



# Community Update

## Wildfire Forces Total Evacuation

## Postal Strike Delays Voting for Chief and Council Elections



Top left: Extreme fire behaviour on June 22. Top right: Smoke rises on the horizon at Ten Houses on June 24. Bottom Left: Smoke hangs in the air at Missabay School while sprinklers soak the school grounds. Bottom right: Flames shooting hundreds of feet into the air. MNR Photos

Elections for Chief and Council will be held later than planned because of the postal strike. The issue is the time needed for people to receive and send back the mail-in ballots. "As soon the postal strike is over and the voting packages are mailed, we will have to wait 35 days before the election is held," said Elections Officer Elizabeth Redsky.

Mishkeegogamang is calling for all community members more than 18 years old to provide contact information to the band to allow participation in the upcoming election. Eligible voters are to contact electoral officer Elizabeth Redsky at 807-466-2957 or 807-733-9903 or membership clerk Susanna Loon at 807-928-2298 to get their ballots.

Candidates were nominated during a meeting June 8. Some candidates withdrew their nominations, leaving 6 candidates for chief and 27 candidates for the five councillor positions. All candidates couldn't be reached for comment, but the ones that spoke to the newspaper had some common themes. Current Chief Connie Gray-McKay said whoever is elected, she hopes they are prepared to work hard. These are not "official opposition" positions for no work and full pay, she says. Rather, the council needs to work together daily for the good of the community.

Several candidates expressed their opinion that better communication is needed with the community, with more community input in decision-making. Former Mishkeegogamang principal Mike Bottle is running for both chief and councillor. He believes it's important to address the problem of drug abuse and build a healthy lifestyle in the community. He'd like to see more opportunities for physical activity and more community involvement in issues like the mining MOU's. He would work for transparency and getting the whole community involved in important decisions. George Skunk, who is also running for council, says he'd like to know

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## Mish Residents Evacuated to Sioux, Ignace, Greenstone

The full evacuation of Mishkeegogamang was completed, according to the MNR, on June 23 after a massive wildfire consumed 37,703 hectares of bush and blanketed the entire reserve in smoke. By the time most of the community had cleared out, the fire was still listed as "not under control" and reported to be about 10 kilometers away from Missabay School. An Emergency Area Order (EAO) was put into effect one minute after midnight on June 24. The EAO is used to ensure public safety and allows officials to close roads and implement "no go" zones to block the movement of people into areas threatened by smoke or fire.

As the entire community knows all too well, the first stage of the evacuation was a sign of things to come for everyone else.

At first, 300 people, mostly young children and elders, were moved because of health risks from the heavy smoke. When the full evacuation was ordered on Thursday, June 23, NAPS officers went door-to-door advising people to relocate to a temporary central location in Pickle Lake. Mishkeegogamang residents then moved on to places like Sioux Lookout, Ignace, and Greenstone.



Mish evacuees at Greenstone Arena on June 24

The Ministry of Natural Resources reported that the fire was caused by lightning and exhibited extreme fire behaviour due to dry conditions and unfavourable winds. Winds shifted away from Mish on Sunday and light rain helped firefighting efforts, but by Monday, June 27, the fire had grown to over 657 square kilometers and most people were surely praying for more rain. Throughout

the crisis, Chief Connie Gray-McKay tried to keep people calm while she was working with the various agencies involved. "It's a time to really work together and not to get people panicked," she said. "We're continuing to focus and if the fire does move toward the community, at least we're prepared."

Chief Gray-McKay and band council were working closely throughout the fire with Emergency Management Ontario, INAC, Nishnawbe Aski Police Service, and MNR. By the end of the week, about 250 Mish evacuees were in Sioux Lookout, 100 in Ignace, 60 in Greenstone, 70 in Pickle Lake, and 50 in Thunder Bay.

By June 27, there were 278 firefighting personnel working on the the fire, 13 helicopters and several fire bombers. Eight additional firefighters from Mish were hired, and MNR spokesperson Dave Jackson said it was difficult to say when the fire would be brought under control and extinguished.

"All I can say is it's dependent on the conditions - on Mother Nature and how successful we are. The variability of the weather has been a challenge for us," Jackson said.

"Considering the conditions, we're making excellent progress protecting the community. We have been successful with that, no properties have been damaged and more importantly no one has gotten hurt."

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## Around the Community

### Youth Community Cleanup

Mishkeegogamang's Youth Community Cleanup is a summer jobs project taking place in July and August. Ten to twelve students from Grades 8-12 will be hired to participate in various cleanup projects throughout the community. The jobs tend to be filled quite quickly so anyone interested in taking part in the project should contact David Masakeyash at the band office as soon as possible.

### Mish Group Heading to Israel

For the third year in a row, a group of people from Mishkeegogamang will be traveling to Israel. Daisy Munroe, Maryanne Panacheese, and Ruth Beardy will be part of a large group of people from First Nations in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Last year, the group toured Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. This summer, the tour will focus on the Israeli capital city of Jerusalem. Daisy, Maryanne, and Ruth are set to leave on July 22 – Happy Travels!

### Trailer Lot Update

The band hopes to begin moving trailers onto the lots this summer, but this might be delayed because of outstanding legal issues with previous contractors who failed to complete work on the lots properly. All of the 26 sites have now been surveyed, and forensic engineering on the trailer lots was completed June 8.

### Rent Receivables Go Up

Mishkeegogamang's rent receivables have gone up, meaning that more people are paying their rent. The increase in rent payments means that the Band will have more money for small home renovations. In some cases, people will be given renovation materials so that they can work on their own homes.

### Community Centre Moves Ahead

Plans for Mishkeegogamang's Community Centre are moving forward, and construction could begin as early as this summer. Mish will be able to hold community and regional gatherings, sporting events and other social events at the new community centre. The facility will include a number of programs and services to promote healthy lifestyles, including a gymnasium, fitness room, locker rooms, washrooms, office and meeting space as well as a kitchen. The centre will promote a healthier community by providing a place for young and old to take part in physical activities and fitness programs. Once the main community centre is completed, a hockey arena will be added to the complex.

### Bears Looking for Garbage

Mishkeegogamang's Public Works department is urging people to keep their yards free of garbage, compost, or anything food-related. Bears wandering into the community looking for food have been a problem this spring and summer. "We've had a least a few bears in yards every day lately," Jeff Loon said. "Sometimes they get chased up trees, and



April Masakeyash throws while Maryanne Kwandibens rubs her horseshoe for luck during a tournament near Missabay School on June 6-7. To see who won, check page 7.



Karen Kaminawaish and Donna Roundhead share a laugh on their way to the Pashkokogan Healing Lodge.

obviously they can be a danger to people and especially children."

### Healthy Breakfast

Thirty people attended a breakfast on May 20 at the Health Centre held to promote healthy living and nutritious food. The menu included fruit smoothies, breakfast burritos, and a porridge made with steel-cut oats and wild rice.

### Health Centre Reminder

The Mishkeegogamang health centre staff would like to ask that you bring your chronic medications each and every time you attend any appointments at the health centre! Meegwetch!

### Grand Chief Upset at OPP

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy is slamming the OPP for commendation awards it handed out to OPP officers in May. Grand Chief Beardy

had problems with a bravery award given to an officer who shot a Grassy Narrows woman in Kenora and another award for exemplary performance in a Pikangikum First Nation dispute last year. Beardy called the awards unnecessary and glorified, and said they send the wrong message to First Nations.

### Summer Camps Schedule

Vacation Bible School will be held at Ten Houses July 2 - 9 and on the Main Reserve July 30 - August 6. Story on page 6

MishAdventures: July 11 - 28. Kids from southern Ontario will join Mish kids for activities like canoeing, sports, crafts, lunch and dinner provided. Poster p 6

August 1 - 14: Christian Horizons camp with lots of activities. Story on page 6

August 29: first day of school

## Community Update

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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.

# Spring Hunting Returns Back to Normal

The spring hunt this year went a lot better than last year, when it got too warm too fast and most of the geese flew away while hunters were sleeping. "Hunters got their share of birds this spring," said Kenneth Wavy. "The mystery was that large flocks were still flying in early June, and usually they are gone by the middle of May."

All those birds brought out a good turnout of hunters, and Kenneth estimates that somewhere around 100 people were out going after ducks and geese. "Everybody has their own traditional areas, family hunting areas, and they stick to those ones. People can't wait for the spring hunt, kids go out and it's an exciting time of the season," Wavy said. "It's very big here in Mishkeegogamang, and a lot of people get a week off from work for the hunt. This traditional activity is on par with the moose hunt in fall."

Most people focus on hunting ducks and geese in the spring, and a few hunt for swans as well. "A few people eat blue herons, but not many," he said. Nobody goes after female moose during calving season when the young are nursing, and he hasn't heard much about bear hunting this spring. There have been lots of bear around though, and some people did a bit of bow hunting for bear.

"The fishing was pretty good this spring, they were biting left and right," said Kenneth, who is already turning his thoughts to the fall moose hunt. Wavy is known to be the finest tracker in Mishkeegogamang, so it's no surprise that he's more than ready to get going with the hunt this fall. "There are two really exciting times for hunting – one of them is the spring hunt, and the other is the fall hunt. As for myself, I can't wait till the fall."



*Kenneth Wavy often gets lost in the bush and needs a Global Positioning System to find his way back home. Actually, Wavy uses the GPS device to map the band's traditional territory for its Land Use Planning project.*

# Talented Young Artist Inspired to Paint



Sixteen-year-old Shanna Neekan graduated in June from the Charlie Neekan Memorial School at Mile 50. Shanna has been drawing since she was twelve and amazingly only started painting last year. Shanna is inspired by a form of Japanese animation called Manga, and says she also gets inspiration from her mom and sister. Shanna recently sold two of her paintings to the band, which is encouraging her to pursue a career in art. "I hope to go to art school," Shanna said. "It's what I planned to do since I started drawing." In addition to painting, she seems to have a knack for creating artistic words as well: her landscape painting (shown at right) is titled "A World of Fragile Things."



# Double Honours Degrees for Mish Student

Before she was old enough to attend kindergarten, Martha Loon decided she wanted to go to school anyway. After constantly bugging her mom to let her go, she was eventually allowed to attend kindergarten early. All these years later, her persistence and love of learning are still going strong. Martha received an Honours Bachelor of Commerce degree from Lakehead University this spring, majoring in Accounting. She also earned an Honours Bachelor of Arts from Lakehead in 2007, focusing on Political Science and Indigenous Learning. Martha returned to Mishkeegogamang after graduating high school in 1991 and worked for the band for 10 years before going to university. After nine years in university, she wants to work to pay down her student loan, and is still deciding whether to pursue a Masters degree, law school, or an accounting designation.

"Having been on and off the reserve for school reasons over the years prior to 1991, I knew I could do so much if I just allowed myself not to be scared and to strive in fulfilling my dreams and goals. I was used to leaving my family for long

periods of time since I did a five-year stint at Poplar Hill which is considered an Indian Residential school. My nieces and nephews at that time were getting bigger and I felt they needed another kind of role model from what my family was showing them. From my family they were learning the traditional lifestyle of living off the land and the other cultural practices of my family. I wanted to show them that education was another option for them and that they could live and be part of both worlds if they wanted that for themselves.

The biggest challenge that I faced in university would be financial. My tuition and living costs were paid for for my first degree but not for the second degree. However I was willing to obtain a student loan to finance my education and that is what I did. You do not get much for a student loan to also pay for living costs so I had to work part-time to play for my living costs. My parents and sister were a huge help in helping me to survive financially. My mother passed away in December 2008. Losing her was the toughest experience I went through

and I will never forget how much she was there for me over the years of me being in school. Going through the last 1 1/2 years was especially hard because I was grieving for her. But she was never far from my mind and I knew she would want me to finish what I started and to succeed in all that I did. My immediate family has been my biggest, biggest supporters! I cannot give enough thanks and recognition to my parents and siblings over the years for their support and love. I would also like to thank my cousins Marena Loon and Gladys Nayanookesic. I also want to thank my late grandparents Isaac and Mary Loon for always believing in me and in my skills and abilities. I can still hear their words of encouragement and my Shoomis Isaac's laugh when he was proud of me.

I have been so lucky to have the family I come from. I never received one word of discouragement from my family and extended family but always rather support and encouragement. I would like to encourage my fellow band members to pursue their educational dreams and goals. But I would also like to encourage families to encourage their own to just

go for it and then to be supportive all the way. Too many people limit themselves or think they are not good enough but this is not true. With perseverance and determination and hard work, one can achieve their dreams and goals."



*Martha Loon received her second university honours degree this June. Congratulations!*

# Balanced Budget for Mishkeegogamang

Mishkeegogamang's finances are in excellent shape, according to accountant Kevin Houghton. An audit was done at the beginning of June and the complete audit and financial report will be available in the band office this summer. Houghton is pleased about the findings of the audit. Mishkeegogamang has a balanced budget and the accumulated deficit is nil. For the second year in a row the audit report has been submitted before the deadline and there is a clean audit opinion. All of these accomplishments and the strength of the balance sheet clear the way for the band to obtain financing for capital projects.

This year saw the community leadership and managers making timely, efficient, and effective financial decisions, enabling

the community to move forward from previous financial distress to a balanced financial statement. Leadership and managers successfully stayed within their budgets and spent the funding within the parameters of the funding agreements. The funding agreements do not allow for discretionary spending which means that leadership and managers have to say "no" when asked to spend funds that go beyond their budgets.

Mishkeegogamang has forecast a surplus of approximately \$634,000 in order to cover previous deficits. This surplus will allow more flexibility to manage cash flow internally rather than being dependent on the timing of government transfers. There were a number of outstanding reports

from 2008 and onwards that required immediate attention in order to allow INAC to process payments. Mishkeegogamang has now filed these reports.

The band has made numerous financial decisions during 2010-2011 to streamline operations and reduce labour costs. Cooperation between programs and departments will maximize funding. The full organization has been reviewed and the structure tailored to better meet the funding and programming needs of the community. Some positions were added and some were eliminated.

Further decentralization is happening and increasingly, ownership is being transferred from the finance department to the program managers. Managers can

now oversee their own programming, make decisions without needing council approval for trivial issues, and may soon be able to issue their own purchase orders. They are also required and allowed to implement and enforce the Administration Personnel Policy Manual.

The accounting team has been working with managers to review and analyze strengths and weaknesses. Identifying areas that require improvement has also been a top priority. Through quarterly meetings, managers are learning about all the community programs and how each program can leverage funding from other programs where applicable. After years of deficits, the balanced budget is a long-awaited achievement for the community.

## Mishkeegogamang Alleges Century of Neglect in Multi-Million Lawsuit

*The following article about the Canada Claim was written by Peter Edwards and printed in the Toronto Star on May 16, 2011. Reprinted with permission from Torstar Syndication.*

More than a century ago, a blind Ojibway Chief from northwestern Ontario named Missabay marked an "X" on a treaty written in English, a language he did not speak. The Chief didn't have a lawyer acting for him or his people from the Mishkeegogamang First Nation and played no part in negotiating the treaty. It was in his hands for less than a day before he signed it.

Before the government officials left his remote community, he was quoted as saying he was confident they would be fair: "We know that you are good men sent by our great father the King to bring us help and strength in our weakness."

Now James Bay Treaty No. 9 is the focus of a historic, multi-million dollar lawsuit called "Mishkeegogamang First Nation v. The Attorney General of Canada and Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario" that began Monday in a Toronto courtroom. There were 15 lawyers in the courtroom before Mr. Justice Arthur Gans, representing the Mishkeegogamang people (who sometimes call themselves "Mish"), the federal government, the province of Ontario, Ontario Power Generation and Ontario Electricity Power Corp.

There are only 900 on-reserve and 500 off-reserve Mish people, but the amount of their traditional land that's involved

is enormous — nearly 355,000 square kilometres in northwestern Ontario and the former Northwest Territories. The case is already historic because this is believed to be the first time a land claims lawsuit against the province of Ontario has actually gone to trial alongside the federal government.

It's a far cry from back in 1905, when Chief Missabay heard his people would receive \$4 each, every year, forever, along with a community school and a patch of land for each family of five.

Mishkeegogamang councillor David Masakeyash said in an interview Monday that the legal fight — which has already taken more than a dozen years in pretrial filings and arguments — is "for our forefathers and our generations to come." "It's about getting justice," said Masakeyash, who is attending the trial with a dozen community members.

When Chief Missabay put his "X" on the treaty, his people lived a nomadic lifestyle, eating moose, wildfowl, fish and whatever else the bush provided. Today, there are no high schools for the Mish people, who live on two reserves and in tiny communities like Poplar Heights, Sandy Road, Doghole Bay, Rat Rapids, Cedar Rapids and Ten Houses. Students hoping to attend high school often travel to faraway Thunder Bay.



*One of the two fairly small dams on Rat Rapids that did a massive amount of damage in the 1930s and beyond.*

Mish residents are wracked by all manner of social ills, including high levels of fetal alcohol syndrome, depression and unemployment. "Every day, we live with social injustices . . . that were done by Canada and Ontario," Mishkeegogamang Chief Connie Gray-Mackay said in an interview. "Our ancestors did not sign us to administer poverty to our people."

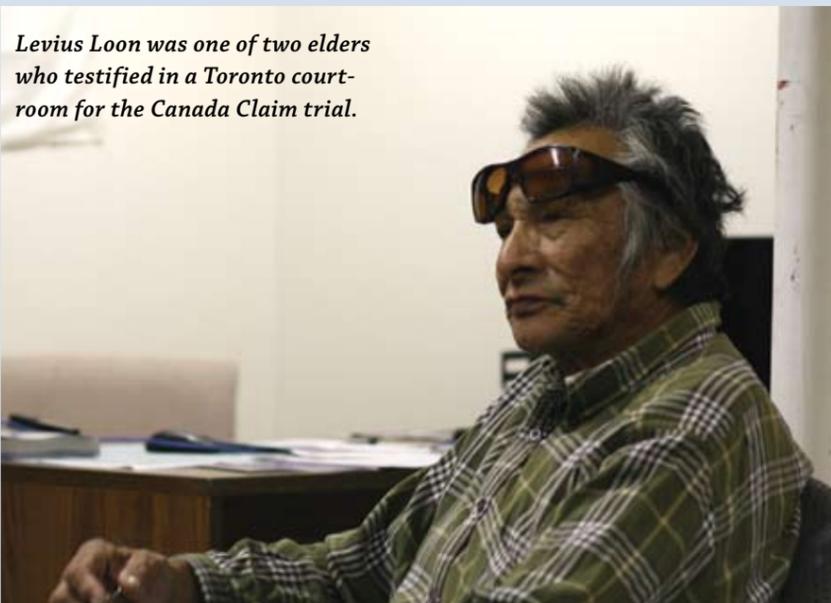
In court on Monday, E. Anthony Ross, a lawyer for the Mish people, argued that the provincial and federal governments didn't honour their side of the deal, first moving Chief Missabay's people from the lands they had expected, and then permitting the flooding of the lands for hydro projects. Many Mish people shifted from being nomadic hunters to being dependent upon government programs and seasonal wage-earning jobs for

survival. The Mish people argue that they didn't even get a copy of the treaty.

Lawyers for Mishkeegogamang note that by the mid 1930s, the governments were promoting hydro dams in the area. The dams buried traditional Mish lands in water, along with homes, a community centre and sacred sites and burial grounds. Soon, elders told of bones washing up on shore, Councillor Masakeyash said.

The suit alleges the Mish people are owed "compensation from Canada for breach of fiduciary duties resulting in trespass, nuisance, wrongful deprivation of riparian rights, permitting profiteering . . . in contravention of treaty obligations." Opening statements from the various legal teams are expected to take well into next week. The trial is expected to last until November.

*Levius Loon was one of two elders who testified in a Toronto courtroom for the Canada Claim trial.*



## Elders, band members testify in Canada Claim

Several people from Mishkeegogamang left for Toronto on June 8 to testify in the Canada Claim trial, where Mishkeegogamang is suing the governments of Ontario and Canada for damages relating to the flooding of Lake St. Joseph in the mid-1930s. Two elders, Levius Loon and Eva Skunk, were selected to testify at trial. Ronald Roundhead, Councillor David Masakeyash, and Chief Connie Gray-McKay also gave their testimony. The court proceeding will adjourn for summer, and further elders' testimony will take place in September.

"Very interesting facts which the community and council have not known have surfaced, including clear evidence of neglect by the Crown and Ontario Hydro," said David Masakeyash. "The litigation is going to be very costly in terms of legal representation, expert representation, expert reports, and more. All of this is necessary because we need to show proof to the court that these events were real. This lawsuit is all about justice for the community and accountability for those responsible. This is for the whole family of Mish, everybody and not just one group, past and present."

## Chief and Council Election Delayed



Elections Officer Elizabeth Redsky announces the names of all nominees at the radio station on June 8.

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what's happening on council and thinks that well-advertised community meetings could get more people involved.

Current councillor Bob Brisket echoes the same theme. "I propose that every band member has the right to know what has been determined by council by way of the financial situation," he said. He also challenges people to pursue education and training and get involved in the needed changes: "You are all aware that the change that you demand will not be produced by the chief and council you may elect - the change can only be made if YOU change also."

Councillor Mary Anne Panacheese says she's running again because she's excited about the work that's been done to strengthen the administration and management teams and she wants to see it continue until things are running smoothly.

Everyone is encouraged to talk to the other candidates to find out what they stand for. Most importantly, everyone needs to get out to vote. Remember, if you don't vote, you can't complain about the outcome. Check with the band office for the exact voting date - likely in the last week of July or early August.

## Nominee List for Mishkeegogamang Chief and Council

Elections Officer Elizabeth Redsky, who's from Shoal Lake, had a busy day at the election meeting on June 8. People were coming in to the radio station all day to make nominations and check the lists of people who had already been nominated. By the time Redsky announced the names on the air at the end of the day, nine people were nominated for Chief and 29 had their names put in for Councillor.

By the time the *Community Update* went to print, five people had pulled out of the race. Some candidates on this list may have already declined and candidates can still decline right up to the close of polling on election day.

### Chief Candidates

BOTTLE, Michael James  
DEROUIN, John  
GRAY-McKAY, Connie  
KAMINAWAISH, Glenn  
LOON, Marena  
WASSAYKEESIC, Thomas

### Council Candidates

BOTTLE, James  
PANACHEESE, Tracy  
BOTTLE, Michael James  
ROUNDHEAD, Ronald  
BRISKET, Kristin  
WAVY, Kenneth  
BRISKET, Robert  
SKUNK, Maureen  
BROWN, Lishia  
SKUNK, Michael  
DEROUIN, John  
SPADE, John Paul  
FOX, Brenda  
SPADE, Linda  
LOON, Eileen  
SPADE, Thomas Dino  
LOON, Marena  
WASSAYKEESIC, Jeffery  
MASAKEYASH, David  
WASSAYKEESIC, Laureen  
MISHENENE, Theodore  
WASSAYKEESIC, Thomas  
MUCKUCK, Gloria  
SKUNK, George John  
MUCKUCK, Ida  
PANACHEESE, Bella  
PANACHEESE, Mary Ann

Good Luck to everyone who is running and make sure you cast a ballot on election day!

## Broadband Project Moving Forward

The broadband project that will bring high-speed internet to Mishkeegogamang and surrounding communities started on June 1. The first phase of the project, from Saugeen First Nation to Pickle Lake, is scheduled for completion on September 1. Mishkeegogamang has guaranteed employment and involvement throughout this phase, and there are currently 12 to 15 people from Mish working on brush cutting, helping linemen, flagging, and fuel and equipment supply. Mishkeegogamang should be ready for broadband access this fall.

"There are opportunities for an entrepreneurship here where one might start a small business distributing the high-speed service," said David Masekeyash. "Interested individuals would work with the band to start this business, which would involve charging a fee to distribute broadband access in the community."

The second phase of the broadband project is scheduled to start this fall north of Pickle Lake. "Chief and council take the position that a more detailed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is required between the band and Bell Aliant," said Masekeyash, who is the band's point person on the project. "We are currently in discussions regarding this issue, and our position is that the MOU needs to solidify and guarantee Mishkeegogamang's involvement in terms of jobs and decision making."



Councillor David Masekeyash has his hands full these days with many files like mining and the Canada Claim.

## Queen's Health Outreach Teachers Welcomed by Mish

Bozhoo Mishkeegogamang! We are Eric Wychopen and Michaela Beynon, on behalf of Queen's Health Outreach (QHO), an organization that has been travelling to Mishkeegogamang and teaching at Missabay School for many years now. We began our stay by meeting with Chief Connie six weeks ago to discuss health issues prevalent in the community. Since then, we have been teaching health related lessons including physical, sexual, and mental health. Based

on information gathered by speaking with Daisy at the Nursing Station, we were able to tailor our lessons to the specific needs of the Mish community.

We recently finished up our teaching curriculum and are overwhelmed by the amount of important health information the students have remembered. Besides teaching, we have had an amazing time getting involved in many community events, such as delicious Feasts at Missabay

and organizing a big game of soccer during the Missabay P.D. Day. We have formed real bonds with the students and hope we have given them some tools that will enable them to make wise and healthy choices in the years to come.

As our stay comes to an end, we are saddened by the goodbyes we are faced with. Our stay in Mish would not have been successful without so many people helping and supporting us along the way. We wanted

to thank you, the Community, for opening your arms and welcoming us with smiles and waves. Whether we met you in person, or we drove past in and around the community, we felt welcomed at every turn. We want to send a huge thank you to the teachers and staff at Missabay. It was their generosity and dedication that allowed us to really make the most of our stay. Mishkeegogamang will forever hold a place in our hearts. Meegwetch!

# Summer Camp is Coming!

Art program for teens and young adults new this year

Mark August 1 to 14 on your calendar: the REACH Summer Camp is coming to Mishkeegogamang again! Many of the same Christians Horizons staff as last year will be back, running a week-long camp at the Main Reserve and another week-long camp at Ten Houses.

The two-hour daily outdoor camp for children includes soccer and baseball along with creative-thinking and team-building activities. A feature this year will be an art camp in the evenings for teens and young adults. Tracey Matthews, an artist with a degree in fine arts, will head up the program.

A "Survivor" night is planned where all of Mishkeegogamang will be encouraged to join in the fun. Friendly competition will encourage families to work together through various challenges, as in the TV show.

Summer camp is a time for all the kids to get together, and a chance for the CH staff to connect with the community. Camp director Matt Eckhardt says the staff wants to be involved with the community and help out wherever help is needed. The crew hopes to help with the housing lots and beautification projects between camp sessions and get to know people. They'd like to build into the community and help youth year-round, rather than just in the summer.

Last year the camp crew was told they'd be lucky if 15 kids showed up, but instead they often had over 40. Knocking on doors and picking kids up for camp added to the good turnout. If you have any questions, email Matt at meckhardt@christian-horizons.org or check Facebook by searching for Mishkeegogamang REACH.



The Christian Horizons REACH camp team includes (L-R): Amie Mariana Sider (Head of NationWares), Matt Eckhardt and Tracey Matthews.

# New Ambulance Arriving Soon

Mishkeegogamang is getting a new emergency response vehicle, allowing quicker response times for emergencies in the community. The ambulance is being donated by an Ontario company called Elite 911, through the work of Kerri-Jean Winteler of Christian Horizons.

When Winteler met Chief Connie Gray-McKay in Toronto in February, the two of them discussed the need for an ambulance in the community. From there, Winteler began to put the pieces in place, from the donation of the ambulance by Elite 911, to the Ministry of Health which will supply training and equipment. A medical supply company called Ferno is donating two stretchers.

Because of greater regulatory requirements and costs, the vehicle will not be an official ambulance, but rather a First Responder Vehicle. First Responders need two days of

training in CPR and five days of training as a First Responder. They don't need a special license to drive the vehicle, but are required to have regular re-training as First Responders.

The band will identify candidates for training, and get liability insurance for the vehicle.

Jake Hasson of Elite 911 gets lots of ambulances through his business, and he is looking for just the right one to refurbish for Mishkeegogamang. He envisions a 2003 - 2005 model with around 160,000 km, meaning about half its "vehicle life" will still be remaining. He wants a vehicle that runs regular fuel rather than diesel, for easier repair.

Christian Horizons is currently fundraising for gas and costs to get the vehicle to the community. They are hoping to deliver the vehicle to Mishkeegogamang at the end of July.



This team is working hard to get a fast-response medical vehicle to Mishkeegogamang L-R: Kerri-Jean Winteler (Christian Horizons), Jake Hasson (Elite 911), Paul Burston (Christian Horizons).



The VBS team: Daniel, Anna, Heather and Brad Soukup and Ron McVean

# VBS Camp Comes Back to Mish

Students from ages 4 - 120 are welcome to attend Vacation Bible School, happening this summer at Ten Houses (and Eric Lake and Ace Lake) from July 2 - 9 and at the Main Reserve from July 30 - August 6. Classes will be held in the morning and early afternoon. Later in the day and evening the VBS team will spend time socializing, playing soccer, having campfires, and swimming.

Team leaders Brad and Heather Soukup have been coming to Mishkeegogamang for the past 11 years. Heather has written a five-year VBS curriculum, including workbooks, specifically for the community. Originally the team taught an introduction to the Christian life. Now they are also taught how to live the Christian life and support each other in knowing

God and doing what's right. "It's so hard to be good in Oz," one of the teens told Brad last year. Brad says that "Ultimately our hope is for a transformed life, so they will become a strong positive influence on their friends."

The Soukups have come as a family over the years, originally with all four of their children. The oldest two are now on their own, so this year Anna, 16 and Daniel, 21, will accompany their parents on the approximately 16-hour trip from their home in Wisconsin. The entire family has many good friends and acquaintances in the community. "The people of Oz are not our projects. They are our friends," says Brad. "That's why we keep coming back. We love Oz and the people of Oz."

## Horseshoe Tourney Winners

Seven men's teams and four teams of women competed in a horseshoe tournament at the baseball diamond near Missabay School on June 5 and 6. Prizes included two weed eaters, room fans, and lawn chairs. Top spot in the men's side went to Frank and Ryan Kwandibens. David Kwiash and Jeff Loon finished second, with Farley Kwandibens and Durrell Gray taking third. The winners of the women's side were Maureen and Susan Skunk. April and Charlene Maskaeyash took second, while Mary Anne and Sarah Lee Kwandibens placed third. "Everybody enjoyed themselves, we had a BBQ at the end and handed out prizes," said Jeff Loon. "It was a lot of fun and we're looking forward to next year."



Plenty of kids were warming up during the horseshoe practice session, and a few looked like they could have given the adults a run for the money.



Fire Officer Robert Bottle at the band office

## Fire Officers Working on Response and Prevention

Robert Bottle is a Community Fire Officer for Mishkeegogamang who works with the Ministry of Natural Resources. Bottle and his partner, Hardy Skunk, respond to fires and call in assistance when required. They also spend time working with the public on fire prevention and educating kids about the dangers of playing with fire.

Before the massive fire that forced the community's evacuation, Robert said there were several close calls this spring, with several fires at Ten Houses this spring and six fires on the main reserve. One of those fires crept up behind Mervin Maskaeyash's house and was dangerously close to getting out of control. There were also several fires in the Pickle Lake area before the big one, with one of them taking three days to put out.

According to Robert, one of the biggest fire dangers in the community comes from kids who start fires so they can see the water bombers come in and drop their loads. Even though the big Pickle Lake fire appears to have been caused by lightning, kids playing with fire is obviously a huge problem. "Some people don't take the time to think about the severity of playing with fires, especially close to a residence," Bottle said. "It might seem like fun and games until something traumatic happens, and people's lives can be endangered. A lot of kids think

it's fun to set fires – it's a social thing too, maybe we need more parents knowing where there kids are and disciplining them."

The local forest fire hazard level has been high to extreme in June, and the community evacuation serves as an unfortunate lesson on how dangerous wildfires can be. People are reminded to avoid burning when it's windy, always attend their fires, and make sure they are put dead out before leaving. And kids: never play with matches! Three people were charged with starting a fire in Pickle Lake this spring, and arrests will be made in Mishkeegogamang if people light forest fires on purpose. "People are going to be charged eventually, it's just a matter of time," said Bottle.

The *Community Update* talked to Robert a few weeks before the evacuation, and his words are even more relevant in light of the events in late June. He mentioned the out-of-control wildfire that recently destroyed nearly half the town of Slave Lake, Alberta, and pointed out that the same thing could happen here if conditions are right. "Especially with the amount of bush we have up here, with all the black spruce, they can carry out a fire very quickly," he said. "If these fires continue, that's the direction we're heading in – if we ever get caught in the right wind, it's coming."



## All-Star Going to Red River Cup with Thunder Bay Knights



Football all-star William Mallery has had a very good year. Mallery finished Grade 9 this year in Thunder Bay and also played offensive lineman for the St. Patrick Fighting Saints. The Saints finished fourth in their division, which is the best they have done in years. In just his first year playing football, the fifteen-year-old made the cut for Thunder Bay's All-Star U16 Knights football team. After training all year, the U16 Knights will travel to Brandon, Manitoba on July 23 for the week-long Red River Cup tournament. The Mallery family moved from Mishkeegogamang to Thunder Bay in 2007 so that William could make friends before high school. "We are very proud of him," said his dad, Eric. "You can always see that William is trying his best. He enjoys lining up against bigger guys for the challenge." Congratulations to William on his successful year, and best of luck at the Red River Cup!

# Negotiations with Rockex Mine Stalled

Mishkeegogamang is in a holding pattern with Rockex mining company over its exploration activities in the Lake St. Joseph area. Rockex wants to continue exploration on their Lake St. Joe properties, particularly around Eagle Island, which has a mineral source of iron and gold.

“We do not want to enter into any agreement or allow any exploration at this point because the plans for the project are quite extensive and may result in negative impacts, primarily to the environment,” said Councilor David Masakeyash. “There are also some potential positive long-term benefits like employment and business opportunities. Therefore, Chief and Council are taking time to reflect on what is good for its community, its members, and the environment.”

Slate Falls First Nation is also involved in the Rockex discussions because of its

overlapping traditional use of this area. The mineral source Rockex wants to mine extends 40-50 miles from Eagle Island to the shores of Soules Bay in a narrow formation running west to east. Open-pit mining took place in the area during the 1970s and 80s, and Rockex is not currently extracting minerals from the area. “We will get back to the discussion table with Rockex after the band election, and we’ll consult more with the trappers in our communities as well as Slate Falls,” said Masakeyash. “Council calls this the ‘mini Ring of Fire’ because of area’s mineral abundance. Rockex’s analysis showed that there may be enough minerals there to mine for 50 years. A smelter was also discussed with this project, as well as a rail line and electricity hook-up. Chief and Council are reluctant to continue these discussions at this time.”



*Elder Jim Bottle at Pashkokogan Healing Lodge with AJ, James, and Tatasha*

Ronald Roundhead was proud of his grandson Ishmael for taking part in his first moose hunt earlier this year. The moose they took down was near Ronald’s campsite off North Road.



*Youngster Ishmael Roundhead helps prepare dinner.*



*Ishmael and his dad Joshua.*

## HELP WANTED

Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation is looking for a **Director of Operations** and an **Economic Development Officer**. If you are interested in applying for either of these positions, you can view the complete job descriptions at [www.mishkeegogamang.blogspot.com](http://www.mishkeegogamang.blogspot.com) or call the band office.

## DID YOU KNOW

that you can read the *Mishkeegogamang Community Update* on the internet? All the back issues and the current edition can be found at the bottom of the home page at [www.mishkeegogamang.ca](http://www.mishkeegogamang.ca)

## Mishkeegogamang First Nation First Annual Fishing Derby

### Winners List – Saturday April 9, 2011

1. Levi Kwandibens – 37” LCD flat screen TV with Home Theatre system
2. Jerry Lastheels – Living Room Suite
3. Steven “Aggo” Lawson – Outdoor Range
4. Justin Kwandibens – Duck Decoys
5. Linda Kaminawaish – Duck Decoys
6. Jerry Lastheels – Blanket Set
7. Jeffrey Loon – Ski-Doo Helmet
8. John Kwandibens – Pots and Utensils
9. Mike Skunk – Toy Set

**Congratulations to all the winners!**

**Meegweetch to all this year’s participants and we’ll see you again next year!**



*Five-year-old Kressida Loon was having lots of fun playing at Missabay School in early June. See you next time...*