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# MISHKEEGOGAMANG OJIBWAY NATION Community Update

## Freedom of Speech Has Limits

The Chief and Council of Mishkeegogamang have had to deal recently with some widely distributed emails critical of them and their actions. Because they believe the accusations are harmful and untrue, they have sought a legal opinion on the matter. What they have discovered, in brief:

*The law of defamation is intended to protect reputations. In Ontario, the Libel and Slander Act describes what sort of speech is acceptable and which is not. For an individual to be found guilty of defamation through slander, certain requirements must be met. Two are especially important:*

1. *The statements must be false*
2. *The statements must be made to a third party*

*An individual can defend a defamation charge by proving that the remarks were "fair comment." The person who made the remarks would have to prove that the remarks in question were an honestly held opinion. Such an opinion does not have to be popular or sensible, but it does have to be based upon some facts. Even if some of the facts on which the opinion is formed are untrue, the opinion may still be honestly held.*

*In practice, the law might allow a member of the community to say that a councilor is "doing a bad job" even if most people disagreed. However, nobody would be permitted to make allegations that a councilor was a thief or that they were dishonest, unless they could prove this to be true.*

*In this case, the author of the letters and emails makes a series of extremely serious allegations against individuals. The comments do not appear to be the result of honest belief; instead they appear to be founded on malice. If the allegations are untrue, the individual can be sued for slander.*

Chief and Council's wish is to restore trust and to avoid expensive and divisive litigation. It is important to note, however, that according to the laws of Ontario and Mishkeegogamang's own community customs, individuals are not free to make slanderous comments about anyone, including those who hold office in the community.



Muckuck sisters: Amelia, Mary and Francis Muckuck are living in their traditional territory near Menako Lake, taking care of the land and the graves of their family members.

## Guardians of the Homeland

Francis Muckuck and her sisters have twice seen forest fires devastate the trees around their home at Menako Lake. But today, along with the Mishkeegogamang flag, the pines and birches soar high into the sky, a testimony to the fact that the sisters have lived here for nearly a century. The "Five Alive" have become four after Annie passed away in March of this year and only three of the "Four Alive," Francis, Amelia and Mary, still live at Menako since Eva moved to a nursing home in Sioux Lookout because of declining health. The remaining three are strong in spirit, although they move more slowly and now need help to do their traditional tasks of keeping paths through the forest clear and tending their family's graveyard.

One day this spring the sisters were surprised to see their doorknob turn even though they hadn't heard anyone approach. They watched mesmerized as several curious bears took a look around their one-room cabin. After a while the seven visiting bears disappeared into the bush, and in spite of the multitudes of bears in the area this year, they

haven't seen one since.

The sisters credit their long lives to living naturally, in tune with creation. Once in a while they sense there is a being out there – something strange. They hear sounds and they know that something's out there, watching. When asked if this worries them, they say stoutly, "Not at all. We don't care." They wait for whatever it is to show up. In fact when asked what they are afraid of, Francis and Amelia answer unanimously: "Nothing!" Upon further reflection they confess that sometimes the weather scares them a bit, for instance once when high winds reduced the trees around their home to matchsticks or recently when a late spring storm visited them with wind, thunder, hail and snow.

Their faith keeps them strong, said Francis Muckuck, the oldest sister. Every evening the Muckucks go outside and sing hymns of thanksgiving to the Creator, then go to sleep in peace.

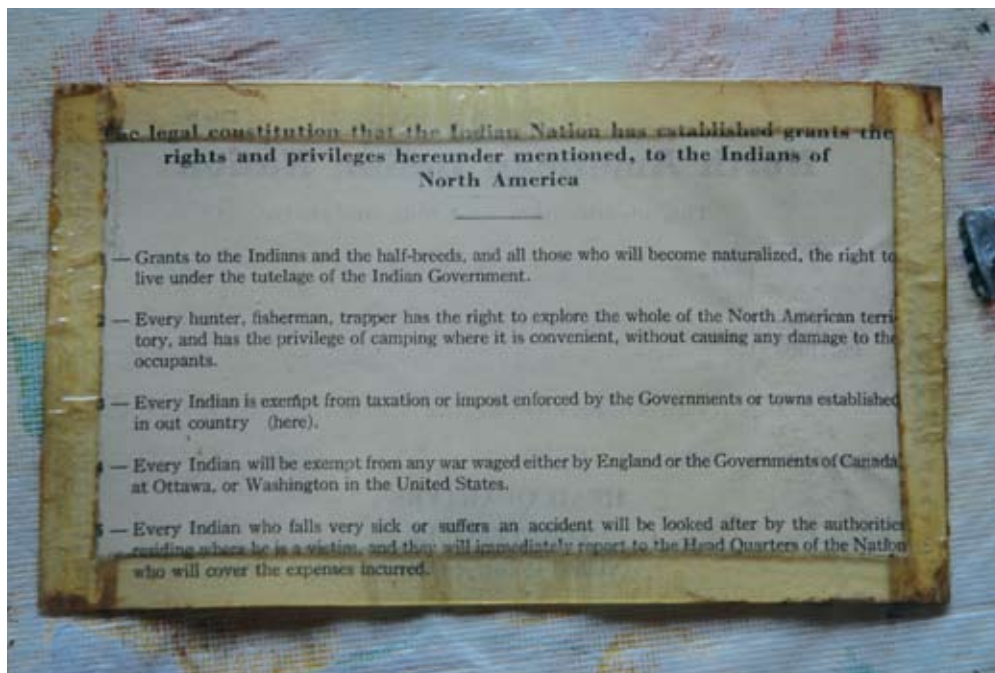
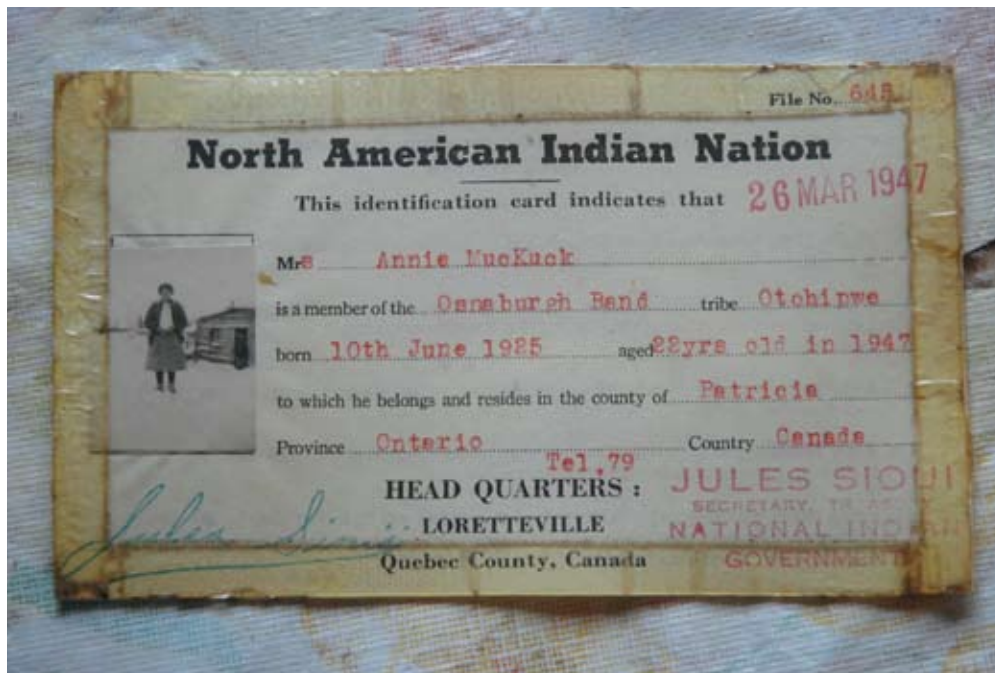
Help is needed regularly now that the sisters are getting older. Visitors from Mishkeegogamang as well as a few others

living in the area come to the Muckuck's home bringing food and help. The Muckucks say Musselwhite Mine used to come each year with a Christmas hamper; they saw this as a kind of thanks for passing through their traditional lands, but it no longer happens. The sisters are doing what their mother challenged them to do before she died – taking care of the family lands and tending the graveyard. "This is who we are," said Amelia Muckuck. "We are always going to be here."

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The Muckkuck sisters still have the treaty cards that were given to them in 1927.

# Finances Past and Present

## How we got into financial trouble

To understand today's financial position, one needs to look at expenditures that were made as far back as the early 1990s. In 1992 Mishkeegogamang had a \$317,000.00 accumulated surplus, but by 1995 there was an accumulated deficit of \$3.4 million. From 1993 - 1998 Chief and Council spent a great deal of money in legal fees to negotiate the hydro settlement. The budget didn't have enough money for those expenditures and during those years they also went into debt in other ways. As a result, the band's bank overdraft at that time was over \$3 million. \$1.8 million of this was from overdrafts in administration, including the legal fees for negotiating the hydro settlement. But an additional \$1.4 million resulted from the building of urgently needed housing (10 log houses were built during this period). Smaller deficits in education, projects and welfare also contributed to the total.

These deficits continued to mount until the first hydro payment was received in 1999. That year there was a small surplus. Again from 2000 to 2003, the deficit increased due to new construction: 12 housing units in 1999, the school construction beginning in 2000 and 18 housing units built in 2003. There were valid reasons for the original debt - negotiations and capital spending on the log

houses were the main expenses. But the debt is not just due to administrative spending in the past. Band operated businesses have also contributed to deficits. The two incorporated companies - Asin Construction and the New Oz group - also run deficits and are now in the process of being dissolved. The Housing Program is supposed to break even (revenue from rent is supposed to equal upkeep plus mortgages) but because rent is often not paid or collected, this money has to be taken from general revenues, and thus housing contributes to the deficit.

## How we're getting out

Mishkeegogamang's accumulated deficit in 2007 was \$2,550,737.00. At the end of 2008 that was down to \$1,145,421.00. Indian Affairs took some deficits off the books which had been there in error, and some others have been paid off through careful management.

Based on the remedial management plan, the projected surplus for 2009 is \$400,000.00, which will bring the accumulated deficit down to around \$700,000.00. This is less than the 8 per cent of the total budget at which co-management is necessary. Through this reduction of the accumulated deficit and other required steps, the band is well on the way to working its way out of co-management.

CHART SHOWING THE TREND OF ACCUMULATED SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR FIRST NATION & NON-FIRST NATION ENTITIES

FOR PERIOD ENDING: MARCH 31

Entity	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Mishkeegogamang First Nation	313,302.00	32,738.00	902,835.00	2,860,126.00	338,883.00	553,476.00	476,944.00	10,579.00	16,416.00	785,365.00	785,365.00	1,485,711.00	873,550.00	1,173,712.00	1,709,787.00	1,222,628.00	1,021,068.00
Asin Construction	-	-	-	-	-	-	32,365.00	112,563.00	125,854.00	87,498.00	87,498.00	240,882.00	228,424.00	282,109.00	297,174.00	321,346.00	76,189.00
Amikoweesh Housing Authority	-	-	-	-	-	-	42,624.00	54,177.00	44,600.00	76,224.00	151,336.00	208,327.00	191,656.00	527,274.00	686,212.00	625,542.00	16,244.00
Amikoweesh CMHC Housing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,100.00	38,493.00	67,664.00	115,448.00	245,071.00	280,841.00	341,860.00	97,153.00
R. Lastheels Garage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-2,385.00	5,530.00	34,664.00	9,532.00	1,857.00	5,867.00	12,629.00	20,664.00	26,469.00	8,756.00
Ontario Hydro Settlement Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	99.00	809,006.00
New Oz Group	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,665.00	3,665.00	5,515.00	2,205.00
Community Store	30,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,278.00
Other terminated projects	25,931.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL PER FISCAL YEAR</b>	<b>317,371.00</b>	<b>32,738.00</b>	<b>902,835.00</b>	<b>2,860,126.00</b>	<b>338,883.00</b>	<b>553,476.00</b>	<b>487,203.00</b>	<b>66,580.00</b>	<b>92,140.00</b>	<b>809,855.00</b>	<b>878,164.00</b>	<b>2,004,441.00</b>	<b>1,414,945.00</b>	<b>2,244,460.00</b>	<b>2,998,343.00</b>	<b>2,550,737.00</b>	<b>380,121.00</b>
Adjusted	-	-	-	-	80,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.00	10.00	6.00	-	-	-
Adjusted	-	-	-	-	167,558.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>ACCUMULATED CONSOLIDATED DEFICIT</b>	<b>317,371.00</b>	<b>350,109.00</b>	<b>552,726.00</b>	<b>3,412,852.00</b>	<b>3,999,293.00</b>	<b>553,476.00</b>	<b>487,203.00</b>	<b>66,580.00</b>	<b>92,140.00</b>	<b>809,855.00</b>	<b>878,164.00</b>	<b>2,004,437.00</b>	<b>1,414,935.00</b>	<b>2,244,454.00</b>	<b>2,998,343.00</b>	<b>2,550,737.00</b>	<b>1,145,421.00</b>
<b>Current year added to accumulated from previous year</b>																	
<b>AUDIT OPINIONS</b>																	
			denial	no opinion	qualified	qualified	qualified	qualified	unqualified	unqualified	unqualified	unqualified	unqualified	unqualified	unqualified	unqualified	unqualified
DEFICIT CREATED BY:		\$349,000 worth of consultants, interpreters, honoraria, elders meetings and legal fees	\$865,000 worth of consultants, interpreters, honoraria, elders meetings and legal fees	Hydro settlement dollars were pledged to build log homes and pay legal fees - bank overdraft at \$3 million dollars		Could not locate audit to break out the entities		Started construction on 12 Housing units	Started construction on the school				Started construction on 18 Housing Units				

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	1991-1993	1992-1995	1995-1997	1997-1999	1999-2001	2001-2003	2003-2005	2005-2007	2007-2009
<b>Chief</b>	Roy Kaminawaish	Ronald Roundhead	Ronald Roundhead	Ronald Roundhead	Ronald Roundhead	Ronald Roundhead	Ronald Roundhead	Connie Gray	Connie Gray
<b>Councillor</b>	Gordon Wassaykeesic	Gordon Wassaykeesic	Connie Gray	Connie Gray	Connie Gray	Connie Gray	Connie Gray	Thomas Spade	Thomas Spade
<b>Councillor</b>	Simon Skunk	Jim Roundhead	Lizzie Gray	Robert Brisket	Jeffrey Loon	Jeffrey Loon	Thomas Spade	Laureen Wassaykeesic	James Bottle
<b>Councillor</b>	James Masakeyash	James Masakeyash	James Masakeyash	Thomas Wassaykeesic	Thomas Wassaykeesic	Elmer Skunk	Jeffrey Loon	Thomas Wassaykeesic	Thomas Wassaykeesic
<b>Councillor</b>	Josie Necan	Theodore Mishcenc	Charles Bottle	Theodore Mishcenc	Laureen Wassaykeesic	Laureen Wassaykeesic	Laureen Wassaykeesic	Mary Ann Panacheese	Mary Ann Panacheese
<b>Councillor</b>	Thaddeus Ash	Thaddeus Ash	David Masakeyash	David Masakeyash	David Masakeyash	David Masakeyash	David Masakeyash	David Masakeyash	David Masakeyash
<b>Band/Finance Manager</b>	Jimmie Roundhead	Sarah McKay	Martha Loon	Martha Loon	Martha Loon	Dena Wavy	Dena Wavy	Dena Wavy	Dena Wavy



## Election for Chief and Council

The election for chief and council will be held at the Youth Centre, located at 63B section of the reserve, on Wednesday, the 15th of July, 2009.

### Nominations for Chief

Basketwang, Leo  
 Bottle, Michael  
 Derouin, John  
 Gray-McKay, Connie  
 Kwandibens, Wayne  
 Loon, Marena  
 Neekan, Wayne Jeffrey  
 Wassaykeesic, Gordon  
 Wassaykeesic, Tom  
 Wesley, Norman D

### Nominations for Councillor

Bergman, Dennis  
 Biedrzycki, Linda  
 Bottle, Erin Marie  
 Bottle, James  
 Bottle, Michael  
 Fox, Brenda  
 Janssen, Leslie Janice  
 Kaminawaish, Marjie (Nora)  
 Kwandibens, Natasha  
 Kwandibens, Wayne  
 Loon, Martha  
 Masakeyash, David  
 Masakeyash, Glenda  
 Masakeyash, Mervin  
 McLean, Wanita (Nita)  
 Muckuck, Anastasia  
 Muckuck, Gloria  
 Muckuck, Ida  
 Muckuck, Lorne (Billy)  
 Neekan, Rachel  
 Neekan, Wayne Jeffrey  
 Panacheese, George  
 Panacheese-Skunk, Mary Ann  
 Roundhead, Donna  
 Roundhead, Isaiah  
 Spade, Ivan  
 Spade, John Paul  
 Spade, Thomas (Tommy)  
 Trembley, Ernest  
 Wassaykeesic, Laureen  
 Wassaykeesic, Tom  
 Wavey, Shawn  
 Wavy, Geraldine  
 Wesley, Norman D



Former Chief Ronald Roundhead says the people of Mishkeegogamang must protect the forest.

## Respect for Every Species

*A former chief talks about the spiritual aspects of illness and resource management*

Ronald Roundhead wears a small red ribbon on his cap. It's his way of showing he is proud to be a "red man." Although he is not yet 60 years old, the former chief is honoured to be called an "elder" on the Mishkeegogamang First Nation. He feels it is a sign of respect.

"I listened to the elders in the early 70s," he said. "What they teach is to put respect ahead of all issues. If you want to gain respect you have to respect every species, every society."

Roundhead said that in days gone by, the people were a part of nature. All of nature was considered to have a spirit – every leaf, every living thing. Because they were also part of nature, the people were much more aware of their own spirit. First Nations people were "genetically programmed" to protect themselves, from a spiritual aspect, from sickness and disease. "We were protected against anything roaming around to attach to our body because we had our spirit to protect us."

"These days," said Roundhead, "ninety-nine per cent of viruses going around are man-made. This takes a toll on First Nations

people. Our body is very vulnerable to anything manmade, like swine flu, because it's not spiritual."

Roundhead said it is this reasoning that makes forestry and mining such a very sensitive issue. "How can you destroy something that's part of you, the very spirit to you?" He compared the First Nations people destroying the forest to the Pope condemning the Holy Bible.

When dealing with forestry issues, said Roundhead, his people have to make sure to carve out land for their unique needs, and make sure every species survives, including every bug in the forest. "If not, we will be punished from the Creator. All we see is God given. How can you destroy what is given to you?" he asked. "Sure, people get jobs and that's very good, but what are the spiritual consequences?"

Roundhead admits forestry is a very complicated issue, and one even the lawyers don't completely understand. He encourages people to remember that the consequences of decisions made today could affect the people seven generations from now.

"If you squish a bug for enjoyment, there will be consequences, a price to pay. It might not be me, but it might be a grandchild, that's what I'm talking about."

## Lateral Violence and Bullying in the Workplace

**Bullying** is an "offensive abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or abuse of power conducted by an individual or group against each other, which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence and which may cause them to suffer stress. Bullying is behaviour which is generally persistent, systematic and ongoing" (Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying, 2001, p. 10)

**Lateral Violence, horizontal violence and horizontal hostility** are terms used to describe the physical, verbal and emotional abuse of an employee or co-worker. This violence can be manifested in verbal or non-verbal behaviours. The thirteen most common forms of Lateral Violence are: non-verbal innuendo, verbal affront, undermining activities, withholding information, sabotage, in-fighting, scapegoating, backstabbing, failure to respect privacy, broken confidences, slander, defamation of character and internet bullying.

**Disruptive behaviour** is behaviour that interferes with effective communication among workers and negatively impacts performance and outcomes.

**Workplace bullying** is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work.

**Verbal abuse** is a disruptive form of behaviour involving verbal communication that is associated with horizontal violence and bullying. Such abuse can include silence, backbiting, gossip, and passive behaviour.

**Implications of not managing lateral violence and bullying**  
 Conflict in the workplace results in serious negative outcomes for all employees and members of the community. Unresolved conflict and disruptive behaviour can affect safety and quality performance in the workplace. Bullying and lateral violence have a negative impact on the ability of individuals to remain in their jobs long term.

## Workplace bullying unacceptable in Mishkeegogamang

It doesn't just happen in the school yard. Bullying can be a problem with adults as well and can be difficult to deal with in a work environment. It can interfere with work performance and the delivery of good quality work.

Mishkeegogamang First Nation has adopted a policy to promote a work environment that is pleasant and healthful, comfortable, free from intimidation and hostility, as well as free of verbal and physical abuse. In fact, Mishkeegogamang First Nation has zero tolerance for behaviour that is verbally or physically abusive and which could interfere with work performance and

the delivery of a safe work environment.

To support victims of abuse, the policy states that employees who report verbal or physical abuse will not be subject to discrimination, retaliation or termination for reporting concerns to their supervisor or the administration. The accused will also be assured of proper investigation and due process through the policy.

Staff must have professional and ethical behaviour and recognize and appropriately address bullying. Communication is to be respectful with all staff participating in abuse prevention.

### Zero tolerance for abuse

Managers are expected to implement zero tolerance policies. They are to investigate reports in an appropriate manner and consider adequate safeguards for the accused. They will promote good communication among all staff and management and provide support, education and counselling to victims and perpetrators.

The need for further training in conflict management and conflict resolution has also been recognized.





The Chief & Council are being proactive regarding winter burials in the graveyard at Pickle Lake.

## Mishkeegogamang First Nation Affirms Historical Burial Rights in Traditional Territory

The Ojibway Nation of Mishkeegogamang is asserting its historic rights to bury members of its community in accordance with the band's traditional practices. The Chief and Council of the Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation are taking a public stance in response to an ongoing disagreement with the Township of Pickle Lake over winter burials.

Because township by-laws prevent burials during winter months, band members were forced to place relatives' bodies into storage for months before they could be put to rest in the Pine Ridge Cemetery at Pickle Lake. These by-laws contravene Ojibway traditions in which band members are laid to rest a short time after death. Not being able to bury loved ones in traditional fashion has been very upsetting to members of the community in recent years.

With strong support from Mishkeegogamang community members, Chief and Council have called for the problem to be resolved. A statement to the

Township of Pickle Lake states, in part:

We are respectful of the township's position but it is necessary to understand that our people have been buried according to tradition in this area for centuries and we want to continue to exercise those practices of our ancestors. The band is requesting that the township allow winter burials with a township-approved contractor.

Burial traditions are protected aboriginal rights that take precedence over local by-laws. The Supreme Court of Canada has been active in recent years in upholding such rights.

Mishkeegogamang has raised the issue with the Township of Pickle Lake but has as yet received no response. The band is hoping the issue will be resolved on friendly terms in the near future; however, it is also prepared to take more formal action if progress is not achieved by the end of summer.

## Drug Testing a Possibility for Job Applicants and Candidates

Mishkeegogamang is concerned about drug use among band employees and wants to implement a drug testing policy. This is a controversial practice in Canada. Canadian law forbids employee drug testing except in special circumstances; however, First Nations appear to have the freedom to impose a broader range of testing on reserve.

There are limits, though, to the extent to which First Nations can regulate drug use. Last year INAC sent a letter to the Peguis First Nation rejecting anti-drug by-laws created by the band. The letter stated that the band's by-law power only applied to minor offenses such as smoking or animals.

In response to this letter from INAC, other bands have taken the position that they do have the authority to regulate drug use. The chief of the Peguis band proposes to get around INAC's position by implementing

his anti-drug plan as part of an employee policy instead of a by-law.

Mishkeegogamang could require pre-employment testing for any position where drug use might put at risk the employee's own safety or the safety of others. In addition, the band can create a policy requiring drug testing every time there is an accident or when there is strong reason to suspect drug use is taking place. The band may consider steps to make drug testing less invasive, such as choosing saliva testing over urine testing. This would reduce the likelihood that the policy would be challenged.

Drug testing is being considered for candidates for chief and council. The band does not have the authority to force candidates to submit to a drug test. The band could, however, encourage voluntary tests and then post the results.

### When Smokers Quit —The Health Benefits Over Time

**20 minutes after quitting:** Your heart rate and blood pressure drops.

**12 hours after quitting:**

- The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
- The oxygen level in your blood increases to normal

**24 hours after quitting:**

- Your chance of heart attack is reduced

**48 hours after quitting:**

- Nerve endings start re-growing
- Ability to smell and taste is enhanced
- Walking becomes easier

**2 weeks to 3 months after quitting:**

Your circulation improves and your lung function increases.

**1 to 9 months after quitting:** Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move

mucus out of the lungs) regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs, and reduce the risk of infection.

**1 year after quitting:** The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.

**5 years after quitting:** Your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker 5 to 15 years after quitting.

**10 years after quitting:** The lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker's. The risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix, and pancreas decrease.

**15 years after quitting:** The risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker's

*The American Cancer Society*

## Meet the Early Childhood Development Coordinators

The Early Childhood Development Coordinator provides intervention, prevention, support and encouragement for families with children 0 - 6 years.

Currently, we are planning to have a workshop called "Moving Forward From Within" in July. The workshop will be for families of the program and of course for anyone else that is interested in participating. Child care will be provided. All community service workers and elders

will be invited to take part in the workshop. The purpose for this is to inform individuals and families of the existing programs and services that are available within the community. As community service workers, we can work collaboratively in providing consistent and effective assistance, referring individuals and families to appropriate services outside the community or bringing in outside professional help as needed. With consistency we will be able to use

the services with the community and for the community towards healing, healthier families and healthier lifestyles.

In August, there will be a Little Kids Club, ages 0 - 3 years and a Big Kids Club, ages 4 - 6 years. There will be two different groups alternating weeks during the month. The purpose is to bring out the families with children to have some summer activities and to have fun. Instead of having the regular Child Snack Program, where a snack

bag is delivered on a monthly basis, lunch and snacks will be provided. Some of the activities will include swimming, arts and crafts, sewing for moms and shelf-making for dads.

Other services provided through this program are diapers, enfamil, baby food, gift bags for newborn babies, community kitchens, prenatal coupons and a parent/child drop-in center.





The police are warning people to be on the lookout for bears in the community.



Representatives from the OPP and NAPS meet with Chief and Council on a monthly basis to discuss areas of concern.

## Regular police updates improve services

Chief and Council have monthly meetings with the Nishnawbe Aski Police Service (NAPS) and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). Chief Connie Gray-McKay said this regular contact has created a good working relationship between the police and the First Nation and assists with program development and proactive policing.

"I don't know what the police are dealing with on a daily basis. We wanted to meet with the police so the council can gauge what's going on in the community and can program based on activities," she said. The meetings are also an avenue for people to bring issues to the police through the council.

The police find they can provide more effective services because when they meet with NAPS and the council they have a better understanding of the community issues. "After NAPS took over the responsibilities on the reserve some of our members lost touch with what was going on here," said OPP Sgt. Nathan Schmidt. "After these meetings I inform our officers about the issues to they can understand and be proactive in their approaches."

"At these informal meetings there is an opportunity to bring up problems that the police or the chief and council see in the community," said NAPS Senior Constable Mel Cotes.

One of the best outcomes of these meetings has been police courtesy stops to elders and people in remote areas. The police call them "remote resident visits." Officers are encouraged to stop in and say hello to people living in the bush without phones and hydro. "We stop at their cabins just to check up, see if everything's ok and ask if they have any concerns," said Sgt. Schmidt. In May the OPP reported 46 of these visits.

NAPS, the on-reserve police force, is jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments. In Mishkeegogamang, NAPS currently has a full complement of six officers and has just acquired a third cruiser. The OPP, a legislated entity based in Pickle Lake, has 12 officers and a sergeant. The OPP assists NAPS and polices Highway 599 and the off-reserve and "unorganized" reserve areas, such as Mile 50.



The need for housing maintenance and new housing has band council and administration thinking "outside the box."

## The high cost of housing

The housing program on reserve is in a serious deficit position which is affecting the living conditions of band members. The First Nation built 30 Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) houses in Mishkeegogamang. With monthly CMHC subsidies as well as rent payments, the band should be able to cover the cost of the mortgages and the maintenance of these homes. However, even the most carefully thought out plan can fail if one of the partners doesn't fulfill their obligation.

According to Co-Manager Myrna Whiteway, the bottom line for the 30 CMHC houses is that due to rent not being paid or collected on these units, the band can't fulfill its obligation to CMHC. CMHC provides a monthly subsidy for maintenance but the second revenue source, rent, is not forthcoming. Our agreement states that we have to put money into a separate bank account called the replacement reserve fund. "There's a snowball effect. If you don't put money into the replacement fund, how do you put money into repairs and things like appliances and insurance?" asked Whiteway.

The CMHC audit reports a shortfall in rent collections of \$45,024.00, with a total housing loss of \$97,170.00 for the year ending March 31, 2008. The current total accumulated deficit is \$415,355.00 in CMHC housing. Operating costs, such as rising insurance costs, add to the accumulated housing deficit.

The band signed an operating agreement with CMHC for an 18-unit project as well as a 12-unit project. Tenants also sign rental agreements before they move into these units.

The agreements between CMHC and

the band are for 25 years. At the end of 25 years the band owns the units and no longer gets subsidy from CMHC for maintenance. Once the mortgages are paid off the band has options to refinance for renovations.

To add to the housing problems, there is a 10-year-old deficiency list on the 18-unit project. That means that a \$37,000.00 CMHC holdback will not be paid until the outstanding issues, such as landscaping, are dealt with. Last year a packer was rented by the Operations and Maintenance department to deal with some of these deficiencies and so far \$37,000.00 has been paid in rental costs for the unit. The rental company was willing to sell the machine last year for \$39,000.00, but later made a deal to sell it to the band for \$49,000.00. A week later the selling price went to \$50,000.00. These types of irresponsible decisions and lack of communication between departments and individuals add to the difficulties of the bottom line on any program.

"Housing is considered an asset on the band books," said Whiteway, "but is it actually an asset?"

Council, along with band administration is trying to "think outside the box" for solutions to the housing problems. Options for home ownership are being considered; also under consideration are incentives for tenants to put sweat equity into home renovations with the band paying for materials. Whiteway has started negotiations with Frontiers Foundation about the possibility of coming to Mishkeegogamang to assist homeowners with renovations.

Twenty new modular homes have been ordered but the lot preparation for these units is on hold until after the election for Chief and Council.





Jeff Loon (inset) is program manager for Operations and Maintenance. Fire truck: A new fire truck will service the main reserve where there are fire hydrants for a water supply.



Watch out for young people playing and walking/running along the road, especially if they are wearing dark clothing at night.

## New Fire Truck Serving North Side

Summer is a busy time for the reserve's operations and maintenance program. Jeff Loon, program manager, said a recent highlight is the acquisition of a new fire truck. It is the first fire truck for the First Nation, bought to reduce the number of houses being lost to fire. "The point is to at least get the fire under control so we can get inside to see if anybody is inside," he said. Basic training was given to eight potential firefighters in June. There are three people with the DZ license required to drive the new truck.

Loon said they had to get a plan in place to satisfy CMHC (Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation) after several houses burned to the ground. The fire truck will be kept in the North Side, or Main Reserve,

where there is water available with a fire hydrant system. Without a quick water supply on other parts of the reserve, it makes little sense to station the fire truck elsewhere.

Loon said his program is trying to get more equipment for the summer work projects. Pads need to be built for 20 new homes coming in and other houses need to be brought up to CMHC standards with landscaping work. Many of the reserve's houses are lower than the road, making drainage an issue that needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

Another summer project involves the construction of a new road around the gravel pit as well as general reserve road maintenance.



Summer is here and with it comes opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities.



Robert Bottle: Robert is the Patrol Sergeant for the local Rangers.

# Rangers provide military presence in Mishkeegogamang

Patrol Sergeant Robert Bottle is in charge of the Canadian Rangers in Mishkeegogamang. The Ranger program is a branch of the Canadian military. The local unit includes about 14 adult Rangers, including NAPS and OPP members, as well as local participants. Numbers can fluctuate, depending on police transfers and other population changes.

Rangers are lightly equipped, self-sufficient mobile forces in support of the Canadian Forces' sovereignty and domestic operation tasks. Their role is to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada which cannot be covered by other elements of the military. Their motto is "Vigilans" which means "The Watchers."

Rangers are trained for ground search and rescue and part of Robert Bottle's responsibility and that of the other adult

Rangers is to show and teach young people such things as traditional military and survival skills. Mishkeegogamang has about 30 young people between the ages of 12 and 18 registered with the program. Rangers strive to be role models for youth and a positive influence on their peers. Many Rangers across the country are active in their communities and hold leadership positions.

There are approximately 4,200 Canadian Rangers in 163 patrols across Canada. Many Canadian Rangers are Aboriginal.

"We are supposed to assist in any emergency," said Bottle. The Rangers were involved in providing security during a recent house fire and would always be ready to help out with a search and rescue if necessary in the traditional territories.

Opportunities for those involved in the

Ranger program have included traveling to North Bay for a winter survival exercise and participating in ice breaking and flood water training in Fort Albany. The military has supplied the First Nation with equipment such as canoes, tents, camping stoves and life jackets.

"It's about living a healthy life," said Bottle. He said the patrol keeps an eye open for unusual predators and attempts to support those going out hunting or fishing on their traditional lands.

"People should contact the Rangers when they go out to their traditional territory," said Bottle. "It's not because we're nosy." Knowing when people are going out, when they are expected to arrive home and approximately where they will be could make all the difference in a rescue operation, should that become necessary.

### July Tent Meeting

July 24 - 30

Location: Ten Houses 63A

Guest speakers:

Lavene Spence and Carl Day

Contact person:

Penny Skunk 285-2838



## Youth Becoming Aware of the Impact of Residential Schools

Mishkeegogamang's Shannon Roundhead, a student at Dennis Franklin Cromarty (DFC) high school in Thunder Bay, has been influential in informing people about the intergenerational impact of residential schools. Roundhead has presented a power point project, prepared by DFC students in 2008, in many different communities, providing valuable education to Ontario youth.

The presentation shows how residential schools continue to affect not only those who went to the schools, but their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Effects such as low self esteem, addictions, teen pregnancy and a loss of confidence come directly from residential school, according to the report.

The students' research found that, as a result of the residential school experience, First Nations people today can experience feelings of depression, loneliness, shame and blame. They often have feelings of being unclean or dirty and don't know how to grieve. Residential school has left scars and people are living in poverty.

Youth are directly affected by things such as suicide, teen pregnancy, loss of language, loss of teachings and a lack of self confidence, among many other effects.

Reactions to these feelings and difficulties range from pretending everything is okay to abusing others, joining gangs and living with violence.

"We all need help to break the chain," says the report. "The cycle of pain - our families have the same pain we do but they have experienced more of it." People should not assume that young people are not affected by residential school, or that young people are not interested in what happened to their parents and grandparents.

Some of the positive ways youth are coping with stress include going to church or ceremonies, drumming, singing and socializing in a positive way. Many are active, go to school every day and get counselling when they need it.

Healing, said the report, can be found by getting in touch with our Creator, learning the history and culture, getting involved with cultural activities, and getting counselling. Programs are needed to help youth to be well and leaders need to focus on a positive vision for the future by promoting a strong and unified nation. "We need to feel proud of who we are and be proud about our culture and heritage," said the presentation.

The goals for the future include a vision for jobs and a healthy environment, with youth doing their best in everything they do. The dreams of the presenters are for more cultural activities, the telling of more stories about the past and encouragement for healing among the youth "so that we can have a strong sense of identity as First Nations peoples."



*The program managers had a three day training to assist them with financial planning and accountability.*

## Who decides how the money is spent?

The financial relationship between Mishkeegogamang and the federal government is very different than it was long ago. After the treaty was signed in 1905, the government for nearly half a century largely left the First Nations of northwestern Ontario to live as they had, except for some infrequent visits by Natural Resources personnel and the Indian agent. In the 1950s, Indian Affairs got more involved in social services, but administered all the programs out of their own office. In 1970 this changed. Families got vouchers according to the size of their family which allowed them to buy certain goods at the local trading post or store. At the same time the Ministry began to give money to band administration. But the Indian Agent still decided what the money should be spent on and how much should be spent.

Former Mishkeegogamang chief Ronald Roundhouse looks at the intent of the treaty itself and notes that the treaty payment did not include a plan for how payments should be spent or how the people should be governed.

"I remember when I was a kid they were still honouring the treaty commitment," he said. "There was a nation to nation approach and the funding flowed accordingly, without stipulations. It was more of a partnership approach in the 60s and 70s." Government bureaucracy of the 70s and 80s increasingly required extensive paperwork, contribution agreements, reporting and programming. Ronald Roundhead sees these as a liability, infringing on the intent of the 1905 treaty.

"We have to go back to the drawing board," he said. What was the real intent of the 1905 treaty from our perspective? Canada must honour treaty in housing, education, health and resources. You have to approach this from both sides - one is physical and one is spiritual. We could build 100 houses, but you cannot build a roof first; you have to start with the foundation. The people are dying. Alcohol is an issue. The social issues are the grassroots and we have to correct those first. And then we will see a people become proud again."



## The Roots of Funding Problems

*By Ronald Roundhead*

- Many funds trickle over to provincial tribal organizations like NAN. The original intent of NAN was to assist people in developing their tribes. But it became political and now NAN has more power than local Chief and Council.
- Social issues are another major setback. Chief and Council are in a very awkward position. They cannot say no to people in need, even knowing that there are limited funds from the government. Chief and Council wash their hands of this kind of decision by creating more layers.
- Funds remained static from the late 1970s until the 1990s and communities fell behind with infrastructure.
- Grants are rigid and limited. Whenever our community tries to implement an idea that would fit the community's need, the grants do not fit into the people's box.
- We need to benefit from our resources - mining and forestry. We get maybe 1 or 2 per cent - there's no 50-50. If we protest, we will go to prison.
- The government will allot \$100 million but by the time it reaches the grassroots, we may see only 1%. The rest is caught somewhere in the system. The intent of the treaty would be to have communities get this money directly. That's the way it is. They are making a business out of our poverty.





There are three grade 8 graduates from the school in Mishkeegogamang.



Activator Erin Bottle and her daughter Katsitsia:Howeh Monture

## Meet the Activators

Boozhoo Mishkeegogamang children, youth, and general members. I, Erin Bottle, would like to share a wonderful opportunity that has become available to our community. Mishkeegogamang has been chosen as one of three successful applicants to the Community Aboriginal Recreation Activator Program, to promote health through sports and recreation. This is a three-year program sponsored by the Ministry of Health. From a few applications, Lorne Muckuck and I were selected as your new Community Recreation Activators. Our temporary office is located in the Resource Centre at the Safe House. We hope to set up a sub-office on the main reserve to enable Lorne Muckuck to stay tuned with what's happening there.

In the coming weeks both Lorne and I will be conducting a Community Recreation Assessment and we will make the resulting report available. Your participation plays a vital role in initiating these programs. Your advice, input and recommendations are greatly appreciated. From a recommendation by the leadership and community members, we will be initiating cultural land-based activities along with other organized sports.

It is with great ambition that we seek new members to serve and volunteer in setting up a Recreation and Youth Committee that will be pivotal in making

recreation programming available to the membership. Please let Lorne or me know of your interest as soon as possible as we have a couple of Youth Gathering Events to plan in the coming months. Our target group will be the children and youth who comprise 60 percent of the membership of our community. We hope to have a Little League organized for soccer and baseball for the summer. Look for postings for tryouts and come out to support the children and youth. We will need volunteers for coaching, fundraising and transportation to make this dream a reality for our children and youth. As your Community Recreation Activators, we have the ambition to introduce other sporting events that may or may not have been available to the children and youth in the past. Here are some of the ideas both Lorne and I hope to bring to life: Lacrosse Camp, Basketball Camp, Volleyball Camp, and formation of teams for the next North American Indigenous Games (2010); so far there isn't a Team Ontario yet. We have an opportunity to spearhead this initiative so let's do it! If you have an idea you want to share please do not hesitate to come and talk to us either by phone or in person. We look forward to working with the community to deliver sport and recreation activities.

### Graduates 2009

Grade 8: Linda Maclean, Leah Sever, Andy Kwandibens, Chanelle Skunk, Janelle Lastheels, Illianna Wassaykeesic Nathan Sabko, Michelle Fox, Percy Keetash

Grade 12: Kristy and Kerry Keesickquayash, Vince Ash, Jennifer Skunk

Grade 12: Lauren Augustine - Queen Elizabeth

### Post Secondary Graduates 2009

There were 33 post-secondary students this year from NNEC, six of which are from Mishkeegogamang:

Biedrzycki, Linda: Social Service Worker, Confederation College

Bottle, Darnell: Business, Confederation College

Fox, Hilary: Law & Security, Sault College

Keeskitay, Nancy: Bachelor of Arts, Lakehead University

Panacheese, Rosemary:

Indigenous Wellness (Oshki)

Wassaykeesic, Gordon:

NLIP, Lakehead University

## Summer Safety

Advice for Mishkeegogamang residents from NAPS and OPP:

1. Be cautious about bears in the area. Clean up garbage that might draw bears into residential areas and do not feed the bears.
2. Do not drink and drive. That means boats as well as motor vehicles.
3. Watch for children walking or playing near the roads. People dressed in dark clothing can be difficult to see at night.
4. Call Crimestoppers with tips. Crimestoppers will pay up to \$2,000 for tips that lead to a successful seizure or arrest. Anonymous calls can also be made to DOPS or NAPS at any time.



School is out for the year and everyone is wished a wonderful summer holidays!



Mishkeegogamang band member Linda MacLean, daughter of Ernestine MacLean, is going to Germany in November with the Canadian Junior (14 years and under) tap dancing team. Linda is graduating from Grade 8 in Winnipeg. The band gave Linda \$500 for dance lessons and will assist her in travel costs for the Germany trip.