario are improving. More Aboriginal people in Ontario are completing school than in the past. Aboriginal people are more likely to complete a college, apprenticeship or trades program than the general population.

The use and continuation of Aboriginal languages in Ontario could be at risk. In 2006, 14% of First Nations people (mostly seniors) said that their mother tongue was an Aboriginal language. The most common Aboriginal mother tongues are Ojibway, followed by Oji-Cree and Cree. Less than 5% of First Nations people living off reserve claimed an Aboriginal mother tongue. English is the mother tongue for 81.4% of Aboriginal people in Ontario.

Risk factors and chronic conditions among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations

BY LISA M. LIX, SHARON BRUCE, JOYKRISHNA SARKAR AND T. KUE YOUNG

In Canada, the prevalence of behavioural risk factors and chronic conditions varies between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, with Aboriginal people generally having less favourable outcomes. For example, obesity and overweight are more common among Aboriginal people than among other groups. Also, the likelihood of having at least one chronic condition and specific conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes is higher among Aboriginal people, even when differences in socio-demographic characteristics are taken into account.

Relatively little research has examined the health of Aboriginal people over time. This is particularly relevant for those in the North, who are experiencing rapid changes in their social, cultural and

physical environments, which are likely to influence their health. For example, a recent study found that the self-reported prevalence of having a chronic condition rose in the North since 2000/2001; an increase was also observed in southern Canada, but it was smaller. That study also found a decrease in physical activity and an increase in obesity among residents of the North. However, differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations were not investigated, so it was not clear if these trends prevailed only among Aboriginal people or were common to all people in the North.

The purpose of the current study is to compare changes over time in several major behavioural risk factors and chronic conditions among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in the North and in southern Canada who were not living on reserves.

What is already known on this subject? On many measures of health, Aboriginal populations in Canada have less favourable outcomes than non-Aboriginal populations.

Aboriginal populations in the North are experiencing rapid change in their social, cultural, and physical environments. Relatively little is known about changes in the prevalence of risk factors and chronic conditions among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in the North, compared with those in southern Canada.

What does this study add?

Differences in self-reported measures of obesity, smoking, drinking, and physical activity between Aboriginal populations in the North and in southern Canada were significant.

Changes from 2000/2001 to 2005/2006 indicate a growing gap between the two

groups on many risk factors.

In 2000/2001, Aboriginal people in the North were less likely than those in southern Canada to report specific chronic conditions, including arthritis, hypertension, asthma and diabetes, as well as having one or more chronic conditions. By 2005/2006, this was true only for arthritis and having one or more chronic conditions.

By comparison, there were fewer differences between non-Aboriginal people in the North and in southern Canada, and less evidence of a widening gap over time.

The full article can be found on the Statistics Canada website at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2009004/article/10934/findings-resultats-eng.htm> Look for the "Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance"



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: *Tanning a moose hide is a lesson in language as well as culture.* • *Dianne Bottle prepares bannock for the MishAdventure camp.* • *A helicopter waits to be called to duty at the MNR fire base in Pickle Lake.* • *This is the view of the lake from the new community cook-out area being constructed along Sandy Road.*

Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation Chief and Council Emergency Contact Numbers

Chief

Connie Gray-McKay

Work: 807-928-2414

Fax: 807-928-2077

Cell: 807-472-2083

Home: 807-928-2083

Email: conniegraymckay@msn.com

Head Councillor

Tom Wassaykeesic

Work: 807-928-2414

Fax: 807-928-2077

Home: 807-928-2014

Senior Councillor

David Masaykeyash

Work: 807-928-2414

Fax: 807-928-2077

Cell: 807-621-3419

Home: 807-928-2927

Email: davidmasaykeyash@msn.com

Councillor

Maryanne Panacheese-Skunk

Work: 807-928-2414

Fax: 807-928-2077

Cell: 807-629-8624

Home: 807-928-2151

Email: maryannepanacheese@hotmail.com

Councillor

Robert Briskett

Work: 807-928-2414

Fax: 807-928-2077

Email: bobriskett@gmail.com

Where did all the money go?

Nine million dollars is a lot of money. To ask where all the Hydro Settlement money has gone in the last dozen years is a fair question and one that Councillor David Masakeyash is happy to answer.

In 1999 Mishkeegogamang accepted a \$17.2 million settlement from Ontario hydro for damage caused by hydro development at Rat Rapids in 1934 - 1935. Damage included flooded burial sites as well as footpaths and shore sites used for gatherings and cultivation for generations. The people were forced to relocate from their original sites on Lake St. Joseph.

Muskrat and beaver numbers declined and islands were submerged.

In 1935 the damage was assessed at \$845 by representatives of Hydro and Indian Affairs. They divided this sum among 18 individuals and a further \$1,425 was paid to Indian Affairs for timber losses. One hundred dollars was paid to compensate for the flooded council house.

The settlement of 1999, although many, many times more than the original compensation, was also paid out to a band of many more than 18 members.

Of the original settlement, over \$9

million has already been spent. The membership received \$6 million in per capita payments. Between \$1.2 and \$1.7 million was paid in legal fees to put forward Mishkeegogamang's Treaty Lands Entitlement Claim. Other legal expenses included the E.E. Hobbs claim against the First Nation, which cost the band \$131,000. Of that they got \$98,000 back when the case was won. A lawsuit by Ron Gauge cost the band another \$39,000 to defend. A provincial welfare bailout was \$100,000 and \$1.5 million was used to pay off the CIBC bank loan.

Three weeks not enough for volunteer

SUBMITTED BY KANDY OSTROSKY

As I sit in silence, all I can think about are those children on the Mishkeegogamang Reserve. So far North, yet it's like they've become a part of my everyday life.

It's hard to believe that this has been my fourth summer. Four years, three weeks a year, and 15 days of camp each year. Every time this sentence goes through my mind, all I can think about is how three weeks on the Mishkeegogamang Reserve is not long enough.

Sometimes, I wish I could just live on the reserve, to be there for those children in times of need. My heart aches, knowing that I am unable to be there.

The Mishkeegogamang Reserve has become my home away from home.

Tears fill my eyes and my heart fills with a sense of happiness. To even be able to think that Mish has become my second home is so emotional. No words can be used to describe what Mish has done for me. And, no words can be found for the

love that I have for those children.

Every year, my heart just keeps growing with love for these children and the people within their community.

Sometimes I wonder to myself, "How will I ever say no to doing the Mish Adventure Camp each summer?" They say nothing is impossible, but when it comes to the Mishkeegogamang Reserve and doing camp with the children, I think it will be impossible to say no!

Out of all the years, this was the greatest. Not only did I have a relationship with the children, but with their parents and guardians as well. Honestly, I couldn't have asked for a better year. I was able to see inside the lives in which these children live. I was able to see the homes they grow up in. And, I was able to see the pain and suffering that this community faces on a daily basis.

Because of this, my heart continues to ache with pain.

Even some days after camp, I would

find it hard to keep back the tears. The sufferings and pain that these people have endured are much too strong for words to describe. In these times of overwhelming sadness that I feel for these people, I have to remember that I am doing all that I can and that is to love their children with all my heart.

Another memory is the priceless one and a half hour bus rides to and from camp. It was quite the thing to see a whole bus full of children and to know that on that day we would fill their hearts with love. We would be a role-model and most importantly, we'd be a friend who would listen and try to understand.

To have a child fall asleep on your lap because they were so exhausted from camp — I cannot even tell you how precious and unforgettable that moment is, nor what it does to the heart.

The Mishkeegogamang Reserve, children and community have captured my heart forever!

Correction

In the June Community update, Tawney Lem was identified as an employee/negotiator for AbitibiBowater. Tawney Lem is a consultant that was contracted by SmartWood to conduct a FSC assessment of AbitibiBowater. She does not work for AbitibiBowater, nor was she negotiating with Mishkeegogamang on the company's behalf. SmartWood is completely independent from AbitibiBowater.

As part of the FSC assessment process, SmartWood meets with First Nations to hear their views about whether or not a company is in conformance with the FSC standard.

Announcement

There will be a school opening feast at the Missabay School on October 4th.

Ad Rates for Community Update

Please contact Marj Heinrichs marjh@gninc.ca or 204-746-5959 or the Mishkeegogamang government office 807-928-2414 if you would like to place an advertisement in the Mishkeegogamang Community Update. The cost is \$120 (1/4 page), \$240 (1/2 page) and \$500 (full page).