



Community Update

Memories of Life on the Land

Imagine happy, healthy children that are never cold or hungry. Imagine a long and lasting partnership where a man and woman treat each other with love and respect. Imagine living in harmony with creation in a land of endless lakes and forests.

Edna Skunk doesn't have to imagine this life, she remembers it. She grew up on her family's traditional land in the Savant Lake area with her parents and two younger siblings. The older children were in residential school, but Edna was schooled in the traditional way with short periods of time in a classroom when her parents returned to the community.

"Our diet was traditional foods like fish, beaver, moose, rabbit, partridges and during the summer, blueberries and wild rice," she said. "We never felt hungry or cold when we were out in the bush and I don't think we were dressed warm. I think it was our diet that made it that way."

Meat and fish were dried to last all winter. On occasion there was porridge, corn, dried apples, flour and jam, but candy and macaroni were rare treats. "My dad would say those foods are no good for us and now I know what he talked about," said Edna.

Edna learned how to trap and clean animals. She thinks she was about 14 years old when her dad, Sammy Skunk, first gave her the smallest beaver and taught her how to clean and cut up meat for drying. She learned how to hunt moose and shoot a gun. "Hunting was so easy at that time," she recalled. Everybody worked really hard, but, because they were strong, tasks were done with ease.

Once, when she was young, her dad got sick. He couldn't catch any beaver or moose. One night he woke all of the children and they stayed up all night listening to him drumming and singing. He had put down tobacco and made a drum from a lard container. Within days he was getting better and able, once again, to check his traps.

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Children from Ace Lake enjoy playing out in the warm spring weather.

PC Gold's Shares are Rising, Thanks to New Gold Discoveries at Pickle Crow

The site of the past-producing Pickle Crow gold mine has been jumping lately, and all signs are pointing up for the old mine's owner, PC Gold. The company's stock price has almost quadrupled in a short time from about the 50 cent level in mid-February, to a recent high of \$1.90, and that's good news for Mishkeegogamang since it owns 200,000 stock options priced at 49 cents. Two drills have been added since the beginning of this year, bringing to four the number of drills now looking for gold around and below the old mine.

The fourth drill was brought online in mid-April, not long after the company announced that significant amounts of visible gold and high grades had been found in the newly discovered No. 19 vein. The best intercept ran a sparkling 43.29 grams per tonne gold over 13.13 metres, a number that really caught the market's eye. "This is one of the best intercepts to come out of drilling anywhere in northwestern Ontario

in the past year," said PC Gold CEO Kevin Keough. "The combination of width and grade is exceptional."

Strong drilling results and the high price of gold have combined to create a serious buzz of interest in PC Gold's shares and prospects. "There's been a mad flurry of activity at Pickle Crow," said Keough. "You've gotta catch the attention of the investing public, and we've managed to do that with our latest results. We've definitely 'arrived' in terms of market awareness. Our stock traded 45 million shares in 7 days - the volume was extraordinary."

All the activity is especially welcome after a challenging start for the company two years ago. "We completed our initial public offering in May 2008, just two weeks before the markets froze. Our stock melted down with the general economy shortly afterwards, reaching a low of just 11 cents in November. We basically shut down and turned off our drilling activities between

November '08 and June '09 to conserve funds. All in all this set our plans back the better part of a year," said Keough. "Now though, with four drills turning we're really into the thick of things. We're confident we will see more great results as we expand the exploration program with the four drills."

The current upswing means that more jobs and economic benefits are coming to the region. "This is good news for Pickle Lake and Mishkeegogamang," said Keough. "Our success is serving as a catalyst for increased economic activity in the area. Until recently, other exploration companies nearby haven't been able to do much of anything because they didn't have money," said Keough. "Now they're riding on our coat-tails, telling investors how close they are to our property, raising money and expanding their exploration programs. This adds to the level of activity and employs more First Nations people."



Dogs require a great deal of care if they are not going to pose a danger to the community.

Something Needs to be done about Stray Dogs

Stray dogs have become a big problem around Mishkeegogamang.

According to Edna Skunk, the dogs have bitten two people already and it's just a matter of time until someone is seriously injured. "The dogs are running all over, and they're going to attack somebody," Edna said. "They're hungry - nobody is feeding them."

Not long ago, a pack of strays killed a cat that crossed their path. "They attacked a cat and shredded it to pieces, but it fought for its life for a long time," said Edna. "I was afraid to rescue it - there were too many dogs. Just imagine a child - it couldn't fight."

Northern First Nations communities have had far too many children die from stray dog attacks in recent years. The latest incident happened in early April this year in Pangnirtung, Nunavut, where a young boy was mauled to death by three dogs. A Thunder Bay veterinarian who studied

the issue says that children on reserves are 100 times more likely to suffer a dog attack than children elsewhere.

Besides the strays being a danger to people, the dogs are also making a big mess around the reserve. "There are a lot of dog lovers out there, and pretty much everybody owns one or two dogs," Edna said. "They're all running around. There's a lot of dog waste around and most people aren't cleaning up after their dogs, or they're only cleaning their yards once a year in spring."

People need to care for their dogs, keep them tied up or in a fenced area, and keep them fed. A system of licensing for dogs is being considered and the community may have to eliminate the strays that no one is taking responsibility for.

Elders need to teach about dog control. Community "Dog Gone Days" is set to begin April 26th.

Life on the Land

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

In 1962 the late James Masakeyash asked Edna's Dad to move back to Mishkeegogamang to help him run the Reserve. In the decades since, Edna has seen incredible change, both in the people and on the land. There is no wild rice harvest in the area and wild meat is harder to come by. "People say there's no more rice, but it's because they don't do wild rice ceremonies," she said. When she was young, the elders would bless the food, including the wild rice. A small amount of rice would be put in the fire with prayers of thanksgiving. Families would gather to dance and drum around the fire. "We would eat together and acknowledge the wild rice before we would take it," said Edna. The same was true for the animals. As well, she said, "you have to be there in order for the animals to come. They are not going to come if you're not going to be there."

Edna hears people say it can't be the same today as it was in the old days, but she disagrees. "Now it's the tourists that are interested in what we had. They want to know and use traditional medicines. Nowadays I don't see native people out there. All I see is tourists."

Tourists are moose hunting and blueberry picking, making jam and doing many of the traditional activities of Anishinabe, said Edna. Except, she said with

a laugh, they have very interesting tools such as night vision cameras and technology to locate fish and measure the depths of the lakes. A lack of boats and motors and hunting equipment does stop many people from going out on the land, but Edna said it doesn't cost anything to get out to the bush to enjoy the peace and quiet and healing that is right outside most people's back door.

Edna is saddened that many would rather go drinking than go out to their traditional lands. She still finds a sense of peace when she goes out to her traditional hunting and trapping lands, trapping beaver or rabbits or catching fish when she gets hungry for traditional food. Edna said she finds that if she eats traditional game in the evening she doesn't need much food the next day. But she is seeing changes in the forest from aerial pesticide spraying and changes in the animals that live there. "They just want to grow trees to harvest in the future. They don't care about the food chain for animals and bugs and birds."

Although over time she got used to eating moose that are not as fat and soft as the ones she remembers from her childhood, a beaver she trapped recently has her worried. "I've never seen that before. It was a skinny beaver, with no fat. I didn't bother cooking it."

Relief from Burial Mishap

The late Sammy Skunk, Edna Skunk's father, was a medicine man from the Savant Lake area who carried the knowledge of a shaking tent when he was a young man. When his children were young, Sammy would tell them stories about events from days gone by.

When he was a young man, an elderly woman passed away. She died in a sitting position, so Sammy was given the responsibility of building a coffin to fit her body. It was an awkward shape and size and when Sammy was lowering it into the ground, the coffin accidentally slipped and dropped upside down into the grave. He tried desperately to turn it around, but was

unable to do it. He was near tears when his mother told him to just leave it and to fill in the grave as it was. He did that, but it always troubled him that he had buried that woman with her head down. Some years later, he went to an elder who was performing a shaking tent ceremony. During the ceremony Sammy heard that same elderly woman he had buried speaking to him. She asked him why he was so troubled about that event all these years later. "I'm not there where you dropped me upside down," she said. "Now go on and get on with your life. I'm not there. I'm not at the grave site. I'm all right where I am." It was with great relief that Sammy left the ceremony that day.

By-Election and Leadership

With a by-election coming up on May 24, some people in the community are once again considering the possibility of becoming a councillor. Any member of the band who is 18 years old, who lives in the community and who has been nominated by a voting community member, can run for office.

If there are problems in a person's past, that does not automatically disqualify them from running for office, but anyone convicted of an indictable offence while in office loses their position on the council.

Those who have served on the council know that sacrifice is involved.

Traditionally men and women worked as a team, with specific roles understood for each. With those roles no longer well understood, it's challenging to get the men and women working together in the community.

Council members sometimes feel torn by the many administrative duties they're expected to do, which often take them out of the community. They would like to fulfil the traditional roles as well, in which they could attend all the community functions, but balancing the traditional role with the contemporary one makes tremendous demands on their time.

Some communities have addressed the

problem by having the chief take on the traditional role while his or her second-in-command is in charge of the administrative duties. Mishkeegogamang has an elders council; the members are Ronald Roundhead, Jim Bottle, Sophia Wassaykeesic, Mervin Masakeyash, and Eva Skunk. Their role is to support and advise Chief and Council according to traditional governance. "We call them in when there are

difficult issues like the governance issue," said Chief Connie Gray-McKay. "If we're derailing or going off the track, they're supposed to put us back on track."

Chief and Council have received a grant to do some work in the area of governance. The first step is to "take inventory" and assess how things work now, then figure out how they could work better. An excellent model is available from Manitoulin Island, where the First Nation has successfully revised its governance system. Balancing time is the real challenge in governance, especially when there seems to be more and more crisis in the community.

Mishkeegogamang will Benefit from North-South Grant

Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win: The North-South Partnership for Children is a growing partnership that brings together First Nation chiefs, elders, youth and community members living in northwestern Ontario. The main idea behind the partnership is to improve life for children, youth, and families by building a respectful, sustainable relationship between communities and organizations.

The North-South Partnership recently became involved in a research project with five universities. The project aims to help Mishkeegogamang and other First Nation communities deal with social issues. Chief Connie Gray-McKay will be the Co-Chair of Research on behalf of Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win.

"The proposed research is intended to create meaningful and sustainable change for the wellbeing of children in 30

remote Northern First Nations in Ontario while making a contribution to scholarly knowledge," said the Partnership's Betty-Lou Scholey. "The goal is to offer communities a potential starting point to identify and evaluate short and long term priorities based on the strengths and challenges of each community."

Mishkeegogamang has already been involved with a community assessment process in 2007. The latest round of research will be followed up by another survey of the community in 2012 that will track social trends, review relationships that have been developed with southern organizations, and determine what requires more focus.

Community involvement is a key part of the project. "Each community will play an integral role in the design and implementation of the study," Scholey said.



Amelia Whiskeyjack is thankful for her strong memory and the legends she heard from her elders.

Legends of Wiisakejaak

She's nearly 90, but Amelia Whiskeyjack has a strong memory and she can remember many of the stories she heard as a child. Her dad heard the stories from his great-grandfather. "It seems like yesterday my dad told me about these legends," she said. Amelia's grandson Mervin Masakeyash interpreted for her.

"A long time ago there were animals that got together," began Amelia. The animals got together twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. That's why we always did this too and that's where the Pow Wow came from. It was here that Wiisakejaak, someone now equated with Noah in the Bible, discovered the animals. Wiisakejaak got to know the animals and learned how to catch them and eat them, since there was no other food on earth at that time. He did everything, things most people cannot even imagine and there is a legend for each. In fact, the legends are ongoing. There is no end to them.

This Anishinabe always tried everything. Whatever we are doing today, this person tried it. He was always a curious person and did stuff nobody else had done, things like fishing, hunting, walking.

Wiisakejaak wore every costume the animals had, trying to be that animal. He fellowshipped with geese and once he took a frog skin and tried to be a frog. One time he joined a pack of wolves. He wanted to be a wolf, but he didn't succeed. That's why Anishinabe don't succeed as much as we desire. Today when Anishinabe wants to be someone he is not, it doesn't always work for him.

Wiisakejaak also got involved with plant life. Trees that are curved up or bent are due to the work of Wiisakejaak. He was jealous of healthy trees so he made them all crooked. Some trees were rubbed with sand to make them smooth and the birch had birds tossed against them, leaving little black spots. Bumps on poplar trees were his doing, as are little branches growing off the main trunk of various trees.

Wiisakejaak was very clever and would always find things to do. When the earth began, all the animals talked like we talk, and Wiisakejaak learned from them and then became an example of how Anishinabe are to live on the earth. He

made medicines and approved the foods Anishinabe people ate for generations. All of these things were passed on with the telling of legends.

Storytelling was the only means of education and many of these teachings had deep and valuable lessons for survival. Sadly, Anishinabe are abandoning the customs and values that were created for them to follow. It is rare that there is an opportunity to repeat the legends that were passed on. Few of the young people speak the language and those that do, the middle aged people, sometimes cut off the storyteller and don't listen.

When she finished her legend-telling for the day, Amelia said, "Myself, I've been keeping these legends and I'm very grateful today to have a sharp memory." She attributes her long life and good health to a healthy lifestyle. "I've been working," she said. "People have to work. When you lie around your body really shuts down." And the Creator gave Anishinabe food to eat. "With our values, we didn't eat like this," she said. "What we are putting in our body now isn't natural. In our own way, our custom was to eat a lot of blood and that really nurtured us."



New regulations require all boat operators to have a license

Boating License Required

New regulations have recently been passed that make it illegal to operate a motorized boat without an operator card. The rules have been phased in over a ten-year period, and every boater that hasn't already been certified will need to do so now.

"I know boat operators' cards were a point of issue and concern in Mishkeegogamang at a recent Band Council meeting," said Sgt. Mark Downey of the OPP. "It is mandatory now for all motor boats in the province." As of September 15, 2009, every operator

of a motorboat in Canada has to carry the new license. The operator cards are good for life and can be obtained after passing a written test. Applicants are not required to take a boat safety course before writing the test, but taking the course first is strongly encouraged by Transport Canada.

Information about the test and courses can be found on Transport Canada's website at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-menu-1362.htm>.

The Operator Cards are issued after boaters prove their ability to handle a motorized craft. Proof of competency can take three forms:

- Passing the Transport Canada test
- Proof of having successfully completed a boating safety course in Canada prior to April 1, 1999
- If the boater is renting a power-driven boat, a completed rental-boat safety checklist serves as proof of competency

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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.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

Leadership, Theft and Healing



Chief Connie Gray-McKay

When I became Chief, Tommy Spade sat me down and talked to me about my roles and those of my council. He told me I was the first line of defence for the community. He said it was up to me to decide what would come into this community and what would not. Councillors, he said, are

supposed to go out into the community and know what the voice of the community is and bring that knowledge. Tommy told me that there has to be balance between a contemporary government and the traditional way of doing things.

Our reality is that we have to deal with the outside world. We have to deal with Indian Affairs and First Nations Health and dozens of other outside organizations. But traditionally, nothing was done without the consultation of the people. Tommy told me the importance of making time for myself. This is never easy. Sometimes I feel like I'm on an island, trying to keep outsiders off. We are elected to protect our people from all forms of harm. This is not only limited to outsiders, but also from harm that we are bringing on ourselves.

Let's not be stuck in a negative space. Let's not be stuck with old ways of doing business that might have worked at one time, but don't work anymore. Let's not blame each other. I hear people say, "I don't like the leadership so I won't work hard." To them I would say, you don't work

for the leadership, you work for the people. How much do you love the people? How much do you love yourself? We do not have to stay stuck in a place of poverty. It is within our power to change, but we will not do that by looking at each other and waiting for someone else to make the first move. Don't worry about who is going to

get credit. Do what YOU can do.

There have been accusations in the community about Chief and Council stealing from the people. I do not want to address specific allegations here, but I do want to talk about stealing. There are many forms of theft and I will outline some of them here.

We steal time from our children.

Parents and grandparents rob their children of time. You can be there, but if you are preoccupied with an alcohol or drug addiction, you're not really there. If we spend our income on alcohol or drugs, we are stealing away from food and clothing and other necessities of life for our families. The amount of alcohol sold in Pickle Lake alone is staggering, (see the last edition of this paper) given the size of our community and the incomes of our people.

Theft of innocence. We see theft of innocence when children are neglected and abused and when they see things that they are too young to see.

Stealing from employers. We see theft of time when employees are paid for time which they did not work. We see falsifying of time records and also theft of time when employees are not working while on the job. It's not the time we put in, but it's what we put in the time.

Stealing from our housing program.

When people do not take proper care of their houses, they are stealing from our housing program resulting in an inability to do legitimate renovations and repairs for those who look after their homes.

Theft of beauty. When we throw garbage around and don't clean up our yards and community, we steal beauty from our surroundings.

Stealing from yourself. You can steal from yourself as well. If you smoke, (and I'm guilty of this myself) you steal from your own health. When you do not avail yourself of educational opportunities, you steal from your own

education. When we are in addictions, there is a risk of death or impairment.

Theft of learning. There is theft of learning in our schools when children are disrupting the class or when they are too neglected or hungry to learn. Sometimes our elders withhold traditional teachings from us. Don't wait for somebody to ask you to share. Take the opportunities you have before we lose our traditional knowledge. We talk about the theft of our language, but we are not even teaching our children what we know.

Stealing from elders. We often see theft from elders which can be in the form of money or property, or proper care and support. If you sell your food to buy drugs or alcohol and then go to eat at your relative's home for the rest of the month, that is a form of theft.

Theft of rights. We steal rights, both personal and from ourselves by not exercising our rights on the land.

There is theft of health and even theft of life, theft of peace and joy – the list is endless. There is loss at so many levels.

Nobody is going to come in and fix us. Each person has to take a look at their own life and do what they can do to make improvements. Life can be short and, as we have seen all too often, it can end quickly.

Yes, much has been taken from us. Much has been stolen. But we don't have to continue this by stealing from ourselves. It is within our power to change. Each person has to take responsibility for themselves and ultimately we are all responsible to God to find His purpose for each of us.



27 housing units should be ready by the end of fall.

Preparing for Fall Occupancy

Twenty-seven families will be moving into their new Mishkeegogamang homes this fall. Housing director Dan Sabko said the modular homes are ready and waiting in Thunder Bay and that lot preparation and sewer, water and hydro hook-ups will be completed "by the end of fall."

DE Hoey Construction of Sioux Lookout will be redoing trailer lots that were started last year. Sabko said the lots were not made large enough or high enough for the homes and sewer tanks need to be relocated on all but two of the lots. C&C Plumbing will be contracted for the sewer work.

"We're going to get this done. We will get trailers in this year," said Sabko. He said he is currently working on securing financing to complete the lots and homes, including skirting, stairs and small decks. The large, double-wide elders' homes will have a larger, wheelchair accessible deck. Sabko said the homes will not be brought in one by one, but rather as a group so they can be set up and finished as one large project for the contractor rather than

one at a time. He said the final list of who will be able to move into the new homes has yet to be determined. Although some have already been selected, some on the existing list have relocated and needs have to be determined.

"This is not done on a first come, first served basis. The list is based on the needs of a family," said Sabko. He said the housing committee will sit down with the housing list and "make a decent determination about who really needs a home." Unfortunately, he said, the need far exceeds the number of homes coming in this fall.

"If Indian Affairs would come in and say they'll supply us with 100 new homes because we need 100 new homes, that would be great," he said. In reality, that is not going to happen. Sabko said once these 27 modular homes are in the community, all existing lots will be full. Increasing housing stock will mean developing a new subdivision, and that is expensive due to the need for big ticket items such as water lines and roads.

Hydro Settlement Payouts

Petitions have once again been circulating to restore the annual Hydro Settlement payouts to members. These payments were made for many years after Mishkeegogamang settled with Ontario Hydro in 1999. Although the payments benefited individuals for a day or two, they meant that the funds were not available to use for important projects that would benefit the whole community for the long run.

Chief and Council wanted to invest these funds in long-term benefits. The

Hydro funds have been put towards legal representation for the Land Claims process. Legal representation allows the Claim to go forward towards what could be a substantial Land Claims settlement with Canada. The federal government has acknowledged the validity of Mishkeegogamang's claim, so Chief and Council believes it is important to be patient and use funds wisely now to ensure that the Land Claim comes to a successful conclusion. It is "short term pain for long term gain."



Pastor Fred and Robin Crisco have been serving in Pickle Lake for about five years.

Stealing is a Sign of an Empty Heart

Thou shalt not steal. Baptist Church Pastor Fred Crisco can recite many biblical references to stealing. The first is in the Ten Commandments in Exodus which state clearly that it is wrong to take something that does not belong to you.

Pastor Fred said stealing goes way beyond robbing a bank. "Don't take anything that's not yours, whether it be time, relationships, taking advantage of people or stealing reputations," he said. "You can even steal years off your mother's life."

Most people would agree that stealing is wrong, but there would be differing views on what to do about it, or what, exactly, is at the root of the problem. Pastor Fred believes that for most, the problem is spiritual. "Satan is a thief and a robber. The greatest theft is the theft of man's soul," he said. "The essential problem with mankind is spiritual."

Every human heart has the capacity to steal and all could fall, depending on their situation in life, said the pastor. According to John 10:10, God gives life but the evil one takes life. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Pastor Fred said it is a lack of purpose that leaves people wanting more in their lives and could lead to stealing from others. The problem is a growing one as people leave past values behind. He said the food gatherers and cabin builders had clear goals in their life. "In the past they were satisfied with life because they had purpose. Stealing is a sign of an empty heart. People are trying to fill a void."

The solution might not be easy, especially in light of addictions and habits formed over years, but it is not complicated. "Love God with all your heart," said Pastor Fred. "The heart can never have enough unless it finds its purpose in God. If you have purpose and fulfillment in your life you will not steal."

Seeking fulfillment from sports, food or any form of addiction makes it difficult for people to see beyond those things – things that will never satisfy. The heart is big, with endless capacity to love. Pastor Fred said that in the same way that eyes can never see enough and ears can never hear enough, the heart of man can never have enough unless it is filled with the love of God.



(l-r) Skye Neekan, Jennifer Skunk, Shanna Neekan (photo by Ken Wavy)

A Plan for the North

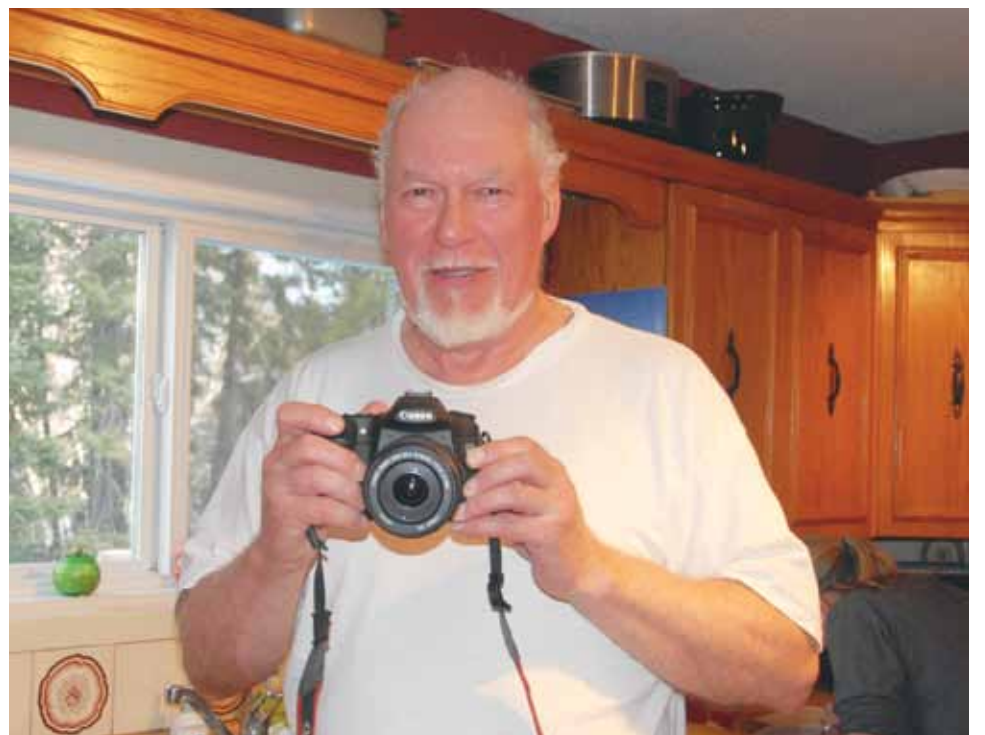
There's a 25-year provincial plan for Northern Ontario, and Mishkeegogamang is smack dab in the middle of it. But Councillor Tom Wassaykeesic finds it interesting that the First Nation isn't even on many of the maps in the official *Proposed Growth Plan for Northern Ontario*. Wassaykeesic's goal is to change that.

He attended a planning meeting in Thunder Bay in March to discuss parts of the plan, including the transmission line to Pickle Lake and on to the Musslewhite mine and surrounding First Nations that currently use diesel fuel to power their communities. "It's all tied in with the plan by the Ontario government to open the North for resource development and settlement," said Wassaykeesic. "This is not for people coming and going during the life of a mine. This is a plan to settle the North. They want to attract permanent residents north of 50."

The vision for Northern Ontario in the Proposed Growth Plan is for a "new Northern Ontario" with a "skilled, educated and healthy population that is supported by world-class resources, leading edge technology and modern infrastructure." Wassaykeesic said the proposed plan is "a plan to displace the aboriginal population."

"They want to expand airports, build railroad lines, transportation, communications, and are talking about bringing in migrants from other parts of Canada, increasing immigration quotas to settle in the North," he said.

Even though the Aboriginal community is the fastest growing population, there will not be enough skilled and educated people to carry out the objectives and goals of the 25-year plan.



Jim Parres, Jiminex Inc., is one of many prospectors staking claims in Mishkeegogamang traditional territory.

"We have got to change that or we will be watching this going by while we are standing there not doing anything," said Wassaykeesic. "This is our people's homeland. We have the right to partake of the benefits." Wassaykeesic said there is money for training and education. People just need to get motivated to participate in available programs. "We need geologists and technicians, not bootleggers and drug dealers," he said.

The "unparalleled natural resources" of Northern Ontario can provide "tremendous opportunities" as the Growth Plan states, but for Mishkeegogamang it is up to the people to prepare and find a way to take advantage of these developments in balance with maintaining traditional lands and values.

APOLOGY

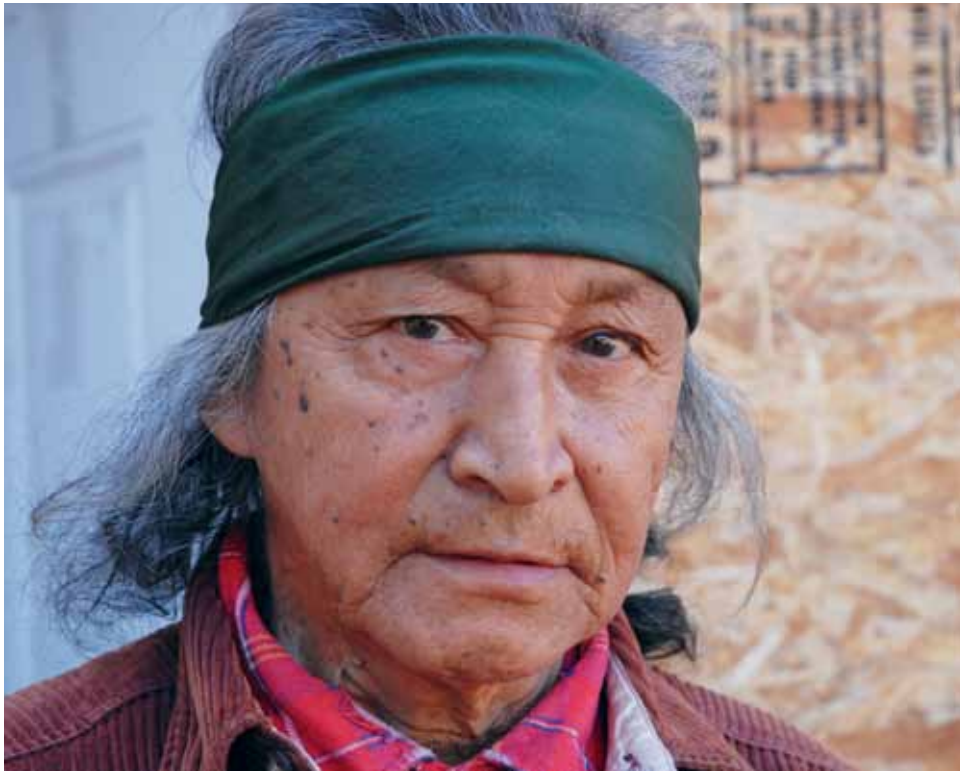
The publishers sincerely apologize to Ken Wavy for misspelling his name in the February edition of the Update. Chief and Council contact information and Rosetta

NEW WEBSITE

Mishkeegogamang has a beautiful new website. Check it out at www.mishkeegogamang.ca

We are looking for a person with some computer experience to update the website from time to time. Training provided. If interested, or if you have photos or material you'd like to add to the website, call the government office at 928-2414.

Life Near the Road at Mile 29



Lawrence Neekan has concerns about sick animals near the main road.



Mile 29 is home to the Neekan family, off the Reserve, but near to schooling for the children

Two neat cabins at Mile 29 are nestled into the forest a stone's throw from the main road. Lawrence Neekan lives here with his family, near the place where his father, Charlie Neekan, settled with his family when the highway was under construction. Charlie, said Lawrence, taught his children to hunt and gather in the traditional way, but he also taught them to work in the increasingly "modern" world encroaching on their lands.

For generations, the Neekans had lived out on the land. They moved around the lakes and forest of the St. Joseph area, surviving on fish, wild game, wild rice and berries. They lived in tents for most of the year, but moved into cabins for the winter. Eventually Charlie found employment as a firefighter and later working on the highway construction. He moved his family near to the highway and then pushed hard to have a school at Mile 50, away from the main Reserve.

Charlie realized that if his children and grandchildren were to earn an in-

come, they would need an education but he did not want to live in a populated area. Today his grandchildren and great-grandchildren are able to attend the Charlie Neekan Memorial School and also spend time in the forest learning traditional hunting and survival skills.

Lawrence is concerned that while the animals far out in the bush seem to be relatively healthy, those living close to the highway appear to be sick. He thinks some of the sickness might be from the salt spread on the highways during the winter. Forestry is also taking a toll. Some animals seem to be starving because their food is being destroyed along with the forest harvest. Even the fish are unhealthy and Lawrence blames this on waters contaminated by poisons.

When Lawrence Neekan goes elsewhere, he has a strong desire to be back on his homeland. In spite of the disturbing changes, he still believes he and his family are in the right place.

Journey to Oz

BY CYNTHIA WESLEY-ESQUIMAUX

The Canadian Roots Exchange Team visited Mishkeegogamang from February 11 to 20, 2010, to create a film which we envisioned could become a voice for the Mishkeegogamang young people, their elders, and their leadership. Mishkeegogamang First Nation, like so many other aboriginal communities in Canada, has an abundance of beauty and strength in its people, its wild and ragged forests, and its unrelenting future.

We worked hard with the community members who supported us, in particular

community activator Mervin Masakeyash, and Chief Connie Gray-McKay, to hear the voices of this land, to understand how the ancient songs can make the drum sound again in the hearts and souls of the young, and enliven the prayers the people have long sheltered their lives with.

The Canadian Roots Exchange Team wanted to create a video that would honour the hopes of their ancestors, yet give voice to the youth through the rap and hip hop that expresses their hopes and fears. Our overarching goal was to simply capture what it means to be them, and to show with honesty and compassion who they hope they will continue to be.

We hope the young people will be so full of pride and excitement about this experience, and about the film, that they will in turn be inspired to do more work on their own. We want the Chief and Council to say yes, these are the people I know and love and that I want the world to see, "this is my home, this is my land, and this is my way of life."

So, we worked hard to honour and depict what they wanted. In the end, we believe that the "grandfathers and grandmothers" of our nations know what we need to do, and I trust that they guided our hand and hearts in the right direction. I have faith in our people, and in our Canadian Roots Exchange youth, and I have walked a long way through the world to get here, to tell this story. Just like our last video "Shielded Minds" came together with all of our input, this one too will come together, and hopefully will deeply inspire our mutual future.

Miigwetch, Cynthia

NAPS Works Towards Excellence

Over the past five years, the Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service (NAPS) has been growing. The organization's goal is to have a police service as well-equipped as the OPP and to provide 24/7 police service to the communities it serves. In order for that to happen, NAPS needs more funding.

Right now, NAPS serves 35 First Nation communities in the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation territory, including Mishkeegogamang. NAPS is the biggest First Nations police service in Canada, and the second-largest in North America. NAPS is the largest Aboriginal police service to sign an agreement with the First Nations Policing Program (FNPP), jointly funded by the provincial (48%) and federal (52%) governments.

The police service's 135 uniformed officers and 30 civilian employees have a very large geographic area to cover. Officers are spread across an area that equals two-thirds of Ontario, from the Manitoba border up the James Bay Coast over to the Quebec border. NAPS needs more funding and operational support in order to provide the kind of police

coverage available elsewhere in the province. It comes down to an issue of public, community and officer safety.

In addition to a need for more officers there is a need for proper infrastructure, meaning good office space, holding cells and equipment. NAPS gets no government funding for infrastructure. It uses buildings left from OPP days but funding to maintain these buildings is always in short supply. Fabian Batise is the NAPS Board Liaison based in Thunder Bay. "OPP has never had to experience this kind of shortage of infrastructure," he said. "It's always been well-maintained. We've had to do all kinds of thinking outside the box regarding getting infrastructure replaced." The government has recently funded modular-constructed detachments but poor weather conditions and minimal winter roads this year meant the units couldn't be delivered. This means another year for NAPS and community members to work in detachments that are below the policing standards.

A recent meeting on the needs of First Nations policing in Ontario may have

been a step towards increased funding. The meeting included the leaders of the First Nation Policing Program, as well as representatives from the federal and provincial governments. Chief Connie Gray-McKay attended the meetings, and challenged the group to include more community leadership in future meetings. The discussion was part of a national consultation that is taking place in every province, on which a report will be issued this fall. "The meeting went well," said Batise. "What matters in the end will be the report itself and what is done with it."

There will be a questionnaire for the community to answer on how they see policing. Call the band office to participate.

Because FNPP is a program, the government can hold back or cancel funding, depending on their budgets or approaches to social issues. NAPS would like to see its policing entrenched in permanent legislation, said Batise, "along with funding that would allow us to effectively address personnel and housing issues."

Mishkeegogamang: The Land, the People and the Purpose Copies of our history book are now available at the band office. **\$40.00**



Few caribou are being sighted on land where they used to be plentiful.

Recovery for Woodland Caribou

Have you seen any caribou lately? Have you noticed there are no caribou where you used to see them? If you have any information on the caribou situation, there are some people at Environment Canada that would like to hear from you.

Early in April Patrick Cosman and Liz Sauer, presenters from Environment Canada, were in the government office to discuss the conservation of boreal caribou. The caribou is a threatened species due to decreased populations and a national recovery strategy is being developed. The presenters were looking for input to that recovery strategy from Mishkeegogamang Chief and Council.

In order to thrive, boreal caribou need large areas of suitable habitat, low levels of human disturbance and low numbers of predators, such as wolves and bears. The main threat to the caribou is unnaturally high numbers of predators. This happens

when natural habitat is altered by fire, lumbering or road-building. Caribou do not have a high tolerance for predators because their reproductive rate is low. Ideally, caribou avoid habitat favoured by deer and moose, spreading out across the landscape and avoiding contact with predators. Where there is an increase in the area of young forests, deer, moose and elk increase in number and this supports a higher number of predators, such as wolves.

Darlene Neekan from Saugeen attended the meeting. She said although she doesn't hunt caribou, preferring moose meat, she recently saw wolves take down a caribou along the highway near Mishkeegogamang. The number of wolves does seem to be on the increase, she said. With information from a variety of sources, including First Nations, a recovery strategy will be developed for the caribou. Cosman

said it is important to ensure Aboriginal traditional knowledge informs the national recovery strategy.

Councillor David Masakayash invited the presenters to return and speak to a group of community hunters for further input and insight into both the threats to the boreal caribou and the recovery strategy.

Students Learn Culture and Language with new Curriculum

This coming September, Missabay School will be officially using a new curriculum. The curriculum was developed by the Kwayaciiwin Education Resource Centre (KERC) based in Sioux Lookout. It's a bilingual/bicultural program designed to meet the needs of the First Nations students in the Sioux Lookout district.

KERC already has a well-planned framework of units for Grades 1 to 6, and are constantly adding more materials. The Centre will also publish materials in any language in the district. Josie Kaminwaish and others at Missabay School have already worked together with KERC to produce a book in the local Ojibway language.

KERC has an Immersion program which will take students from a full Anishiniimowin immersion in the early years to become fully bilingual in both their native language and English by the end of Grade 8. Students in Grade 8 should be performing at grade level in the English

program and will be prepared to meet the academic demands of high school.

Any school can use KERC, even if they're not implementing an Immersion program. The program blends a land/culture based and student-centred Social Studies program with the Ontario Ministry expectations to provide a seasonal framework of integrated units from Kindergarten to Grade 6.

Sioux Lookout Area Chiefs, including the Mishkeegogamang Chief, directed the implementation of the KERC curriculum by resolution at the Annual General Meeting of NNEC in October 2008. The Kwayaciiwin curriculum will be the official curriculum for the schools within the Sioux Lookout district by September 2010.

Councillor Mary Anne Panacheese represents Mishkeegogamang on the District Education Planning Committee, which will be changed to an elected education board in the near future.



Written by former Osnaburgh OPP (1980s)

A bright star has joined eternity
As I make this journey
Though my life was short
Too soon, I left this earth
My friends, my family
Remember totally
I will love you all with my soul
Through circumstances beyond
my control
Unable to go on but, my soul lives on
Remember me as I was, not as I am
The good times, I had many
Bad times, very few
To remember me,
Look towards the midnight sky
As you see the stars, the twinkling
It's the twinkle of my eyes
For eternity I've become
Do not be sad, for life goes on
Remember me;
You will see
The star I've become.

Volunteers Needed for the Homecoming Committee

Homecoming is August 2-6, 2010. Please contact the band office at 928-2414

Missabay Community School Citizenship Awards

Grade 8 • Yzerman Skunk

On the bus, Yzerman took it upon himself to help staff in seating and delegating seats for students. He is very dependable and a great motivator. Yzerman is a remarkable young man and a great asset within the school community. Keep up the great work! (Submitted by Amy Joy, Grade 4)

Grade 8 • Nathan Masakeyash

Nathan has been a huge help here as of late March, and continues to strive to improve on every subject he is given. He has also been going into younger grades and helping younger students read and write. I am very proud of Nathan. (Submitted by Marco, Grade 8)

Grade 8 • Colleen Skunk

Always helpful in class and does things before she is told. Kind and respectful to all students. (Submitted by Madeline Oswald, Grade 7)

Grade 1 • Lidstrom Skunk

Lidstrom has been a great citizen in the Grade 1 classroom. He has a positive attitude and is caring and respectful to all students and teachers. He demonstrates great leadership skills inside and outside of the classroom. He has very good sportsmanship skills and is a good competitor. (Submitted by Betsy Lucko, Grade 1)

Staff • Rachel

Rachel works very hard to purchase healthy snacks and food for our students. She is constantly running around accomplishing things for the staff and students. She is a hard worker and kind to the staff and students. Thank you Rachel for always working your hardest. Without you things just would not be the same! (Submitted by Betsy Lucko, Grade 1)

K5 • Kieran Kwandibens

In K5 for our citizen of the month, we have chosen Kieran Kwandibens. Since the beginning of the year Kieran has improved his manners, his ambition to learn, and his ability to make friends with other students. He is much more polite around his peers and he enjoys making new friends. Also, his respect for his teacher and teacher assistant has greatly increased. Say hello to Kieran and congratulate him on his award the next time you visit Missabay Community School. Well deserved, Kieran!

Get Your Check-up!

An annual check-up with your physician is always a good idea, but if you have a chronic disease such as diabetes or heart disease, it is a must! Please see your doctor on a regular basis and have blood work and other important tests done. Book an appointment at the clinic today: call **928-2298**.

Email Available

There are about 60 email accounts set up for Mishkeegogamang employees. These addresses are in the form of your firstname.lastname@mishkeegogamang.ca e.g leanne.neetumgeesic@mishkeegogamang.ca. It would be handy for employees to use this because that way everyone would know everyone else's email address. If you would like to use this email, here are the steps:

Click on the email link at the bottom of the Mishkeegogamang homepage (www.mishkeegogamang.ca).

Log in with your email ID (your first name, then a period, then your last name, all as one word).

Call Leanne at the band office (**928-2414**) for your password.

Users can change passwords, set up forwards, and otherwise manage their email accounts by going to: <https://mishkeegogamang.ca:20000> Users will have to ignore the warning and accept the self signed security certificate. Use the same login procedure as when checking email.

Call Leanne at the band office if you don't have an account or need help getting set up.

HST will Eliminate Tax Exemption

Under the present law, First Nations people are exempt from paying Provincial Sales Tax (PST). But with the Ontario Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) set to replace the PST, the point-of-sale exemption will be gone.

That means if a native person purchased a winter coat for \$100 in Kenora, Rainy River, Sioux Lookout or Fort Frances, the price at the cash register will be \$113 because of the HST. There will be no exceptions.

There has been no consultation, discussion or dialogue with the FN leaders on this issue. This is viewed as an incredible demonstration of disrespect for treaty rights and First Nation leaders.

Affected items will include purchases such as gasoline, adult footwear under \$30, hotels, domestic air, rail and commercial bus tickets, green fees, utilities(hydro/natural gas), hair stylist and funeral costs.



Fiddling for the 2010 Winter Carnival.(photo by Carol Ferguson)



Billy Kwandibens and Arvel Keetash with young Thomas.



Tommy Spade dances up a storm with young people at the Carnival dance. (photo by Carol Ferguson)



The play structure at Ten Houses is a busy place for children when school is out for the day.

Kii-way-pa-zi-kwii-win – To Rise Again After a Fall

The victims and survivors of convicted pedophile Ralph Rowe stretch across the North, but now, thanks in part to retired OPP Don Hewitt and the NAN Rowe Project, healing has begun. Hewitt investigated the case that led to Rowe's 1994 sentencing. He met with members of Mishkeegogamang Chief and Council and health to discuss an update on the Rowe situation.

Rowe was an OPP constable before becoming a pilot and then being ordained by the Anglican Church and assigned to the north. For 16 years, from 1975 through 1988, he traveled throughout the west side of NAN territory, spending time in 20 of

NAN's 49 First Nations. He left a painful trail, the impact of which is expected to continue through a second and third generation of children similar to what has been witnessed in the intergenerational impact of residential schools.

Although Rowe is currently free and living in British Columbia, victims continue to come forward. The leaders of NAN have a program in place that supports the victims through the process that will take place when they reveal their abuse. NAN has set up a support team of professionals that are closely associated with Rowe victims. There are meetings with victims one on one as well as group

meetings for victims to support each other and receive up to date information concerning the court process. Professional counselling is available to any and all who request it, including family members of victims.

"These young men were denied their childhood by suffering at the hands of this pedophile and the constant denial from many to believe their stories," states the Rowe informational package. "It is important that these men not be denied the opportunity to heal and work on their issues so they can live a decent adult life." For more information call NAN at 1-800-465-9952.



Mervin Masakeyash helps arrange flowers for one of several funerals held in the last few months.

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
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Fax: 807-928-2077
Home: 807-928-2014

Senior Councillor

David Masaykeyash
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Cell: 807-252-1412
Home: 807-928-2927
Email: davidmasaykeyash@msn.com

Councillor

Maryanne Panacheese-Skunk
Work: 807-928-2414
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Home: 807-928-2151
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