

The roots of youth violence

ONTARIO is conducting a review of the roots of youth violence, ("Tough is not enough" — Chronicle-Journal, Nov. 27). Thunder Bay is one of the five cities (in addition to Hamilton, Kitchener, Ottawa and Toronto) selected for community consultations on this growing concern. The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) is co-ordinating local efforts to gather information for a report to be submitted to Premier Dalton McGuinty in May 2008.

We were privileged to have former chief justice and attorney general Roy McMurtry, and former Speaker of the Ontario Legislature Alvin Curling in the city Nov. 26-27. They were appointed by the Premier last June to lead the review. The RMYC organized a meeting at City Hall for the co-chairs to meet with our civic leaders, the Police Chief, and representatives of the First Nations. We also arranged consultations with the Lakehead Public Schools, Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, and the Northern Nishnawbe' Education Council.

I facilitated a special session with the co-chairs at the Multicultural Youth Centre. A select group of adults and youths were invited to discuss the kind of youth violence in our schools and in the community, the root causes, and solutions to the problem. I was very impressed with the ideas shared, and suggestions brought forward. I believe that Mr. Curling and Mr. McMurtry gained an insight into what is happening here, our unique situation, and what we feel needs to be done.

But, since only a few people could participate in the focus group, we welcome more ideas to prevent youth violence. We have until Jan. 15 to make a final submission. Please drop your comments at the Multicultural Youth Centre, 511 E. Victoria Ave.



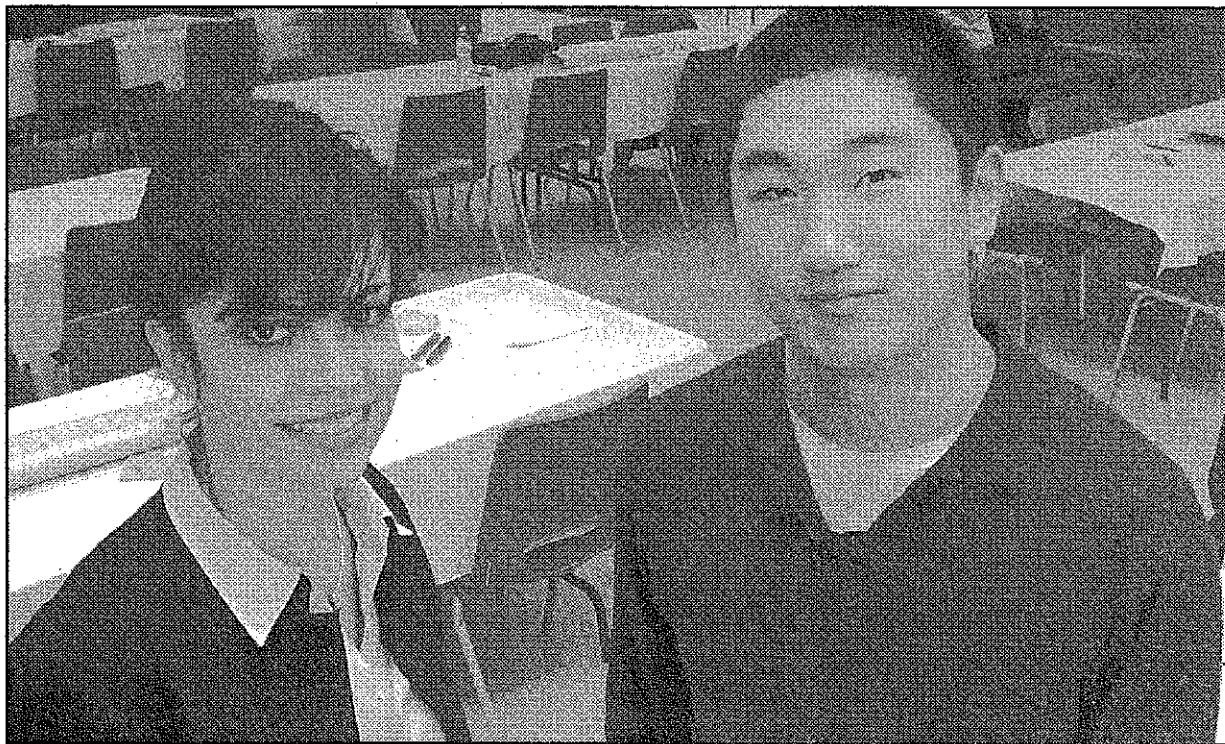
NEWDIRECTIONSINDISCIPLINE.COM

Local youth council is seeking public input to a study on preventing youth violence. "Thunder Bay is one of the five cities selected for community consultations on this growing concern."

You can also send them via fax to: (807) 622-7271, or by e-mail to: rmycvoice@gmail.com.

Martin Zhang

President, Regional Multicultural Youth Council
THUNDER BAY



THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL/BRENT LINTON

Youth Venture director Michelle Dagnino and Martin Zhang, president of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council, are among those in Thunder Bay who want to get at the roots of youth violence.

Youth violence eyed

Thunder Bay groups aim to identify roots, solutions

BY LINDSAY LAFRAUGH
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Thunder Bay is taking a report prepared by the provincial government on youth violence and looking for local solutions.

Representatives from all levels of government, the education sector and youth groups gathered at Dennis Franklin Cromarty high school Thursday evening to discuss how "Roots of Violence" applies to Thunder Bay.

The document was released in November and had been in the works since June 2007.

The forum was led by the United Way, which provided the province with input when information for the report was being compiled.

The purpose of the forum was to "identify what some of the community concerns are around youth violence and strategize some ideas of how to address those at a community level," said Sandra Albertson, manager of community capacity build-

ing with the United Way of Thunder Bay.

She said youth violence has a broad definition.

"Youth violence can be defined in many ways. We are looking at things from bullying and all the way up to crime like stabbings, beatings, many different things," she said.

The important matter is where violence stems from and how it can be prevented.

"When we are looking at youth violence, we are looking at community issues like poverty, racism, unco-ordinated services and family stress," Albertson said. "What we are hoping to do is learn more about specific issues around youth violence in Thunder Bay."

The report contained 30 recommendations for communities, including adding a layer of governance to deal with the issues specifically, a province-wide ban on handguns and designating local schools as hubs for after-hours activities.

Martin Zhang, president of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council, said the latter seems like a great idea.

The youth-run council consists of about 20 members and advocates for youth issues.

"I would like the community to become more aware of youth issues, and I would like there to be more youth leadership in the community and hubs around the city," he said.

It is important for the province to involve youth in the process if it wants to see changes, he added.

"I think youth need to be able to make their own activities, discuss the issues in their own community by themselves and work together to be a part of the solution to the problem," Zhang said.

Albertson said the information gathered at the forum will help to create local solutions to youth violence in Thunder Bay.

"I think the report is only the start," she said.

THE REGIONAL MULTICULTURAL YOUTH COUNCIL'S COMMENTS ON ONTARIO'S ROOTS OF YOUTH VIOLENCE REPORT

A Review of the Roots of Youth Violence was commissioned by Premier Dalton McGuinty in June, 2007. The purpose was to identify and analyze the underlying causes contributing to youth violence, and provide recommendations to guide Ontario to move forward. Dr. Alvin Curling--former Speaker of the Legislature, and the Honourable Roy McMurtry--former Ontario Chief Justice, co-chaired the review process. They met with representatives from social service agencies, civic leaders, educators, police services, the justice community, Aboriginal community, racialized and minority groups, youth representatives and concerned citizens for consultations.

Thunder Bay was one of the five cities selected to host neighbourhood consultations. In the fall of 2007, the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) co-ordinated focus groups for the co-chairs to hear local stories and the challenges we face in Thunder Bay and across Northwestern Ontario. The *"Review of the Roots of Youth Violence Report"* was released on November 14, 2008, and presented to the Ontario Premier for implementation.

After reviewing the report which is on line: ([www.rootsofyouthviolence.on.ca](http://www.rootsof youthviolence.on.ca)), the RMYC is proposing that the Ontario government set aside adequate funding to implement Structural Recommendations #7-10 as soon as possible. As a proactive youth group, the RMYC would like to see an immediate investment in safe spaces (youth centres and community hubs), to engage growing numbers of impoverished, marginalized and at-risk youth who are vulnerable to crime and other negative lifestyles that perpetuate the cycle of violence.

1. YOUTH SPACES: YOUTH DROP-IN CENTRES / COMMUNITY HUBS

Youth need safe places to hang out, participate in casual or structured activities, access relevant information, programs, supports, services and guidance to make a difference. They need their own space to learn, share experiences, bond, work and grow together. Such facilities are ideal for the community to meet with young people on their own 'turf', hear them out, and engage them for input on their problems, safety issues and community development initiatives.

In Thunder Bay, there is a shortage of safe and supervised places for kids to hangout after school. The RMYC's Multicultural Youth (Drop-in) Centre established in the city's south-core in 1992, was forced to close its doors last winter due to a lack of funding. This took away a safe popular place for many disadvantaged kids in the downtown neighbourhood to hang out, use computers, access resources, mingle with positive peers, network with significant others, and be exposed to other helpful supports they had come to enjoy. The Youth Council's executive was also deprived of a place to meet, plan and organize activities, train peer leaders, develop role models, be involved in professional development work, and discuss issues of mutual interest.

The Youth Centre has enabled the RMYC to regularly consult with youths, share and exchange ideas, concerns, and opinions with peers and the community at large. The Youth for Safer Communities Report, Thunder Bay Transit Safety Report, Thunder Bay Neighbourhood Profiles Report, the Schools Acknowledging Safety Solutions by Youth Report, and the Project 21 - Anti-Racism Project Report, all produced by the Youth Council in the last four years are examples of what young people are capable of doing if provided with safe spaces, financial resources, guidance, training and caring supports. Youth have the potential and capacity to be a valuable resource for social development, and be part of the solution to the problems they face.

The RMYC's ability to engage children and youth, give them a voice, listen to their issues was disrupted by the closure of the Centre. Since then the Youth Council has been concerned about fundraising, instead of using the time, talents, skills, and leadership potential to connect with and assist marginalized kids who stand to benefit from positive peer influence.

Therefore:

- * There is a need to support youth centres or community hubs as safe places for kids to hang out and participate in well supervised programs and activities. Spaces in schools, recreation centres, community halls, church basements, etc., that are conveniently located in local neighbourhoods and willing to serve as drop-in centres should be identified and supported to operate as positive areas for kids to hang out. Existing facilities with best practices should be invited to run after-school programs and recreational activities to keep kids busy. Local facilities that are easily accessible on foot will reduce safety risks and costs of transportation that can limit youth participation in extra curricular activities.

- * We need financial resources for youth drop-in centres. It is important to provide funding to sustain and stabilize operations for safe spaces that keep kids off the streets. It is critical to have continuity of services to maintain contact with at-risk youth. Disruption of programs and services disengages the youth, and drives them to the streets where there are vulnerable to substance abuse, prostitution, crime, violence, criminal youth gangs, and involvement in other negative lifestyles. This is what has maintained the status quo.
- * Pools of responsible sensitive adults are needed for supervision, security, guidance, advice, and support. The adults -- paid staff and volunteers should enjoy working with kids, be culturally sensitive, show empathy, be prepared to help out after-hours, maintain order, and enforce discipline for safety, growth and wellbeing of all children and youth.
- * Partnerships should also be established between community groups and agencies willing to provide resource people, Elders, counsellors, professional presenters and give donations for sustenance and to reach out and help the youth.
- * The support of policing services to patrol youth centres/community hubs is critical to build positive relations with police officers. This also ensures protection of the facilities from drug traffickers, child molesters, criminal youth gangs, and other folks who prey on kids, exploit them and put them at risk.

2. ENGAGING YOUTH & CAPACITY BUILDING: INVESTING IN YOUTH CAPITAL:

Youths communicate well with peers because there is no generation gap. They know what is going on among their friends and schoolmates. Training young leaders to use positive peer influence has an impact. Identifying, recruiting and training peer leaders will reach more young people, and using young leaders to consult with peers on issues, and seeking their input on ways to resolve problems is an effective strategy to connect with, motivate and mobilize young people.

Providing relevant information enables the youth to make responsible decisions and wise choices. Helping them to handle difficult situations builds self-confidence to mediate arguments and find alternative ways to resolve conflict -- talking things out instead of fighting or resorting to violence. Training youths to make presentations to their peers, to decision-makers, to the media and so forth, gives them a voice to raise the profile of their issues.

A large pool of trained young leaders working with peers at youth centres, community halls, in schools, churches, and other facilities is an effective way to reach out and encourage more youths to participate in positive activities. Having youth groups in neighbourhoods using near-by community recreation facilities to organize their own activities, access services and share information to enhance their well-being will make a difference. Positive peer influence helps to break negative cycles, reduces risks and minimizes the chances of involvement in risky lifestyles.

The RMYC has successfully used a youth-to-youth approach to deliver programs. We train peer leaders to organize activities that alleviate boredom and encourage mass participation. The Youth Council has used this strategy to expand youth-led initiatives in schools, neighbourhoods, and across the region including First Nations reserves. This has been an effective way to amplify the voices of children and youth, share skills, and challenge them to discuss topics such as racism, bullying, poverty, addictions, education, crime, violence, homelessness, abuse, jobs, nutrition, education, recreation, the environment, relationships, parenting and so forth. Teaching empathy, cultural sensitivity and communication skills and other key qualities develops the capacity of young leaders to be advocates who mobilize each other to make a difference.

Therefore:

- * There is a need to invest in the development of young leaders, role models and peer helpers who can reach out and engage more young people in positive activities. Training is needed to enable young people to develop self-confidence to speak out about their problems, mobilize themselves and use the media to make the general public aware of their priorities. This will bring issues of interest/concern to the fore-front, and challenge relevant authorities and decision makers to act accordingly.
- Pools of peer helpers who are approachable, empathetic, sensitive, can communicate well, and capable of reaching out and working with children and youth in schools and the community at large should be created. With nearly 25 years of experience in youth group development, we believe that youth centres are ideal places to train young leaders who in turn will use positive peer influence to make a difference. The RMYC is willing to help provide skills to needed to train peers and engage others. Our Youth Council is already working with school boards in this regard, and we can help as peer leader mentors.

- * To retain the services of trained peer helpers longer, they should be rewarded with course credits, honouraria, special awards or other incentives. Compensating young leaders and role models for their time, skills and effort will reduce the talent-drain to fast-food and other commercial outlets where their qualities are in high demand. Communities benefit from peer leaders who can connect well with children and youth, reach out to at-risk youth, and use positive influence to make a difference.

3. COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND RESOURCE NEEDS:

Thunder Bay City Council adopted a Children's Charter in June, 2004. The Children's Charter provides a blueprint of what the community should do to enhance the well-being of children and youth. We believe that if fully applied, the Children's Charter will improve the living conditions of all children and youth, reduce risks that make kids vulnerable, help to make our community safer, and improve our quality of life for current and successive generations.

"Our Quality of Life Report – Thunder Bay: 2008" released in early 2009 reveals that Thunder Bay has a youth crime-rate that is more than twice the provincial average. We attribute this trend to our failure to implement aspects of the Thunder Bay Children's Charter that prevent problems, and not supporting initiatives that engage children and youth to be directly involved in their issues. So far, City Hall has not supported youth-led initiatives such as youth centres, or invested capital to enhance the services and programs of community groups impacted by the Casino to fundraise for social programs, services and supports that complement the Children's Charter.

Therefore:

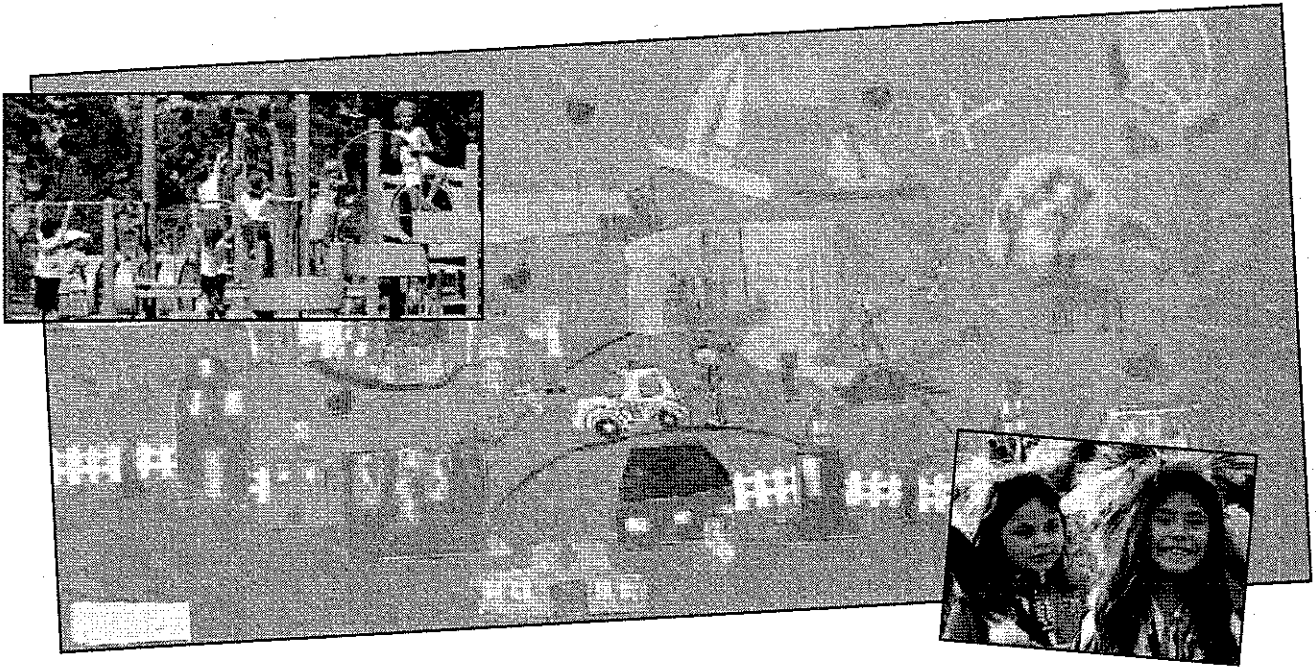
- * The City of Thunder Bay and Thunder Bay's Children's Advocate should be proactive in promoting the Children's Charter as a vision of what needs to be done to enhance the well-being of children and youth in our community and invest resources accordingly.
- * The city should use recommendations in the "Review of the Roots of Youth Violence Report" to secure and distribute financial resources for the engagement of stakeholders in creating a collective strategy to implement Thunder Bay's Children's Charter. City Council must urge Premier McGuinty / the Ontario government to apply all recommendations in the report, and, the City should also approach the federal government and the private sector for additional funds and resources to enhance the wellbeing of children and youth.

- * The City should conduct an audit of what exists in the community in regards to services, programs and supports for children and youth, and convene a forum for 'stakeholders' (community groups, agencies, individuals, etc.) working to complement Thunder Bay Children's Charter, to share their best-practices. Existing gaps need to be identified and a working document developed to enable the City to provide the resources and supports needed to improve the status of children and youth, families, and the whole community.
- * Thunder Bay Children's Advocate should lead the campaign to implement the Children's Charter, engage stakeholders with a proven track record of working with children and youth and assess the financial, human resources and supports they need to enhance their programs, services and activities. The City's Children's Advocate should liaise with the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for support of youth centres/community hubs to address the urgent need for safe spaces with structured programs and support services for vulnerable kids.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Improving the quality of life for children and youth and creating a positive, healthy and safe environment to play and grow shows a caring community. Affordable recreational activities reduce boredom, promote fitness, and promote healthy lifestyles. Counseling and other supports for youth-at-risk can help them to heal, give them hope, and make them feel they belong. Training peer leaders in youth centres to organize activities will help to reduce delinquency and save a fortune in costly correctional services and rehabilitation of young and repeat offenders.

There is a saying—"It takes a village to raise a child". Youth are a dependent population with no capital to fund, run and sustain programs. With changing family structures and growing numbers of kids in care, investing in activities that foster caring, healthy lifestyles and encourage kids to get along builds stronger caring communities. Creating environments for children and youth to realize their full potential enables them to participate equitably in society. The RMYC believes that investing in children and youth today lays a strong foundation for creating a safer, equitable and harmonious community. The Youth Council is willing and prepared to share experiences gained through the years to enhance the well-being of all children and youth across the region.



Thunder Bay Children's Charter

All children deserve basic rights and freedoms. A fair share of society's resources must be devoted to ensuring this. Families are responsible for raising their children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that working in partnership with communities, all levels of governments have a duty to assist families to fulfill their responsibilities.*

All Thunder Bay children deserve:

- ✓ a quality of life that meets their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.
- ✓ to have enough nutritious food every day.
- ✓ to have a safe and comfortable place to live.
- ✓ quality child care and/or early education programs.
- ✓ to have safe places to play, and access to affordable recreational activities.
- ✓ quality primary, secondary, and affordable post secondary education.
- ✓ the resources to ensure life-long good health.
- ✓ to be served by governments that put the health and well-being of children first by ensuring enough funding for children's programs.
- ✓ to be protected from neglect and abuse.
- ✓ to be safe from exploitation.**

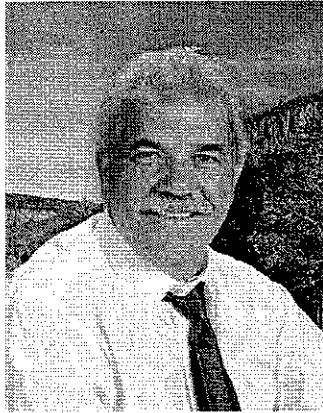
* For the purposes of this Charter children are defined as being from birth to eighteen years of age.

** For the purposes of this Charter being exploited means to be used unfairly by someone else to meet their own needs.



Adopted by
City Council for the City of Thunder Bay
June 14, 2004

CITY OF
Thunder Bay
Superior by Nature
www.thunderbay.ca



Councillor Joe Virdiramo
Residence 625-5547

E-mail
jvirdiramo@thunderbay.ca

Mailing
City of Thunder Bay
City Hall
500 Donald Street East
P.O. Box 800
Thunder Bay, ON
P7C 5K4

A Message from Thunder Bay Children's Advocate

The City of Thunder Bay's new strategic plan calls for the need to improve our quality of life.

A vital part of accomplishing this Mission is the development of a Children's Charter and Child Advocate for the City of Thunder Bay in consultation with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and other interested groups.

On Feb. 16, 2004, City Council appointed me as the Children's Advocate for the City of Thunder Bay. The Children's Advocate is an elected official who, in co-operation with the Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition, will advocate on behalf of children's needs with all levels of government, and the private sector as appropriate. I am honoured to serve in this important new role.

Councillor Joe Virdiramo

The Children's Advocate will:

- ✓ provide advice, and advocate on behalf of children's needs, at the political level
- ✓ be an active member of the Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition
- ✓ be kept informed about local issues relating to children's health, social needs, and available children's programs, services, and activities
- ✓ provide advice to the Coalition on the best ways of bringing concerns forward at the political level
- ✓ keep the Coalition informed about the Corporation's plans that will affect children
- ✓ report regularly to City Council on the activities of the Coalition
- ✓ endorse the publication of an annual report on the Coalition's activities which includes the Thunder Bay Children's Charter
- ✓ act as ambassador to promote the values embodied in the Thunder Bay Children's Charter at every opportunity

The Thunder Bay Children's Charter embraces these values as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child.

Youth gangs are real

Let's tackle the issue quickly and effectively

IN response to Diane Thompson's letter, "Castlegreen resents graffiti-gang link" (June 15) we feel that the article by Phil Andrews (June 6) "Gang activity picking up" serves to highlight a potential problem across the city.

We recently held a conference on violence prevention and Const. Dave Warren made an impressive presentation on gang activity in Thunder Bay. Youth gangs were identified as a concern by over 75 per cent of the participants, and a third of the youths we surveyed knew of someone who had been a victim of gang violence. This led us to invite an expert on Winnipeg street gangs to come and address local students on the topic. It was scary to learn how widespread street gangs, gang-related violence and crime have spread all over Manitoba. Some of the gangs have started to move into our region.

We do not feel that Mr. Andrews is trying to single out neighborhoods with graffiti as the only problem areas. We welcome the reporting as a proactive

wake-up call to stifle the growth and expansion of street gangs in our community. We need to raise community awareness of gang activity. We cannot be complacent and deny the presence of gangs in our backyard.

Many people are saying that the gangs here are nowhere near the ones in Winnipeg. There was a time when gang activity in Winnipeg was seemingly harmless and similar to what is in Thunder Bay today. Not taking the issue seriously and acknowledging the causes of youth gangs is waiting for the problem to grow. Before we know it, our personal safety will be threatened, and our property violated.

We realize that street gangs are symptoms of ills in society. Poverty, abuse, alienation, racism, violent role models, absence of fathers and out-of-home placement are all risk factors for adolescents to join gangs. While we may all agree that no government will solve all these problems, communities have to work together and support each other to improve the quality of life for

children and youth. At the same time, we should send a clear message that gang activity will not be tolerated in our schools, neighborhoods and the community as a whole.

Our suggestions to deal with youth gangs include introducing curfews to protect children, and prevent juveniles from getting into trouble with the law. Eighty per cent of the youths we surveyed support curfews. Any gang-related graffiti should be covered immediately. This will eliminate the staking of gang territory and open publicity to recruit new members. Furthermore, our council is meeting with other youth groups, the police and interested agencies in the city to form a coalition against street gangs.

We also feel that parenting skills should be mandatory in all schools. In addition, parents should take the initiative to teach life skills and social responsibility to their children. While many people say that discipline should be taught at home, we are aware of adolescents with no safe, stable homes to grow in. Further, there is a significant number of young parents and single mothers already caught in a cycle of dysfunctional relationships. Unless they have an opportunity to learn positive values and obtain practical skills, we will have a generation of delinquents who will be a fertile breeding ground for street gangs.

AMY LAKHANI & MARCIA WINT

Regional Multicultural Youth Council, Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario
Thunder Bay

Gangs attract youth with alcohol syndrome: doctors

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — A higher incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome among some aboriginal communities in Canada is making their youth more vulnerable to being lured into gangs, experts say.

The syndrome, in which the brain of the fetus is damaged by excessive drinking during pregnancy, can make gang life seem exciting and attractive, say doctors and social workers who deal with aboriginal youth suffering from the condition.

And they worry that if more isn't done to provide support those youth could be lost to criminal life forever.

"If we don't get engaged in a solution for this issue, we are creating a nightmare, because we do know 60 per cent of the aboriginal population is under 25," said Steve Koptie, a veteran social worker and Mohawk.

"This is . . . a demographic tsunami facing Canada."

Koptie, who has spent several years in some of Canada's most remote and troubled reserves, said he's seen gangs in Hamilton use youths suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome to conduct break and enters and petty crimes.

"These kids are vulnerable."

Experts are careful to ascribe the vulnerability only to those youth who have actually been medically diagnosed with the syndrome.

"Kids that are in gangs, that have been medically identified with having (fetal alcohol syndrome) . . . there is still a correlation there," said Mitch Bourbonniere, a Metis social worker who has spent much of his life pulling kids out of gangs in Winnipeg.

"It's significant, for sure."

Youth with the syndrome often face a double-whammy. Many are dealing with poverty, addictions and abuse in a family that may also be breaking down, factors that can also draw youth into gangs, Bourbonniere added.

Several studies of aboriginal communities

have shown the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome can be 10 times that of the non-aboriginal population, said Dr. Chandrakant Shah, a pediatrician with Anishnawbe Health Toronto who has worked on aboriginal reserves for 30 years.

Health Canada pegs the incidence of the syndrome in some aboriginal and Inuit communities as high as one in five.

The federal agency says that each year up to 750 babies are born with full-blown fetal alcohol syndrome in Canada. About 1,000 are born with a range of alcohol-related damage, sometimes referred to as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) or fetal alcohol effects (FAE), it says.

"It's not a racial issue so much as rampant use of alcohol," warns Dr. Albert Chudley, a professor of pediatrics and medical genetics at the University of Manitoba.

"It's a disease of poverty," said Chudley, adding not all aboriginal communities suffer from such alarming rates of the disorder.

Dr. Caroline Tait, assistant professor of native studies at the University of Saskatchewan, said she doesn't accept the argument that fetal alcohol syndrome makes youth more vulnerable to gangs.

A child without the syndrome who is raised in multiple foster homes, or is neglected or abused is just as vulnerable, Tait said.

Tait adds she's concerned that aboriginal women will be blamed for feeding the gang problem if the link is made between the two.

"It draws our attention away from the conditions of poverty, the other determinants . . . that I would argue are much more important if we want to understand gang involvement than FAS ever is."

A number of scientific studies solidly and consistently show an over-representation of those with fetal alcohol syndrome among those involved in criminal activity and in jails, Chudley said.

Aboriginal gangs thrive

They're becoming 'sophisticated in how they do business'

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Aboriginal gangs are proliferating across Canada as criminal organizations exploit the intense poverty and squalid conditions that many First Nations youth live in, says a top officer with the RCMP's aboriginal police division.

The gangs' stock-in-trade includes drug distribution, prostitution and theft, and they're only growing more sophisticated, said the RCMP.

"The gangs are brought on by poverty," said RCMP Sgt. Merle Carpenter, who holds the aboriginal gangs file with the National Aboriginal Policing Services.

"They intimidate by violence and these aboriginal youth are just wanting to belong to somebody."

While Winnipeg, with its large aboriginal population, is still the epicentre for native gangs, outfits like the Indian Posse, the Manitoba Warriors and the Native Syndicate have spread from coast to coast and into the far North.

"They are certainly increasing in numbers and becoming more sophisticated in how they do business," said Carpenter, who is a member of the Inuvialuit First Nation in the

western arctic.

The gangs are growing through the country's network of jails, which are acting as hothouses for recruitment and learning the tricks of the trade.

If you're not a member of a gang when you go to jail, police officials in Manitoba say, you will be when you come out. Many prisoners simply cannot survive jail life without the protection of a gang.

Last week, an aboriginal policy conference in Ottawa heard that aboriginal youth membership in gangs could double in the next 10 years.

Dr. Mark Totten, a sociologist and expert on Canadian street gangs, released a study that found aboriginal gang violence has reached "epidemic levels" in many communities.

Totten said female aboriginals are often traded among gang members and, as part of their initiation, are made to have sex with numerous gang members at the same time.

Observers say the explosive growth can't be combated unless the federal government steps up and addresses the woeful conditions underlying the startling trend.

"It's so simple that it's hard to understand why nothing's happening,"

said Steve Koptie, an aboriginal social worker who spent several years working in the mental health field for 21 reserves in Ontario's Northwest.

"It's all about education and employment. If we don't get youth educated and we don't get them ... participating in the workforce we're going to continue to watch this deterioration."

Koptie notes there is vast mineral wealth in Canada's North, such as the Ring of Fire in Northwestern Ontario, which can provide jobs for many now-destitute aboriginals.

"The issue is how are we going to share the resources and how are we going to make education a priority," said Koptie, who added schools on reserves get half the funding of schools off reserve.

"The federal government is responsible for education on reserve and they've fallen so far behind, they've dropped the ball majorly on this."

Calls to the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for comment were not immediately returned.

• Continued on page A5

If there's money to be made, gangs will be there

• Continued from page A1

Vancouver and the lower B.C. mainland, with its close proximity to the United States and its oceanic coastline, have become a major gateway for the importation of drugs in the last few years, said the RCMP.

But alarmingly, the native gangs are spreading into rural B.C. as well, including Vancouver Island, the B.C. interior, Fort St. John's in the northwest and Prince Rupert on the northwest coast.

Smaller gangs are springing up there, with names like Red Alert, Cree Boys, Native Blood and Native Posse.

They are now in all corners of the province, said Supt. Dan Malo, the RCMP's officer in charge of the combined forces gang task force in B.C.

"In all the locations and corners of this province, there are people who use drugs," said Malo.

"Where there's a consumer base there'll always be a seller, and that's where some of our native gangs seize the opportunity."

Aboriginal gangs are easily migrating eastward from Winnipeg into Northwestern Ontario as well, often using relatives and friends as drug and alcohol couriers into even the most remote fly-in reserves, via plane or winter ice roads.

"In one of the northern communities I was in, I met a young man with rope burns on his neck, he was 17 years old, and a gang member from Winnipeg had been in the community and he gave him one week to come up with \$1,500," said Koptie.

The young man decided he was

going to kill himself because he couldn't come up with the money, he said.

"This is happening across the country."

The criminal gangs are even spreading as far north as Iqaluit, Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Inuvik and the Arctic, said Carpenter.

Oil and gas exploration meant there was a "lot of money in that neck of the woods."

"If there's money to be made, they're going to be there."

One-time geographic boundaries, in which gangs used to control turf-specific areas of towns or cities, are blurring.

Now, in any given neighbourhood in Winnipeg, for instance, all the gangs will be represented, said Mitch Bourbonniere, a Metis and

veteran social worker who has spent decades pulling aboriginal kids out of gangs in Winnipeg.

"The higher-up guys who are smarter know not to make trouble for each other," he said.

"They've all learned to kind of co-exist because they all know they're all in it for the same reason, and that is to make money."

The gangs are evolving in other ways as well, learning police and Crown attorney tactics across the country, Carpenter said.

"It's just cat and mouse. If you are doing a big operation on one gang and put them all in jail, well another gang pops up," he said.

"It's a supply-and-demand issue and it's just a never-ending cycle."

Carpenter said he thinks much can be done at the community level about the gang proliferation.

"The police can't do it alone."

FACTS AND STATISTICS ON CRIME & VIOLENCE IN CANADA

(Information compiled in 2008 from: Correctional Service Canada & Juristat, and Statistics Canada) for the RMYC's "Investing in our Future to Prevent Crime Project")

1. Violence and Crime Statistics:

- * More than 80% of young offenders in federal institutions have below grade 10 education; 65% have less than grade 8.
- * 90% of offenders in federal institutions have previous convictions; 81% committed a previous violent offence.
- * More than 50% of the current population in federal institutions were under the influence of alcohol and drugs when they committed offences that led to their incarceration. About a quarter of all those incarcerated committed drug-related crimes, and 20 % have a history of mental health disorders
- * Eight out of ten young offenders have long-standing substance abuse problems. 80% of offenders enter federal institutions with some type of substance abuse problem, and many have multiple addictions.
- * 80% of all young male offenders aged 25 and under are affiliated with gangs.
- * A majority of women offenders are survivors of physical & sexual abuse and trauma.

2. Incarceration rates:

- * Canada-wide, in 2005/6, the incarceration rate is 131 per 100,000 adult population, an increase from, 129 per 100,000 in 2004/05. Just over 232,800 people were admitted to some form of custody in 2005/6, a 4% increase from the previous year.
- * On any given day in 2005/6, 153,000 individuals were under supervision on Correctional Services Agencies in Canada. This number is slightly more than the previous year.
- * Approximately 33, 400 adults were in both federal and provincial prisons in 2005/06.

3. Aboriginal Offenders:

- * Aboriginal people represent 4% of adult Canadians (2006 Census), but 18% of all federal prisoners; 21% of male prisoner population, and 30% of female prisoner population.
- * Aboriginal people make up 43% for the prison population in the Prairie Region, which includes Northwestern Ontario.
- * About 80% - 90% in the prison population in the Kenora and Thunder Bay Districts are Aboriginal.
- * In Manitoba, Aboriginal people accounted for 71% of sentenced admissions in 2005/2006 (and make up 16% of the outside population), up from 58% in 1996/1997.
- * In Saskatchewan -- Aboriginal adults make up 79% of the total prisoner population (15% of outside population) (for all provinces, see page 22 of [StatsCan Report](#))

4. Aboriginal Women (2004-2005)

- * In the provincial system, 30% of female prisoners are Aboriginal (2004-5)
- * In the federal system, 25% of female prisoners are Aboriginal. (2005-6)
- * In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal women account for 87% of all female admissions
- * In Manitoba and the Yukon, Aboriginal women account for 83% of all female admissions
- * In Alberta, Aboriginal women account for 54% of all female admissions
- * In British Columbia, Aboriginal women account for 29% of all female admissions

(This has increased steadily since 1997 when Aboriginal women made up 15% of federal female prisoners)

5. Aboriginal Youth (2005-2006)

- * Aboriginal youth make up 6% of the youth in Canada - (2006 Census), 23% of youth held on remand, and 31% of admissions to sentenced custody
- * There were approximately 7,500 Aboriginal youth admitted to either custody or probation in 2005/2006

6. Female Aboriginal Youth

- * 35% of female youth admitted to sentenced custody
- * 27% of female youth admitted to remand

7. Male Aboriginal Youth

- * 31% of male youth admitted to sentenced custody
- * 22% of male youth admitted to remand

8. Youth (12 - 17 years of age)

- * There were about 39,000 admissions to youth custody and community correctional services (2004/2005, not all provinces reported).

(In 2005/06, the third year following the implementation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA), there were 3,724 youth admitted to sentenced custody, 14% fewer than the previous year and 18% fewer than in 2003/4. Declines occurred in both secure and open custody admissions)

- * Youth make up 8% of Canada's total population. Youth represented 21% of all persons charged by police in 1999 and 21% of these charges were against females.
- * In 2004/5, about 450 young people on average were on deferred custody and supervision. (Deferred custody and supervision allows a young person to serve a custody sentence in the community under a number of strict conditions and is comparable to conditional sentence for adults. Any breach of conditions may result in the young person being sent to custody)
- * In 2005/6, there were 13,681 youth admitted to remand (meaning custody while awaiting trial or sentencing) which was an increase of 2% from the previous year.
- * The incarceration rate in 2004-5 was 83 per 100 000 youth population, 2003-2004 was 82 per 100 000.
- * There were 12,550 admissions to probation in 2005/2006, marking a 2% decline from the previous year and a 24% decrease since the implementation of the YCJA in 2003/2004.

9. Gangs in Prisons:

- * There are currently 50 separate gangs in federal institutions, and 41 separate gangs and gang types that offenders on conditional release belong to.
- * In the Prairie Region including Thunder Bay, Aboriginal gangs that include: Manitoba Warrior, Native Syndicate, Indian Posse, and Redd Alert, and outlaw motorcycle gangs such as Hells Angels, the Cripps and Bandidos are the most prevalent gangs inside institutions where they pose a serious threat to staff and orderly operation of the facilities.

10. Costs:

- * Correctional services expenditures totaled almost \$3 billion in 2005/6, up 2% from the previous year. Custodial services (prisons) accounted for the largest proportion (71%) of the expenditures, followed by community supervision services (14%), headquarters and central services (14%), and National Parole Board and provincial parole boards (2%).
- * This figure does not include policing or court costs which bring the total expenditures up to more than \$10 billion for the year.
- * Cost of incarcerating a Federal prisoner (2004/5): \$259.05 per prisoner/per day
- * Cost of incarcerating a Federal female prisoner (2004/5): \$150,000 - \$250,000 per prisoner/per year
- * Cost of incarcerating a Federal male prisoner (2004/5): \$87,665 per prisoner/per year
- * Cost of incarcerating a provincial prisoner (2004/5): \$141.78: per prisoner/per day
- * The cost of alternatives such as probation, bail supervision and community supervision range from \$5.00 - \$25.00/day.

PLEASE NOTE:

The high rates of imprisonment for Aboriginal people remain despite changes made by parliament to the sentencing provisions of the criminal code. These changes to the criminal code were designed to address the issue of over-representation of First Nations within the sentenced prison population. Section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code provides that "all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal offenders."

Students battle loneliness

Young natives suffer through strange environment, says high school counsellor

BY KIMBERLY HICKS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

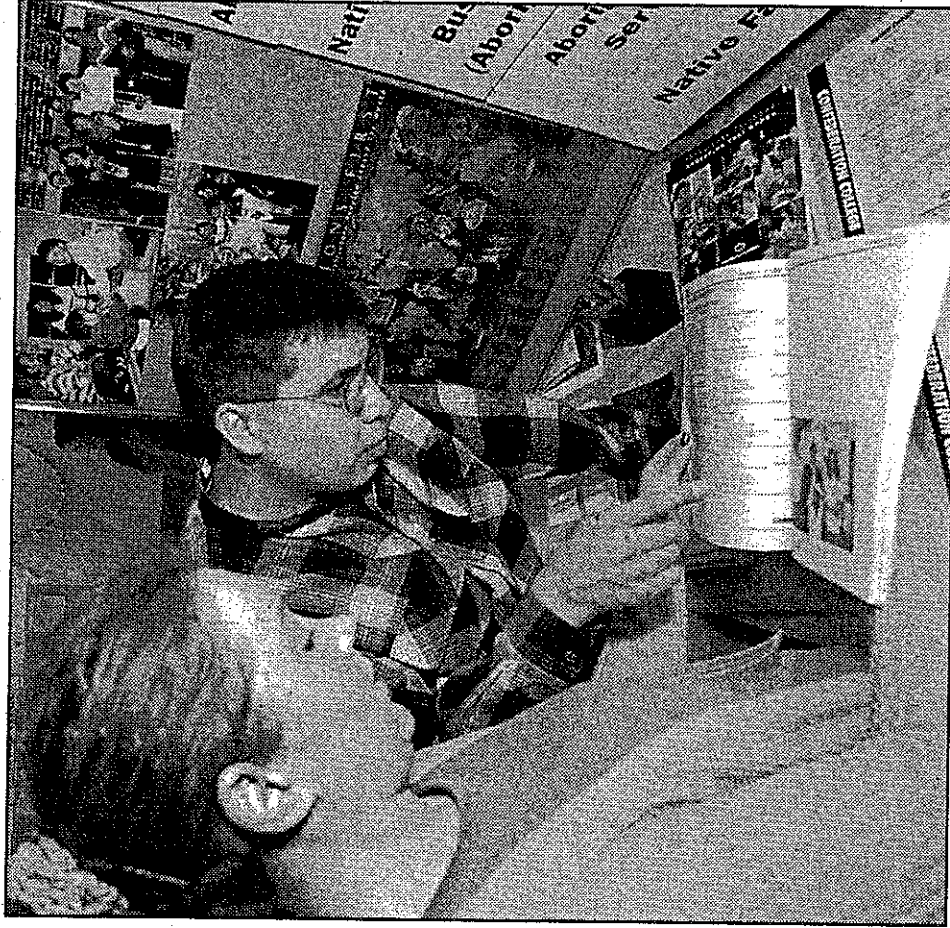
Bobby Narcisse spends half of his time as a counsellor tracking down native students who aren't going to school.

As a counsellor at Sir Winston Churchill Institute, his job is to keep native students in the classroom, but it's not always an easy job because of all the negatives working against him.

Students, especially in grades 9 and 10 have left their families and their small tight-knit communities to come to a city of strangers where feelings of loneliness are common even when they are surrounded by students of their own age. Some students have been away from school for as much as 38 days and it takes a lot of convincing to get them back into the classroom.

"My job is to motivate them to go to school and empower them," said Narcisse, who often has to talk to teachers about native students and their needs because they don't realize how susceptible they are to dropping out of school if they feel lonely and uncomfortable in class.

Narcisse was one of four panel mem-



SANDI KRASOWSKI/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Brian Joseph chats with Kelly Binette of the Confederation College Aboriginal Studies Division at aboriginal fair

bers who spoke Friday at an aboriginal fair held by the Regional Multicultural Youth Council.

The purpose of the fair was to bring native agencies together to better serve

native students from the far north.

But it's not an easy problem to tackle when 33 per cent of absentees are native students, said Vern Kimball, a native counsellor at St. Patrick High School.

Kimball said native students just arriving in Thunder Bay are very apprehensive and afraid to go into classroom settings. When they leave their native communities they expect to be in classrooms with their friends but usually end up with a group of new faces and experience racial discrimination.

"They're not in classes with their friends, they don't know anybody and they begin to skip out and it becomes a habit," said Kimball. "Some of it is peer pressure, but a lot of it is loneliness. They're afraid of their environment and don't trust anyone."

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Deputy Chief James Morris said his own son experienced racism in kindergarten and now he doesn't want to go back to school.

Ann LeSage, of Thunder Bay's Indian Friendship Centre said the key to keeping native students in school and help them fit into city life is for urban agencies to work together and to establish better relationships with communities in the far north.

"The first few months is very crucial between September and December," said LeSage, who urged native agencies throughout the city to work together to keep native students in school.

"We still have our little agencies, our political affiliations, our individual jurisdictions, but we have to try and remove these barriers," said LeSage.

Students and others attending the fair suggested several ideas to make a secondary education more attractive for native students. Teaching more native history, intramural sports, having sessions of cultural crafts and mentor-support programs in schools were some suggestions for keeping students in school.



Eugene Nabigon, left, Roderick Fiddler, Johnny Anishinabe and Michael Meekis were among those attending special orientation courses last week

Todd Mowatt photo

Life lessons

Orientation sessions help native students from isolated communities make their way in Thunder Bay's high schools

By BOB HEARN
The Times-News

NATIVE students from remote area reserves are finally getting help adapting to one of the scariest and alien places known to them — a city high school.

In the past, many native students couldn't cope with moving from an insular community, away from family and into a large high school in the city. Students board with city families that are mostly non-native. Drop out rates were alarming and few native kids ever successfully mixed socially with non-native students.

Now through the efforts of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC), both city boards of education and various native bands, native kids are coming into Thunder Bay high schools a little better prepared.

"It helps there are others here that I know and that we are able to do this, helps you feel more like you fit in," said Johnny Anishinabe, 15, a Grade 10 student from Sandy Lake attending Hillcrest at an orientation session last week.

The council, assisted by local educators, organized three different orientation sessions for native students, the last one held today.

About 120 native students are attending city high school this year from remote communities like We-

bequie, Sandy Lake, Summer Beaver, Moose Factory, Sioux Lookout and Fort Albany.

The all-day sessions were aimed at letting native students know what they're going to face and how to cope with their special needs, said RMYC outreach officer George Ishabid.

"Right now they're pretty fragile and a lot of them are very shy," said Ishabid. "We tell them that it's not always a friendly and fair world out there. They'll run into discrimination, insults. Some may be tempted by drugs and alcohol, so we tell them to use their heads and stay away from certain elements and parts of the city."

When you come from a community of 400 residents, a school of 1,200 can be intimidating. Exercises such as scavenger hunts, skits, problem solving and communications sessions are designed to help the kids. The RMYC spent between \$4,000 and \$5,000 to hold the orientation sessions at the Nor'Wester Resort Hotel.

Anishinabe says the sessions really help native kids.

"I like getting into things and I've already joined the volleyball team," he said.

One of his friends says most native students are naturally shy and need loads of support.

"I really didn't know what to expect when I started school, it was scary," said Roderick Fiddler, 18,

and a Grade 12 student at Hillcrest. "I wasn't used to catching buses, or finding and remembering street names. This helped."

This is the first year RMYC funds have been available to help native

'We tell them that it's not always a friendly and fair world out there. They'll run into discrimination, insults. Some may be tempted by drugs and alcohol so we tell them to use their heads and stay away from certain elements and parts of the city.'

students get acquainted with their new surroundings. Hillcrest has run its own native orientation sessions for the past three years.

"What we noticed was native students clumped together with kids from their own reserve," said Hillcrest teacher Jan Schindelbauer.

But some native students say banding together with other native kids at high school is important. St. Patrick has a special native room where kids can relax and socialize.

"That room was very valuable, I

got a chance to meet other natives and hang out," said Sandy Lake's Cindy Meekis, 17, and a Grade 12 student at St. Pat's. "We also learned a few things about AIDs, drugs and alcohol."

"There was no native students room when I first got there, I was just wandering around and didn't know anybody. I didn't fit in at all."

Meekis said she couldn't approach other native student in the hall because she was shy. She was also intimidated by all the white kids. Not because they were mean to her, she said, but because they didn't go out of their way to make her feel she belonged.

"They'd say 'hi' and maybe talk a bit to me in class, but after that I was pretty much ignored," Meekis said. "There were also some classes where I was the only native and it made me uncomfortable, so I'd just stop going."

Ishabid says that's a common problem for native students.

"A lot of native parents have a

different attitude about kids missing class. If they don't make a class, they don't yell. 'Why did you miss that class?' it's 'Oh, you missed class, you must have had a reason for doing that,' " he said. Getting native students to tough out the year can be a problem, too. Last year 34 students from Webequie came to Hillcrest. There were two suicides back home, and 30 of them did not return to Thunder Bay after the second funeral.

Non-natives saw that as a wasted school year. Native students thought it was more important to be close to family after the tragedies, said Ishabid.

"It's not two worlds colliding. It's two worlds missing each other completely," he said. "If we want them to finish school and carry on, we not only have to orientate native students coming in to Thunder Bay, but educate others about their special needs."

SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

John Palko, Principal
Laurie Tulloch, Vice-Principal

December 7, 1993

Mr. Moffatt Makuto
c/o The Regional Multicultural Youth Council
Victoriaville Centre Mall
711 E. Victoria Avenue
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7C 5P7

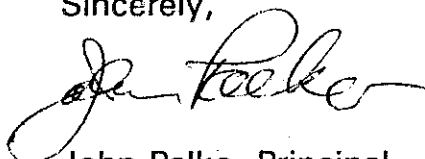
Dear Mr. Moffatt Makuto:

Northwood High School in the past school year has delivered an Aboriginal Transition Program for Aboriginal students from remote communities. This program has been run in partnership with the Lakehead Board of Education and two locals of the Ontario Native Women's Association - Jiiwitaniquek Local and Thunder Bay Anishnabequek Local. At our December meeting the Steering Committee voted unanimously to send a letter to the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario supporting the retention of the Fall Residential Orientation Sessions for the Non-resident Aboriginal Boarding Students.

It is felt by the Committee that this session had a positive impact on the students and made a significant contribution to group bonding. It gives the students a group cohesion that we feel contributed to the better retention of the students in school and allowed positive interdependence between the students, teachers and community agencies to occur.

The program should continue. Please contact us if any further support is desired.

Sincerely,



John Palko, Principal
Northwood High School

/mj

c.c. J. Schindelbauer - Hillcrest High School



SANDI KRASOWSKI/THE TIMES-NEWS

Finding a new kind of life

Students from Northwestern Ontario reserves who have arrived in Thunder Bay to study, made a pyramid at the Nor'Wester Resort Hotel Monday during an orientation

program organized by the Regional Multicultural Youth Council. All Thunder Bay high schools are participating in the program to help students to acquire urban lifes-

kills, make friends and become aware of services in the city. Similar programs take place in Red Lake, Sioux Lookout, Fort Frances, Kenora and Ignace.

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL, Wednesday, September 20, 1995 A3



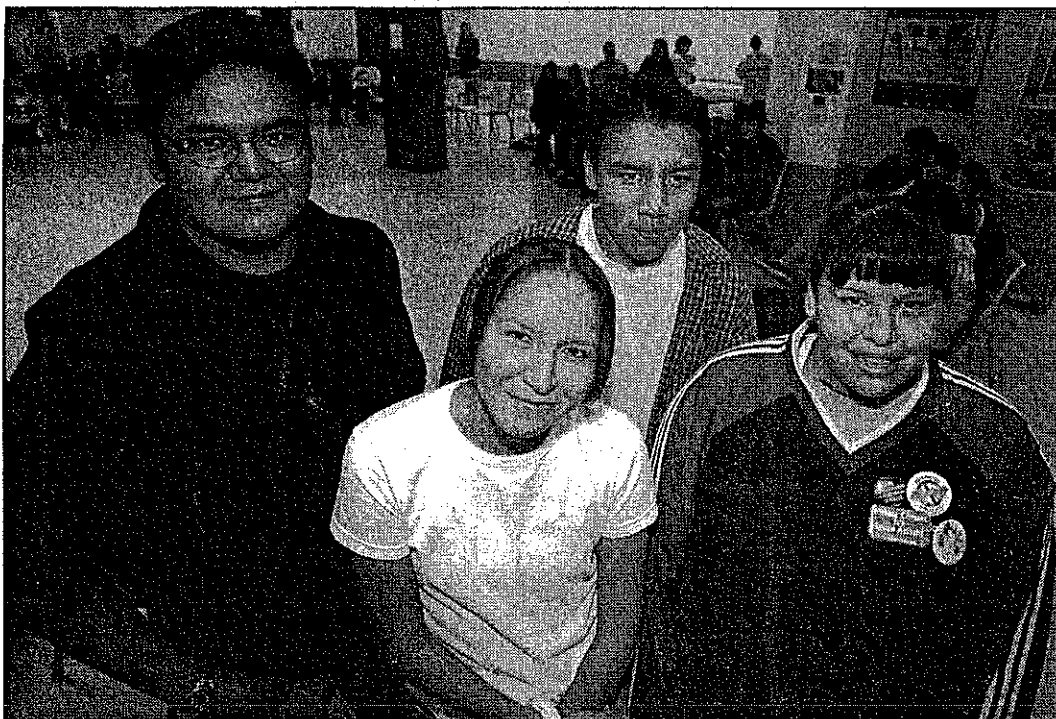
SANDI KRASOWSKI/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Orientation for students from remote native areas

Boarding students from native communities in the region who have come Thunder Bay to attend school, are shown at the Norwester

Resort Hotel. The students were taking part in an orientation program at the hotel organized by the Regional Multicultural Youth

Council. The orientation gave the students a chance to acquire urban lifeskills, make friends and learn about their school.



BRENT LINTON/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Bobby Narcisse, co-ordinator, with students, Florence Spence, 18, Mike Whitehead, 20, and Connie Kentner, 14, during a orientation session at The Regional Multicultural Youth Council Centre

Easing into school

Many native students in city are living away from home for the first time

BY KIMBERLY HICKS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

A sleepless night of nail biting, tears and a longing for the comfort of family members is a common first night experience for native students schooling in Thunder Bay.

Mike Whitehead, of Webequie First Nation isn't coming to the city as a new student, in fact it's his fifth year here. But that doesn't make it any easier for the 20 year-old student of Sir Winston Churchill Institute.

He won't ever forget his first night away from home.

"The first day I got here, I was thinking about my family and wanted to go home," said Whitehead. "I couldn't sleep and didn't get to sleep until 3 a.m."

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council is trying to lessen some of these sleepless nights and stressful situations associated with being away from home by holding an orientation program for native students.

Close to 170 aboriginal students from remote reserves and some from



Students play a lap-sit orientation game

right here in Thunder Bay took part in an orientation session to provide them with urban life skills, share ideas with peers on how to survive in a large school and strange boarding home far away from home and offer various social services and agencies available to them, said co-ordinator Bob Narcisse.

"It's pretty challenging for an aboriginal student coming to an urban setting," said Narcisse, who himself experienced these challenges when he began high school several years ago. "There are a lot of culture shocks going on. We need support mechanisms and have to tap into resources. Sometimes they don't have the opportunity to meet each other."

The orientation gets them together in one room and allows them to gain confidence in introducing themselves to each other and build new friendships.

"The hardest thing is being accepted and sometimes that's a pretty hard adjustment," said Narcisse, who also discusses how to handle racial comments, encourage and empower students.

Florence Spence, 18, and also of Webequie First Nation, said the orienta-

tion has helped her gain confidence to be able to approach other students and introduce herself.

Most importantly, orientation sessions in past years have encouraged her to stay focused and stay in school.

"It has helped me not to get into drinking, which is hard when your friends are doing it," said Spence. "I've also learned to believe that I can do anything I want to do."

Whitehead has come a long way since his first year in school when he couldn't speak a word of English and was too shy to talk to other students.

"It helped me a bit in introducing myself to other students and in getting used to the routine, living at a boarding house and being away from my family," said Spence.

Connie Kentner, 14, just started Grade 9 at Sir Winston Churchill Institute. Her family are originally from Wabigoon Lake First Nation but now live in Thunder Bay.

For her, the orientation session has helped her to get know people and taught her to work hard, pay attention and listen well in classes.

New place, no new friends



**Northwest
SUNDAY**

Students tackle their shyness

*City can be
intimidating*

BY KIMBERLY HICKS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Even in a room of people their own age, you'll usually find Ricky and Andrea Brisket sitting off to the side on their own.

It's not because they aren't friendly and it's certainly not because they're snobs.

They'll be sitting by themselves because they are extremely shy.

Attending an orientation program for native students put on by the Regional Multicultural Youth Council was a true feat for them.

Although they've been in Thunder Bay a year now, they are still withdrawn and shy.

The Briskets have a similar demeanor to many other native students who come to city high schools from Northern reserves. Most are so reserved they won't look directly at you. When asked questions they smile or cover their mouths and answer "Yes", "No" or "I don't know."

Growing up in a small community where most people are either family or friends and a school has a total of 25 students, is a far cry from a school of 1,500 in a city of 117,000.

The Briskets came to Thunder Bay from Lac Seul First Nation, originally because their father required medical assistance.

Continued on Page A3

Continued from Page A1

Both use the word "scary" to describe their first day at school.

"I was scared when I had to start school because I didn't really know anybody at school," said Andrea.

She said school is the toughest challenge for her. And it doesn't help that classmates don't approach her or make her feel welcome.

Her brother Ricky has similar fears.

"I was scared because I had heard stories about people fighting and I thought I would get jumped on or people would call me names," said Ricky.

Pauline Fogarty, president of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council and a

**Northwest
SUNDAY**

student at St. Patrick High School, buddied up with a new native student for a day to get a first-hand experience of what they go through.

"There is so much prejudice," said Fogarty.

She said teachers and other students need to be sensitized to native students and help them feel comfortable in their new surroundings.

"There is no welcoming by students. It just doesn't happen," said Fogarty.

"These students are marginalized in school."

Fogarty said this leads to isolation and barriers not only between city students and native students, but also between native students from different communities.

The Briskets say they haven't met any friends in the year they've lived here.

"We're not talkative people," said Ricky.

Debra Moonias, 15, and her friend Juliet Sakanee, 15, of Neskantaga First Nation (formerly Lansdowne House) say they were also frightened when they arrived in Thunder Bay.

They got lost in the school and on the transit system.

"I got lonely for a while," said Moonias, who only hangs out with other Neskantaga students.

She said there isn't much interaction between native students and city kids.

"It doesn't matter to me," said Moonias.

Vern Kimball, a counsellor at St. Patrick and St. Ignatius high schools, said isolation and segregation boost drop-out rates.

"We take for granted saying 'Hi' to a stranger, but for these students it's really tough."

He encourages interaction between native and non-native students and especially encourages city students to introduce themselves to native students and continue to include them in activities.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2001

WWW.CHRONICLEJOURNAL.COM

THUNDER BAY,

Worry-free weekend for teens at retreat

Conference participants learn to accept all skin colours and backgrounds

BY WARD HOLLAND
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The scene at the Victoria Inn yesterday was strangely encouraging and perhaps something people don't expect from today's teenagers.

Young people — white, black and aboriginal — were standing in a line, writing with a felt marker on a piece of paper taped to each others' backs.

They weren't writing "Kick Me" like teenage pranksters might do.

Instead, they were writing, "John is special because..." and completing the sentence with a positive message.

Such a scene is typical of the Multicultural Youth Centre, host of a two-day youth retreat designed to confront racism and breed acceptance among people of all skin colours and backgrounds.

Bob Narcisse, recreation director at Thunder Bay's aboriginal Dennis Cromarty High School, said he helped set up the retreat so young aboriginals could voice their opinions and make decisions on their own without the influence of adults.

And it gave 12 Cromarty stu-

dents, all living away from home, a chance to interact with non-natives.

Moffat Makuto, director of the youth centre, had many of the aboriginal students fill out a questionnaire, with the first question,

"What did you like best about this retreat?"

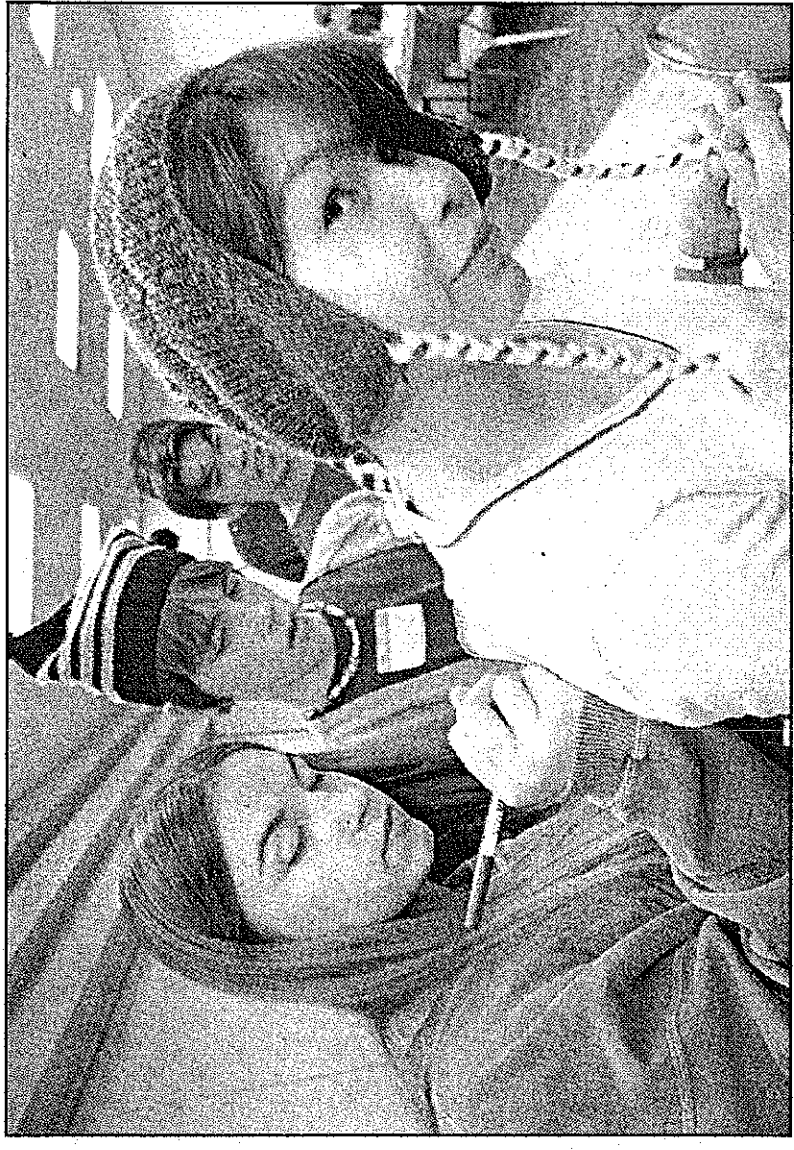
One response: "That I didn't drink (alcohol) and knowing that I have friends who have goals and wish to become something."

Another: "Interacting with other races without worrying about racism."

Narcisse said such conferences are important for native students who are living with boarding parents for 10 months of the year so they can get an education at a Thunder Bay school.

He said the temptation for these teens to use drugs or alcohol is high because they aren't being watched by their biological parents.

And there's easier access to al-



BRENT LINTON/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Chelsea Horth, 15, and Jon Lesage, 17, write on the back of Naomi Mamakwa, 20, a Dennis Cromarty High School student, as to why she is special. The exercise was held during a youth retreat at Thunder Bay's Victoria Inn over the weekend.

cohol and drugs in a city compared to remote communities, he said.

Narcisse said the retreat also showed native youths there are options to joining gangs.

ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ
WAWATAY
YOUTH COMMUNICATIONS SOCIETY

Excellence in EDUCATION

WELCOME BACK

Wawatay News
10-4 Driving Academy

Supported by:

Lakehead University-Aboriginal Initiatives
Oshki-Pimache-O-Win

Queen Elizabeth District High School
Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council

Senior DFC students welcome new students

Catherine Sergerie
Wawatay News

For most students, transitioning from Grade 8 to high school is one of the most exciting and, often, intimidating experiences of their school years.

The same can be said for Aboriginal students, although many have to contend with the added stress of transitioning from small, remote communities to a larger city.

For most students, moving away from home doesn't happen until college or university, but for many Aboriginal students in Thunder Bay, including students at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFC), it's a reality they are all too familiar with.

Every year, students from over twenty remote First Nation communities in northwestern Ontario make the journey to Thunder Bay to attend high school, often leaving behind their support system of family and friends.

It can make an already difficult experience even more challenging, increasing the risk of dropping out.

Hoping to ease the transition

to city life is a group of senior DFC graduates, along with the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC).

Together, they welcomed DFC high school's newest students to Thunder Bay with a luncheon barbecue, where they had the opportunity to introduce the students to the youth council and invite them to participate in their fall program.

"I felt invisible. I was shy and it was hard to meet people."

— Valentina Rae

"We thought it would be a good idea to welcome the students to Thunder Bay and to let them know we are here for them," Martin Zhang, president of the RMYC, said.

Many of the council members know the challenge of getting acquainted with a new city, new school, new teachers and new peers is not always an easy task. But they believe acquiring a sense of belonging can help to develop a positive attitude towards school.

The youth council offers

study groups, gym nights, sports and recreation, dances, karaoke, movie nights, and workshops and conferences that are organized to keep students in school and out of trouble.

Looking back to her first days at DFC, graduate Valentina Rae of North Spirit Lake First Nation admitted that she often felt lonely.

"I felt invisible. I was shy and it was hard to meet people," she said.

Rae said an event like this might have made the transition easier for her, had she known more about what was out there, and was the main reason she and the others decided to make it happen.

They feel that students who are involved with school activities alongside their peers and teachers are more likely to work toward achieving good grades, whereas, students who do not feel welcome at school may be less likely to succeed and more likely to drop out.

"This is a way to encourage students to stay in school and to give them something positive to do," said senior DFC student Shannon Roundhead of Mishkeegogamang First Nation.



Catherine Sergerie/Wawatay News

Senior Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School students along with volunteers from the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre hosted a barbecue for new students to the high school. Clockwise from left: Moffat Makuto, executive director of RMYC, Michael Kelso, Martin Zhang, president of RMYC, Ginger Beardy, Valentina Rae, Chelsea McKay, Zoe Kawei and Kyle Atatise.

Challenges of leaving home, DFC students talk about life in the city

Lenny Carpenter
Wawatay News

Four Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFC) students sit in the office of principal Jonathan Kakagamic.

They are not in trouble. On the contrary, they are members of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council, a group providing a voice for youth of north-western Ontario since 1985. The students are here to talk about their experiences of moving from their home communities to the city of Thunder Bay.

Marsha Kennedy of Sandy Lake First Nation is the president of the council, though she prefers to be called "chief." The 17-year-old first moved to Thunder Bay when she was 13 and attended a school where she estimates she was among 20 Native students going to the school with a student population of more than 1,200.

The next year, she transferred to another school, but in the first year there she returned home due to homesickness.

"In the beginning, I focused on the homework because I had academic classes," she says. "But I guess the stress got to me."

Marsha transferred to DFC last year and lasted 20 days.

"I got sent home for drinking," she says.

When she first moved to Thunder Bay, she was afraid she'd get lost or get jumped. She only knew three friends, who she knew from back home.

"But after a while, we got sick of each other," she says, laughing.

Kevin Rae, 17, recalls moving to the city from Deer Lake.

"First time I got here, I got in trouble a lot of times," he says. "But this year I'm going to try to change that."

Linda Kwandibens first moved to the city from Mish-

keegogamang First Nation while in elementary school.

"I didn't have a choice because I was in (foster) care," she says.

At 18, she should have graduated from high school by now. Instead, she's in Grade 11.

"I came back so I get my life back: get a job, get an apartment. Grow up, pretty much."

Linda gets homesick a lot. She has a lot of siblings back home; so many, she's embarrassed to give a number. She compromises with more than five. As the eldest, she says she's always worried about them.

"I do talk to them, see how they're doing."

She says she quit school to move back at least once because of her concerns.

Darren Gray of Cat Lake isn't afraid to tell how many siblings he has: he's the youngest of 12. He also fell behind in school but it wasn't necessarily his fault: the school in his community burnt down, leaving him to finish Grade 8 when he was 16 after a new school was built.

At 18 years old now, Darren recalls his impression of the city before moving.

"I heard about murders, and I worried about getting lost or jumped. My dad said to have a buddy system."

Marsha was also afraid of getting lost or jumped, while Kevin says he was excited to move to the city last year, but he was also "scared in a way."

Drinking alcohol was a common thread with the students. Each has a story of being caught by Kakagamic outside a liquor or beer store.

"It's J.K.," one recalls saying when spotting him. "Don't run."

"What, there's a beer store over there? I didn't know that," another recalls saying. They laugh about it now, though, at the time, it was a problem for them.

"I met friends who were into stuff," Linda says. "Nothing major, but enough to get into trouble."

She abused alcohol so much that she dropped out of school.

Racism comes up early in the conversation. Each has experienced it on various levels.

"They would throw eggs at me, or drive by and yell something," Kevin says.

Marsha also says people have thrown "stuff at me, or yell 'Go home.'"

"Guys would park in front of me, or follow me and creep us out," Linda says.

Linda and Marsha have experienced separate but similar incidents while attending other schools. Marsha says in Grade 9, one student dressed up, wore feathers and face paint and began to war whoop in stereotypical fashion. While at another school, Linda recalled a fellow student calling her and other Native students some racial slurs. In each case, the students reported the incident to a principal or vice-principal, only to have their complaint dismissed because the offender is "Métis" or "part Native."

"I was pissed off," Marsha says.

These are some of the challenges teens from northern communities face when moving to the city, and there's the added stress that comes with being a teenager.

"They have to take public transit just to come to class," Kakagamic says. "They should be heroes for having to do that."

This year, DFC has more than 150 students that moved in from 23 communities, all seeking a high school diploma. The school offers a variety of programs to ease the transition of moving from their community to the city. Students are provided with a 24-hour hotline to call if they ever need assistance,

be it counselling or a ride home. The school has a van that looks out for students during after-school hours, should they be in dangerous areas or are out past curfew. There's also an Elder's program where students can sit and talk with an Elder at school.

Ultimately, Kakagamic says, it's up to the students to seek help if they need it.

Darren, Kevin, Marsha and Linda are among those who have spoken up and are taking an active role within their school and community.

Linda is looking to start a music program where students can record music.

"So you can record your rap," she says to Kevin.

To help combat alcohol abuse, each of the students are enrolled in the school's alcohol abuse support program, similar to Alcoholic Anonymous.

A couple of the students are taking judo, also offered by the school. Darren says it came into use when he was walking home one night last year.

"I was listening to my iPod, and I heard footsteps behind me," he says. A young man, unprovoked, attacked Darren from behind. Darren fell and was stunned, but he got up and when the assailant tried to attack again, Darren executed a hip toss, which he learned in judo. The assailant's lower back hit the curb.

"Then he got up and ran," Darren recalls.

Darren sustained a swollen eye.

When asked what advice the four students would give to their fellow students, the immediate response was "be positive."

"Get involved in activities as much as you can," Marsha says, "even if you don't like it."

Linda adds: "Make new friends. And find a hobby if you can."

RISING ABORIGINAL VOICES (RAV) YOUTH FORUM

Victoria Inn, Thunder Bay. April 3 and 4, 2009.

(Notes taken by Thunder Bay City Councillor Rebecca Johnson)

More than 270 Aboriginal youths attended a two-day Symposium organized through the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy: Youth Outreach and Neighbourhood Capacity Building Program. The forum was co-hosted by the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre and the Regional Multicultural Youth Council. Most of the youths were high school students. Some are permanent city residents, while others are boarding students from northern reserves attending Thunder Bay schools.

The youth divided themselves into 10 working groups under Clan names (Wolf, Bear, Rabbit, Otter, Fish, Moose, etc.) to talk about issues that impact them. The following are the top priorities, concerns and challenges identified, as well as suggestions on how the issues should be addressed.

YOUTH PRIORITIES, CONCERNS AND PROBLEMS - TOP 6 PRIORITIES

1. Racism
2. Drugs and Alcohol
3. Suicide
4. Education
5. Abuse
6. Poverty

The Other 6 Priorities:

- Teen Pregnancy
- Violence, gangs
- Family and Friends support
- Youth Centres
- Lack of self-identity
- Culture

IN 3 YEARS WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH IN THUNDER BAY?

- . More Aboriginal graduates
- . More cultural activities
- . Equality for all, less racism and discrimination
- . Aboriginal content/curriculum in all our schools
- . Cultural sensitivity training at all workplaces especially in the justice system
- . Young Aboriginals working/employed in the community
- . Support for young Aboriginal parents
- . Fewer teen pregnancies, less violence and crime among Aboriginal youth
- . More confidence and pride in being an Aboriginal
- . Proud to be who we are, our history, culture and traditional way of life
- . A strong community of people who believe that together we move forward

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO GET THERE?

- . Easy access for cultural events, positive activities and supports
- . Affordable activities – accessible to all youths
- . Secured funding for programs to benefit those who need help
- . Stay in school, graduate, and a job, and get off welfare
- . Have respect, attend workshops, sharing circles, AA meetings, etc.
- . Dedicated professionals willing to support Aboriginals to help themselves
- . More conferences like this
- . Encouragement and motivation to get a good education, and learn about our culture
- . Promote and advertise programs and services to help Aboriginals
- . Pow Wow awareness, motivate dancers, singers, and on-lookers to be proud
- . Support from chiefs & band councils, federal, provincial and municipal governments
- . Be active and learn to be responsible for yourself and your well-being
- . Together we are the future, should support each other
- . Must learn organize the things we want to see done
- . Establish a Youth Councils and provide youth empowerment training
- . More youth centers and safe places for kids to hang-out

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

- . Request recognition for high school grads, awards
- . More interesting classes in school - more Aboriginal content
- . Everyone should work together for a better future
- . Organize ourselves to regain our identity, pride, and shape our destiny
- . Staying school, and encouraging students not to drop-out
- . Have respect for yourself and others

IF WE CAME BACK IN 3 YEARS TO EVALUATE OUR PROGRESS, WHAT IS THE SINGLE CHANGE OR KEY THING THAT WOULD INDICATE THAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE?

- . By the way we are going, it will be a slow progress. But we should never give up and think that we Aboriginals are lost cause – we can come back, and be leaders of our communities!
- . Progress that I would like to see is more active youth in positive events like this.
- . More high school grads continuing to college/university, and getting into trades/professions
- . Language and culture reverence.
- . Decrease in teen pregnancy and experimenting with drugs/alcohol
- . More positive role models
- . More after school programs
- . Improvement in the family structure through education, awareness, and supports
- . More networking and family gatherings – Pow Wows, feasts, forums

THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTION TO MOVE US FORWARD TOWARD THIS CHANGE

- . To continue and never give up!
- . Communication and better understanding by working together more effectively.
- . Use of the media with more youth involvement and encouragement.
- . More workshops, information-sharing and supports.
- . Use of our resources such as elders, professionals, etc.
- . Start with small changes such as youth councils, and youth groups. Open the eyes and see what we have to change to improve ourselves.

OTHER COMMENTS PROVIDED FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION REPORTS

- . Lack of winter coats for youth, poverty a big issue
- . More Pow Wow's at Elementary schools and in the community
- . Police are rough/cocky when dealing with Aboriginal youth
- . Need more Aboriginal officers in the city
- . More help lines for suicide prevention
- . More health programs required for addressing teen pregnancy
- . Need to be more active within our culture
- . Be positive role models
- . Leadership and organizational development training for young leaders
- . Make donations, get jobs, adopt a child to help address poverty
- . Need funding to organize groups
- . More art groups and recreational activities
- . Family nights
- . AA meetings for youth
- . Help for youths who want to leave gangs
- . Commercial advertising to address drug abuse using youth communication tools
- . Motivators – supporters
- . We must participate, and avoid apathy
- . Need easier access to events and activities – better transportation
- . Cultural sensitivity training to live with diversity
- . Tell stories
- . After school programs
- . Spiritual ceremonies
- . Elders must be respected – look to them for guidance/counselling/teachings, etc
- . Native counsellors in schools
- . Provide free condoms and sex education
- . Help each other to graduate
- . Address inequalities fairly
- . More jobs for Aboriginals, and a better work-ethic
- . Get involved with culture
- . Need anger management courses
- . Be responsible for ourselves and our future
- . Spiritual healing
- . Better physical and mental health
- . Youth Centres across the city – a must
- . Racism in police force needs to be addressed
- . All gang violence is NOT Aboriginal
- . Life management and life-skills courses in schools
- . Need a change in thinking, have a positive attitude
- . Change is here – we need to adapt
- . Mutual respect for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
- . More funding for youth programs to maintain them
- . Look to past for solutions and avoid making similar mistakes in the future
- . Youth engagement, empowerment, and involvement
- . Access to positive peer role models



VANDALISM: Police believe the graffiti was placed on the sign sometime Saturday night or Sunday morning.

Disturbing message

Police endure weekend of offensive graffiti around Thunder Bay

CRIME

By Scott Paradis - TB Source

Police are looking for the person or people who spray painted "disturbing" messages across the city, including one that read "kill Indians" on a sign near a high traffic area.

The derogatory, anti-Aboriginal message was crudely painted on a retail sign for The Brick and Bank of Montreal at the corner of Fort William Road and Main Street. The message has been removed, but Thunder Bay Police Service officials say they believe the "offensive and disturbing" graffiti was placed on the sign sometime Saturday night or Sunday morning.

Anti-aboriginal

"It would be disturbing to anyone in looking at it," said city police spokesman Chris Adams. "It involved a very strong anti-aboriginal statement ... That graffiti has been cleaned up, but we are seeking the public's assistance."

Three other incidents of offensive graffiti were reported in the Current River area over the

weekend. Adams said the Current River vandalism featured anti-religious messages and also included the name tag of The Hesh.

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy said the message is troubling but added that it isn't just First Nations residents who should feel uneasy.

"It might be an isolated incident, but anytime there is violence intended toward any group of people I think we should be concerned," Beardy said. "It's one group today, for example in this case it is First Nations people, but tomorrow it could be some other group that's targeted."

"So whenever there's racism involving potential violence, I think we should all be concerned as a society."

Bardey said he hasn't personally experienced racism in Thunder Bay but acknowledges that it does exist, and snuffing out that racism starts inside the province's schools.

"Right now when you look at any textbook in the school system, especially at the elementary level, the First Nations people are always portrayed as savages," Beardy said. "I think that's wrong and I think as

a society we need to work at that."

The Current River locations featured derogatory remarks about Jesus and what police are calling a satanic symbol. While the vandalism was all reported during the weekend, police can't say at this point whether or not the Current River incidents are connected to the graffiti in the Intercity area.

No gangs involved

"We don't believe that these are gang-related messages," Adams said. "The tagging that has gone on in the Current River area is obviously someone who has feelings about religion. There was a satanic symbol left at at least one of those sites."

Police did not give the exact location of the Current River vandalism, but said two appeared at institutions while a third appeared on a residential property.

These incidents are now under investigation by the Community Policing Branch of the Thunder Bay Police Service.

Anyone with information regarding these incidents is asked to call police or Crime Stoppers.

A place for everyone

Racist graffiti stifles inclusiveness

MANY people who drove along Fort William Road at Intercity last month saw the racist graffiti under a bank sign: "Kill Indians." The public does not know who wrote it and we do not know how many people share these sentiments. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be a public outcry against this call for genocide or ethnic cleansing.

Canada is a multicultural society and we take pride in our diversity. The Canadian Charter of Rights and our Constitution acknowledge special inherent rights for Aboriginal people.

Racist messages and negative attitudes against the First Nations take us back to the pioneer days of colonization and residential schools. The early settlers wanted to exterminate indigenous people and take over everything, while residential schools were intended to take the "Indianess" out of Aboriginal children, and assimilate them.

At the Rising Aboriginal Voices Youth Symposium attended by over 270 young people in Thunder Bay last year, racism topped the list of priorities.

And, from media reports, various surveys and consultations the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) has conducted in local schools and city neighbourhoods, racial incidents, including violent altercations involving Aboriginal people, are on the increase.

Each fall, the RMYC works with other community groups to orga-

nize orientation sessions to welcome hundreds of First Nations students from the region to Thunder Bay, help them to deal with culture shock and make them feel comfortable.

The message of "killing Indians" does little to ease the fears of these youths in a new place. It also raises anxiety and safety concerns among parents in outlying communities who send their children to schools in our city.

The RMYC is a member of the City of Thunder Bay's Advisory Committee on Anti-Racism. When the committee resumes sitting after the summer break, we hope that there will be public pronouncements by our community leaders denouncing this form of blatant intolerance.

We need to assure Aboriginal students coming to attend school here, as well as the growing Aboriginal population in our city, that we indeed, have a "giant heart" that accommodates everyone.

It is our collective obligation to make sure beyond any doubt that all citizens, regardless of race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, etc., are welcome for the growth and prosperity of our community.

**Amal Abu-Bakare, Correen
Kakegamic, Shane Turtle,
Richard Wirkkunen, Martin
Zhang**

Regional Multicultural Youth Council
THUNDER BAY

EDITORIAL

Ignorance is bliss?

Often we in the media hear and read opinions of people that we dare not print because they're not only rude, but outright ignorant.

In the past week or so, there has been a lot of talk around town and in the news about the Kashechewan evacuees who are staying in the city. Many residents are welcoming or indifferent, but some are just embarrassing.

Comments have come in from the online polls reeking with racist comments. One woman wrote in that she was waiting to cross the street near County Fair Plaza and someone yelled out their car window, "Go back to Kashechewan you (expletive) Indian."

She was appalled; not only because she wasn't from Kashechewan, nor was she native, but because that was how some people in the city would have welcomed her if she was.

Is this really necessary? No wonder people think this city is full of rednecks.

Different colours blend well

Young speaker captures attention of anti-discrimination audience

BY KIMBERLY HICKS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Pauline Fogerty says she wishes people could recognize the beauty and equality of all skin colours.

As one of the youngest speakers at a breakfast in Thunder Bay to recognize The International Day for the Elimination of Discrimination, Fogerty's cheerful speech about eliminating racism made everyone put their forks down for a few minutes Tuesday and tune in to her words.

Fogerty said Regional Multicultural Youth Council members spent hours cutting tiny pieces of red, white, black and yellow ribbons and pinning them into tiny bows.

THUNDER BAY

The bows were sent to Parliament Hill, Queen's Park, Thunder Bay Police Service and city hall.

Fogerty said the bows are a conversation starter. People see them and ask questions about them.

"It's a great way to start a conversation about discrimination," said Fogerty. "We all know these colours look beautiful together as bows, so what stops us from thinking the same way about skin colour."

The breakfast at the Port Arthur Ukrainian Prosvita was a chance to discuss racism and racial harmony.

Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Grand Chief

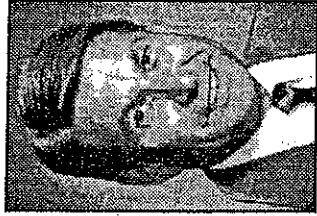
Charles Fox thanked the creator in Ojibwe.

Fox focused on the need to foster and nurture relationships among different groups of people.

"When I look at the poor relationships in the past, I personally have been the subject of crude remarks, insults and racist remarks," said Fox.

Fox said he doesn't see racism declining until relationships between native and non-native people improves.

"The First Nations population in this



Ken Boshcoff

country is the fastest growing in the country. In 100 years, our population will be as high as yours."

Mayor Ken Boshcoff said Thunder Bay has long recognized that diversity is a strength that the city must build on.

"We have an extraordinary range of people here and we have to set ourselves a goal," said Boshcoff. "We want to eliminate racism. Can it be achieved? I say resoundingly yes."

Boshcoff said Thunder Bay is becoming a model city dealing with anti-racism and Fox said he wants to be a part of creating that model.

Other events to mark The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination were held at Lakehead University and Confederation College.

Aboriginal youth asked to leave Intercity Shopping Centre

James Thom
Wawatay News

approaching his students in stores and telling them they had five minutes to complete their transaction and leave, students being told they had a few minutes to finish eating in the food court before they would be asked to leave and a group of students being escorted off Intercity's property. The students weren't allowed to catch the city bus on Intercity's property, Kakegamic said.

Intercity Shopping Centre general manager Tony Stapley and security supervisor Damien Julier said between Sept. 15 and 16, security did ask many youth to leave the mall, for a variety of reasons.

Based on reports he received from security, Stapley said there was a large congregation of youth around the customer service area of the mall Sept. 15 in the early evening. It is a place youth tend to gather.

"We try to be proactive and talk to them," Stapley said. "We remind them this is private property ... but they are welcome as long as they are compliant with our code of conduct."

Mall patrons are not allowed to loiter, spit or be profane inside and outside as well as only smoke in designated areas, according to a code of conduct handout.

"We approached a large group of youth early in the evening," Julier said, noting it was not only Aboriginal youth who were in the group.

He said none of the patrons were shopping so they were asked to leave.

"I found a large group of them in the loading dock by Zellers just hanging out (later in the evening)," Julier said. "There's no entrance near there, just recycling and garbage."

These include security

Unwanted and unwelcome.

That's how Eddie Meekis, a 20-year-old Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School student, felt after he and some friends were kicked out of the Intercity Shopping Centre in Thunder Bay by mall security in mid-September.

Meekis, who is from Keewatin but living in the city while attending school, said he felt targeted because of the colour of his skin.

"We weren't doing anything wrong. We were just hanging out," Meekis said of the Sept. 16 incident.

He said three security guards told them they would have to leave if they weren't going to buy anything.

"My friends had already bought things," Meekis said. "They had shopping bags."

In order to appease the security guards, the group bought coffee and sat down in the food court.

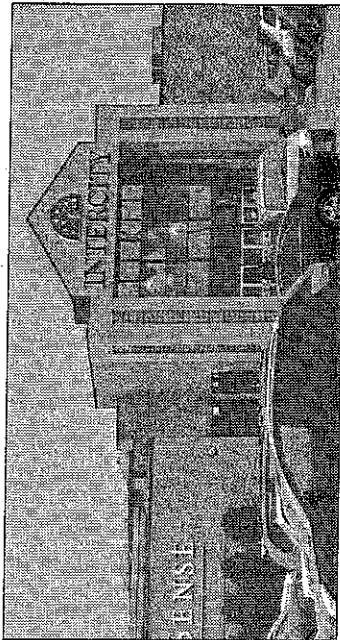
Again, security approached them and told them they were loitering and would have to leave, Meekis said.

"I think they were being really rude to us," he said. "I think they just wanted us out."

The incident left Meekis frustrated. "I was supposed to meet my aunt (at Intercity) that night," he said. "She told me later that she was waiting for me and couldn't find me. She couldn't find me because I got kicked out."

Meekis' story is one of several DFC principal Jonathan Kakegamic heard of during the week of Sept. 13-17.

These include security



James Thom/Wawatay News

Over the course of a week in mid-September, several incidents occurred at Intercity Shopping Centre where security guards asked Aboriginal youth to leave their property. Intercity officials said youth – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – were asked to leave because they were loitering and not following mall rules.

Julier said when the group saw him, they scattered and ran away over the McIntyre River bridge toward the movie theatre.

Stapley said loitering has been a common problem in the past, involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth. When there are large groups congregating and not shopping, it can lead to a poor shopping experience for other patrons. In this case, Intercity had "concerns over the other customers," Stapley said so security started removing people.

Neither Stapley or Julier knew of any of the other specific incidents raised.

"If (patrons) are misbehaving, they may be asked to leave," Stapley said.

Julier said a protocol exists for escorting people off the property.

He said a person may be escorted if security feels the mall, its property or tenant merchandise may be damaged, or if a further incident may occur if the person is not removed.

mall around 8 p.m.

"My daughter and her friends came out," he said. "I asked them if something had happened again with security."

His daughter told him that after they had made their purchases, they stopped in the food court for drinks.

"At that point, they were told they had five minutes to finish their drinks and vacate the mall," Robbie Kakegamic said. "They hadn't done anything wrong. They weren't loitering, they were shopping. I know they were really bothered by that."

He said his daughter and her friends had a card explaining mall rules.

Robbie Kakegamic decided to get out of his vehicle and enter the mall, in part to see if security would give him any problems.

"There were three staff standing right in front of the main entrance," he said. "It looked like they were guarding a prison."

As he entered the mall, without a fuss, he saw an Aboriginal couple sitting on the benches in front of the customer service booth with a full cart of purchases.

"I watched as security approached them and pointed toward the corner," Robbie Kakegamic said. "I don't know what security said to them ... but this was an adult couple that had just done a lot of shopping. They were made to go stand in the corner. I always assumed the benches were there for sitting."

The following day, he approached DFC school officials about what he'd seen after recognizing some of his

students being removed from the mall.

Jonathan Kakegamic and others from the school and KO, met with Intercity officials including the operations manager Sept. 17. Stapley and Jonathan Kakegamic met Sept. 20.

"We're trying to develop a relationship with the school," Stapley said.

Jonathan Kakegamic said some good can come from these incidents, though they shouldn't have happened in the first place.

"I went (to the meetings) because my students came to me and they were really upset about what happened," Jonathan Kakegamic said.

He said there have been ongoing issues with students at Intercity long before these incidents came to light. He said the school has never gotten a call about students being in trouble at Intercity though there are on-call workers equipped to deal with it so police don't always need to be involved.

"I know these kids," Jonathan Kakegamic said. "They don't have their mom and dad here to help them with their problems. I need to take that role."

He said Aboriginals, especially the youth, need to start speaking up, but in a positive way.

Jonathan Kakegamic said the matter will be resolved through the meetings he's been having.

He said it would be more productive to work towards a resolution together than take a hard stand.

"If I had gone the political way, this could have been ugly," Jonathan Kakegamic said. "We need to teach patience, teamwork, accountability and co-operation."

RMYC**Regional Multicultural Youth Council**

MANWO

Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario

511 E. Victoria Avenue, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 1A8 Tel: (807) 622-4666 Fax: (807) 622-7271

RACIST INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This form is for reporting racist incidents at school, community centre, store, hotel, restaurant, mall, office, with police, etc. When completed, please give it to the school principal, teacher, store/mall manager, supervisor, or senior staff responsible for personnel or the facilities. Make an extra copy for your records. You can also fax the form to the RMYC / Multicultural Youth Centre at (807) 622-7271.

1. Date of Report _____ School/Community _____
2. Name of person Reporting the incident: _____
3. Name of person Recording information: _____
4. Briefly describe the incident, What happened? (Was it verbal, physical, etc?) _____

5. Where did it happen? (Place) _____
6. When did it happen? Morning _____ Afternoon _____ Evening _____ Night _____
7. Do you know the Name(s) of the person(s) involved? YES _____ NO _____
If YES, Who? _____
8. Did anyone else see what was happening? YES _____ NO _____
If YES, List the Witness(es): _____

9. Any other information you feel is important (i.e. whether this has happened before) _____

10. How would you like to see the problem resolved? _____

Race relations awards set

Nomination deadline for inaugural event is March 29

BY KRIS KETONEN
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

A Thunder Bay group plans to tear down walls with the first Race Relations Image Awards.

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) is seeking individuals and groups who have made contributions to the race relations movement in Northwestern Ontario.

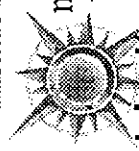
"If we can't accept each other, we can't work together," council president Tamara McDonald said. "If we can't work together, we can't achieve anything. So hopefully, it will lead to bettering the society."

McDonald said she hopes the awards will become an annual event.

"Race relations work is very important in Thunder Bay," she said. "There's a huge divide not only between aboriginal and non-aboriginal, but any minority group."

"I see evidence of this divide in school, in the workplace, even walking down the street," McDonald said. "It's everywhere."

There are six categories for the awards: outstanding woman; outstanding man; youth achiever; media resource; group/organization; and business/corporation.



"We're looking for people that have promoted race relations within the community," council member Jon Lesage said.

"People that have organized events or run programs specifically to show acceptance and diversity amongst different cultures, integration between different cultures."

tbaytel.net/manwoyc

"Just in general promoting a multicultural lifestyle."

Awards are to be presented at a dinner in early May.

Nomination forms are available on the council's Web site or by phoning the council, 807-622-4666. Nominations cost \$10, and completed forms can be dropped off at the RMYC office in Victoriaville mall.

Nomination deadline is March 29.

The council is also looking for corporate sponsors for the event. Call the council for more information.

Youth council wins national award

BY CATHI AROLA
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The efforts and commitment of the Thunder Bay-based Regional Multicultural Youth Council have been recognized at a national level.

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation has presented the centre with an Award of Distinction worth \$2,500.

Awards are presented to public, private or voluntary organizations whose efforts represent excellence and innovation in combatting racism, a news release said.

The foundation recognized three other groups from across Canada.

"This is very flattering for the young people that they are being acknowledged nationally for their work," Moffat Makuto, executive director of the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario, said.

"It really boosts their self confidence."

Since 1985, the centre, fully operated by youth, has promoted racial diversity and tolerance. As well as community volunteering and fundraising for the centre, the youth run outreach programs and other initiatives.

"When you walk down Yonge Street (Toronto) you see the diversity there, in Thunder Bay it's mainly native and non-native relations," Makuto said.

"With the aboriginal population being the fastest growing in Canada, we know most of them are looking to urban centres for the future of aboriginal youth. So you have new native peo-

ple coming to town with no urban living skills and they need the support just like immigrants do."

Makuto said he fears that the award money will have to be used for rent at the organization's Victoriaville Centre drop-in centre. The award money was intended to fund the local Race Relation Image Awards which recognize positive race relation initiatives in the community.

The organization is in a "unique situation" because its regional work on reserves means appropriate funding from Nishnawbe-Aski Nation and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. This funding, however, doesn't apply to the drop-in centre.

Money to pay for rent and operating costs are raised through fundraisers, including bingos.

"Since the Thunder Bay Charity Casino opened, we have lost revenue on bingos," Makuto said.

"Since the money is going to the casino more than the bingo hall, we are stuck -- we cannot pay rent," he said.

"People need to make that distinction -- the group is sound when it comes to outreach work. We are funded for in the region, but no one has really helped to fund the (drop-in centre) in Thunder Bay."

The centre threatened to close in December because of an outstanding \$40,000 debt. Since then, the centre has been speaking with Thunder Bay city council to ask for a share of casino revenues.



THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL/BRENT LINTON

Participants in Tuesday's Youth Embracing Diversity in Education conference included, from left, Nathan Ogden, 10, Chelsea McKay, 19, Shannon Roundhead, 17, and Yohann Khani, 14.

Students share safety concerns

Teachers get a lesson in what's going on in city schools

BY LINDSAY LAFRAUGH
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The roles were reversed at Dennis Franklin Cromarty school Tuesday as students from across Thunder Bay gathered to educate teachers and school administrators about some of the hard-hitting issues they face in their schools.

In March, Lakehead Public Schools students celebrated United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at the Youth Embracing Diversity in Education conference.

A Regional Multicultural Youth Council survey passed out at the conference identified what students are most worried about as far as safety is concerned in their schools.

Drugs, discrimination, bullying and violence topped the list.

And on Tuesday, about 100 students had a chance to discuss those issues.

"We just wanted to follow up on (the survey) results and have this conference that included workshops and guest speakers, so that we could really find out the details about these issues that students are facing," said Martin Zhang, youth council president.

Students listened to youth workers

and school staff before breaking off into groups to participate in workshops, where Zhang said they would be able to get their ideas and opinions across to the adult organizers.

"Ultimately, we just want to find out from the youth themselves what suggestions we can give their teachers, school administration, parents and peers to have safer schools," he said.

Robin Laye, chairwoman of the public board's diversity committee, said it is the students who are at the front lines and know what is really going on in city schools.

"(They see) things that administration and teachers might be missing, so we need them to be able to provide us with the information we need in order to make schools safer places," she said.

Rheanna Kendrick, a Grade 7 student at Nor'Wester View school, said the time is now to put a stop to racism, which she believes goes hand-in-hand with the safety issues discussed Tuesday.

"We need to get the message across that racism needs to stop.

"If we grow up with it and don't stop it, then it will only continue into other generations," she said as the group of girls she sat with nodded their heads in agreement.

Students of Exceptional Achievement

Amanda Grinstead, Churchill CVI

Outside of her mandatory hours of volunteer service, Amanda has participated in numerous Sir Winston volunteer activities, which have benefited communities locally and abroad. Over the past 3 summers, she has volunteered as a hospitality hostess and a junior cabin leader at Dorion Bible Camp for seven weeks. These positions encourage a variety of social skills and responsibility for the children that she educates and leads in selected activities. During March 2002, she traveled with a group of 23 people for a 10 day building project to El Salvador.



Mohamed Isse, Hammarskjold High School

Mohamed came to Canada with his mother and two younger siblings in 1997. At that time he did not speak any English. He started his schooling at Edgewater Public School in Thunder Bay. To improve his English, and not get bored, he started volunteering at different community organizations. One important group he joined is the Regional Multicultural Youth Council. Mohamed also volunteers at: Dioceses Office of Refugee Services Centre, Sleeping Giant Refugee Sponsorship Group, Thunder Bay Somali Community and Forest Park School.



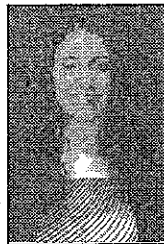
Karen Kadolph, Westgate CVI

Karen joined the Thunder Bay Therapeutic Riding Association as a volunteer in the summer of 1998 and worked hard to prove her ability as a volunteer. She began as barn apprentice cleaning stalls and paddocks as well as helping with the game equipment used by the riders. She became the leader of the youth group, took part in horse shows. Soon she assisted riders as a side-walker, walking alongside the horse providing support. It wasn't long before she became a leader, responsible for the control of the horse and the activities of the rider. Karen has great respect for our riders and their needs and is a valuable component of our program.



Dyane Lagadouro, St. Ignatius High School

Dyane has accumulated approximately 250 hours of community volunteer service since she entered high school. She is an excellent academic student with a 90 per cent average. Dyane's volunteer experience begins at Corpus Christi Church serving as a cantor and singing in both the adult and youth choirs. Her valuable community hours are spent at the St. Joseph Heritage Centre assisting at bingos, serving refreshments, taking residents out shopping and on outings. She is extremely committed to helping our seniors.



Michael Sklazeski, Fort William Collegiate

Volunteering is an important aspect of Michael's life. Since Grade 10 he has been involved in his community. He has experienced and organized many events to help take teens off the streets and introduce them into a positive environment where they can be surrounded by peer leaders and role models. An ongoing project he has been working on at the Royal Multicultural Youth Council, called Northern Rites of Passage, intends to bring together youth leaders in Thunder Bay so that there can be an effective exchange of ideas and thoughts among the youths. Michael is also a musician representative on the board of the Thunder Bay Youth Symphony.



Sara Swerdlyk, St. Patrick High School

Sara is a graduating class student at St. Patrick High School. Since Grade 11 she has been volunteering her time to read announcements in the school. Sara is an active volunteer at the Youth Advisory Council of the Thunder Bay Volunteer Centre. She arranges weekly meetings to discuss and organize volunteer opportunities for teenagers in the community. Sara also volunteers at the Regional Multicultural Youth Council, a youth-based organization that develops programs, workshops, and events for youth in the community.



Erica Vandahl, Hillcrest High School

Erica has been a volunteer at the Bethammi Nursing Home. She visits two elderly residents and assists them in their daily routines, writes letters to their families, play cards etc. She also accompanies them on outings. Erica volunteers at St. Joseph's Hospital as a nurse's helper. She delivered meals to patients, feeding them and cleaning up afterwards. Erica volunteers at the 30 Hour Famine to help raise funds and awareness for the people in Third World Countries. She has been a junior camp counselor at Camp Aurora teaching and planning activities and being a leader.



Chris Vieira, Port Arthur Collegiate

Chris exemplifies duty to others. He has been a volunteer at Dorion Bible Camp for the last 3 years. His duties there ranged from assistant cabin leader, with direct responsibility for youngsters to other camp necessities such as maintenance and kitchen work. He has also volunteered for the last 3 years on the Inter-school Christian Fellowship. He has helped plan city-wide events within this group and sits on the Christian Fellowship Student Executive. His talents are also shared with the youth at his church. Chris' duty to others is exemplified in his commitment to these groups.



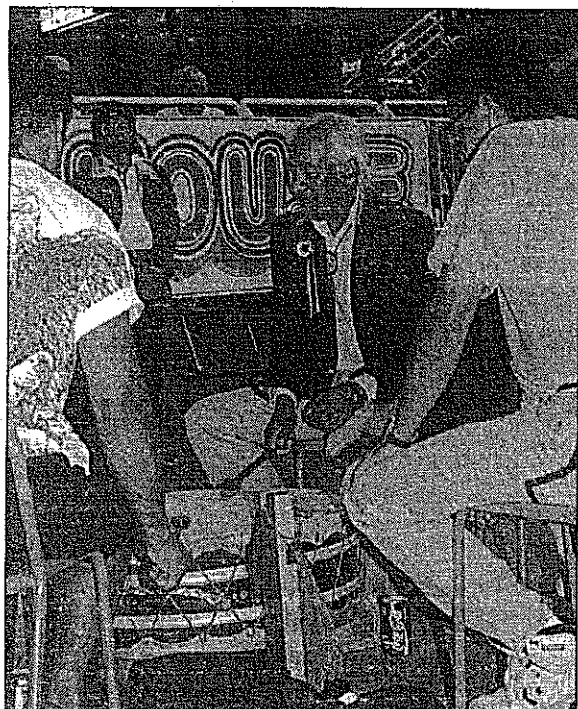
KIM GUTTORMSON/SUNDAY

Celebration at centre

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council officially opened its youth centre Saturday at Victoriaville Mall in Thunder Bay in a ceremony that was attended by representatives of such Northwestern Ontario communities as Seine River and Kenora. The ceremony in-

cluded traditional native drumming, as well as youth shawl and jingle dancers. Members of the council, some dressed in traditional costumes from a number of countries, joined in to dance around the drummers. The event was also attended by Ontario Citizenship Minister

Elaine Zemba, who also has responsibility for human rights, disability issues, senior's issues and race relations. She heard submissions from various city groups on the provincial government's employment equity legislation. See story on Page A3.



KIM GUTTORMSON/SUNDAY

Traditional native drumming was part of opening ceremonies

Youth centre opened in city Cabinet minister impressed

By KIM GUTTORMSON
Of Our Staff

THUNDER BAY.—The Regional Multicultural Youth Council officially opened its youth centre Saturday with dancing, singing and the provincial citizenship minister.

Elaine Ziemba cut the ribbon to open the centre in Victoriaville Mall and listened to the council's presentation on what services it provides.

The council held its regional meeting this weekend to coincide with the opening, so representatives from towns such as Kenora and Seine River could attend.

Ziemba said she's impressed with the what the council has accomplished and said she brags about them across the province.

She cited Aaron Goldstein as an example of the leadership the RMYC brings out in people.

On Thursday, Goldstein made a presentation on the RMYC's behalf to the provincial legislature's justice committee, which is hearing from the public on proposed employment equity legislation.

Ziemba said the 20-year-old's presentation was one of the best

she'd heard.

"It's an example of the leadership qualities the youth council brings out,"

Goldstein's presentation recommended that the employment equity commission have commissioners that represent natives, women, racial minorities and the disabled, with at least one between the ages of 15 and 24.

"Employment equity affects the working age population and that begins at age 15," he said. "Equity has to take root at the earliest possible age. If we don't determine what our future is, someone else will."

While in Thunder Bay, Ziemba also heard from representatives of local multicultural and multiracial organizations, disabled groups, aboriginal people and public sector employees on the proposed legislation.

"Their main concern was that we have something workable, that the legislation enacted by efficient to bring about," said Ziemba. "Some very good ideas were brought up."

Public hearings on the legislation are only being held in Toronto, so this was an opportunity for North-

western Ontario residents to have a say.

Before the centre's grand opening ceremony, Ziemba listened to briefs on a number of programs the council is running.

The summer camp program brought native youth to Thunder Bay to show them how to set up recreation programs on their reserves and give the young children role models.

The council has also been studying a teen court program running in the U.S., where young offenders charged with crimes such as shoplifting plead guilty and are sentenced by members of their age group.

Ziemba also heard how the council is working with schools to give youth input into conflict resolution and violence in schools.

The opening ceremony began with traditional native drumming and youth shawl and jingle dancers. Members of the council, some dressed in traditional costumes from a number of countries, joined in to dance around the drummers.

Youth centres solve problems

Facilities keep kids off the streets, help them learn responsibility

BY KIMBERLY HICKS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Finding fun and productive activities for youth to participate in so that they don't turn to drug and alcohol abuse isn't easy, but it is possible.

A strong, supportive youth centre is one way to deal with the "there's nothing to do here" syndrome, common to small North-western Ontario communities.

Eight communities including Wawa, Terrace Bay, Nipigon, Thunder Bay, Dryden and Ear Falls participated in a youth centre workshop this week at the Thunder Bay Multicultural Youth Centre.

It was part of a Health Canada program to promote youth centres, said workshop leader Les Voakes, a youth worker from an addiction services centre in Smiths Falls, Ont.

Voakes said people often overlook the importance of having a youth centre in a community.

There is always a small percentage of youth who participate in hockey and baseball, but the others are left with nothing to do, Voakes said.

"Youth centres have a positive effect in communities against countering drug and alcohol abuse and high-risk youth," he said.

Without a place to go, he said, youth will hang out on the streets, attend bush and pit parties, and begin staying away from home for longer periods of time.

A study done by addiction centres in southern Ontario found that almost 40 per cent of the street kids who end up in large cities are from small towns.

He said these statistics show that small towns shouldn't discount the impact youth centres can have on young people.

Youth centres can provide a safe place for youth to hang out, learn leadership skills and be a safe place for youth who are caught in abusive family situations.

"Youth centres aren't the answer for everybody, but they are the answer for some," said Voakes.

Of the eight communities participating in the workshop, only one-third had youth centres.

It may seem like an obvious resource, but many communities have either had to close centres because of government funding cuts or little community support.

Voakes taught participants how to develop a strategic plan that would keep youth centres open for the long haul. Youth participants learned how to have successful fund-raising activities, and how to add coin-generating items such as pop machines and pool tables.

He also suggested looking for financial support from service clubs.

"I'm not talking about asking for huge amounts of money, but asking them to sponsor the youth centre for one month at a time," he said.

"There are financial challenges, but it's a matter of putting it together one step at a time."

Each workshop participant went back to their home communities with a computer and some with a printer, that would give them a head start on opening a youth centre.



WISH-LIST FOR A MULTI-PURPOSE DROP-IN YOUTH CENTRE

From brainstorming sessions, surveys and focus groups:

The following is a wish list from brainstorming sessions and focus groups held by the Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) on what the youth want for a Youth Centre (not prioritized)

- Good safe location easy to access by Transit, biking, or walking
- A warm friendly place where all young people feel welcome and safe
- Non-shatter windows, secure doors, surveillance cameras and police patrols
- Sign-in reception with code of conduct hand-outs and good supervision
- Bulletin Board with Goals, Objectives, Rules, motivational sayings, posters, etc
- Notice Boards to post messages, activities, up-coming events, jobs, etc.
- PA system for public announcements, to play music, etc
- One-stop resource centre open 24/7, and providing a variety of services and supports
- Age-limit: maximum 25 years except for Workers, staff and volunteers
- 2 sets of bathrooms (male/female) with showers -- wheel-chair accessible
- Counselors, Social Workers, Resource people and Specialists for at-risk youth
- Food: kitchen and eating area: snacks, refreshments, food-bank and cooking lessons
- Rest area and sleeping quarters for emergencies and special visitors such as parents
- Laundry facilities, clothing exchange and other hygienic/basic needs
- Caring staff / volunteers / peer helpers who are resourceful, kind, strict and fair
- Wifi and computers -- under supervision
- Tutorials: teachers and mentors - literacy classes, academic upgrading courses, etc
- Employment counseling e.g. YES Employment Services for resumes and job searches
- Health services: On-call Nurse, First-Aid and First-Aid Training
- Flower and vegetable gardens
- Outdoor patio - for barbecues (in summer) and skating area (in winter)
- Rooms for meetings, workshops, presentations, discussions, demonstrations, etc
- Hire youths and train students to work and help to run the Youth Centre
- Gym or activity rooms with equipment for sports, indoor games and exercise
- Region's Centre of Excellence for youth centre development, research, management etc

- Leadership and organizational development training to run youth groups /youth centres
- Hands-on activities for awareness/involvement in social issues and community concerns
- Hangout area, lounge, Television, Video games, music room, etc
- Mutual respect: No tolerance for discrimination, racism, homophobia, etc.
- Zero tolerance for gangs, pimps, sexual exploitation, violence and criminal activity
- Drug/alcohol free, and support for those who want to quit using, need after-care, etc
- Safe room / private space for individuals to come down and talk, get help and referrals
- Youth as part of the code of behaviour/discipline enforcement team with adults
- Economical heating and air conditioning; solar and wind energy, and recycling program
- Hosting special events and celebrations, talent shows, exhibitions, displays etc
- Study room, homework area, classes for alternative education, literacy support etc.
- Open-houses for public relations, fundraising, and showcase youth-led initiatives
- Small business and fundraising ventures; i.e. bake sales, crafts store, raffles, etc
- Teaching lifeskills, social skills, financial literacy, universal skills, etc
- Staff and volunteer name tags, uniforms, jackets, t-shirts for security identification
- Partnering with colleges, university and schools to provide interns and co-op students
- Youth Advisory Committee to help run the facility, enforce rules, plan/organize activities
- Training youths to be part of the solution to problems: mediation, conflict resolution, etc
- Out-reach to city neighbourhoods, surrounding communities and First Nations reserves
- Training youths to be part of the solution to problems: mediation, conflict resolution, etc
- Entertainment , games, recreation, dances, concerts, pool table, ping-pong, gym, basket ball, volleyball, soccer, hockey, foosball, board games, etc

Special ideas from 'Leaders of Today' Aboriginal boarding students studying in the city:

- Elder visits, Aboriginal guest speakers and role models
- Residential school awareness, healing programs and wellness supports
- Native language classes, traditional (seven) teachings, medicine wheel, etc.
- Teepee/Tipi and Sweat-lodge, smudging, spiritual and religious ceremonies
- Dealing with transition: how to live the traditional way and thrive in the modern world
- Sharing circles, healing and wellness programs / Dealing with addictions, anger, etc
- Visitors' lounge and sleeping area for parents/guardians visiting their children
- Lifeskills, universal skills, healthy-lifestyles, wellness, budgeting, culture-shock, etc
- Drum group, Pow Wow dancing, Regalia-making, preparing traditional foods
- Arts and crafts: painting, drawing, carving, drama, bead-work, leather-work, dream catchers, storytelling, traditional games etc

Youth centres need consistent funding

THE PROVINCE'S funding announcement Friday for its After-School Initiative is a good step to help at-risk youth improve their health and wellness and stay off the street.

But, it does nothing to clear up a big problem that youth centres in the region have in keeping the lights on, staff in place and rent paid on an annual basis.

These important institutions work hard to keep kids occupied, but unfortunately are at the political whim of funding priorities.

They have no core funding to count on and must keep applying, and hoping to get enough funding, to staff the centres and pay the bills for the few next months or year.

That shouldn't be the case. The provincial government has got to get serious about providing stable, core funding for youth centres in Northwestern Ontario if they are to provide long-term benefits.

The problem is wide-spread with several examples of good youth programs being stressed or closed due to a lack of funding.

The Regional Multicultural Youth Centre in Thunder Bay was slated to shut down this fall if it hadn't received 11th-hour, "After-School" funding Friday of \$50,000 from the province.

Volunteer advisor Moffat Makuto said the funding is "going to let us stay open for winter" meaning up to 80 kids will be enjoying programs at the Brodie Street facility. What about spring and summer and the seasons and years after that?

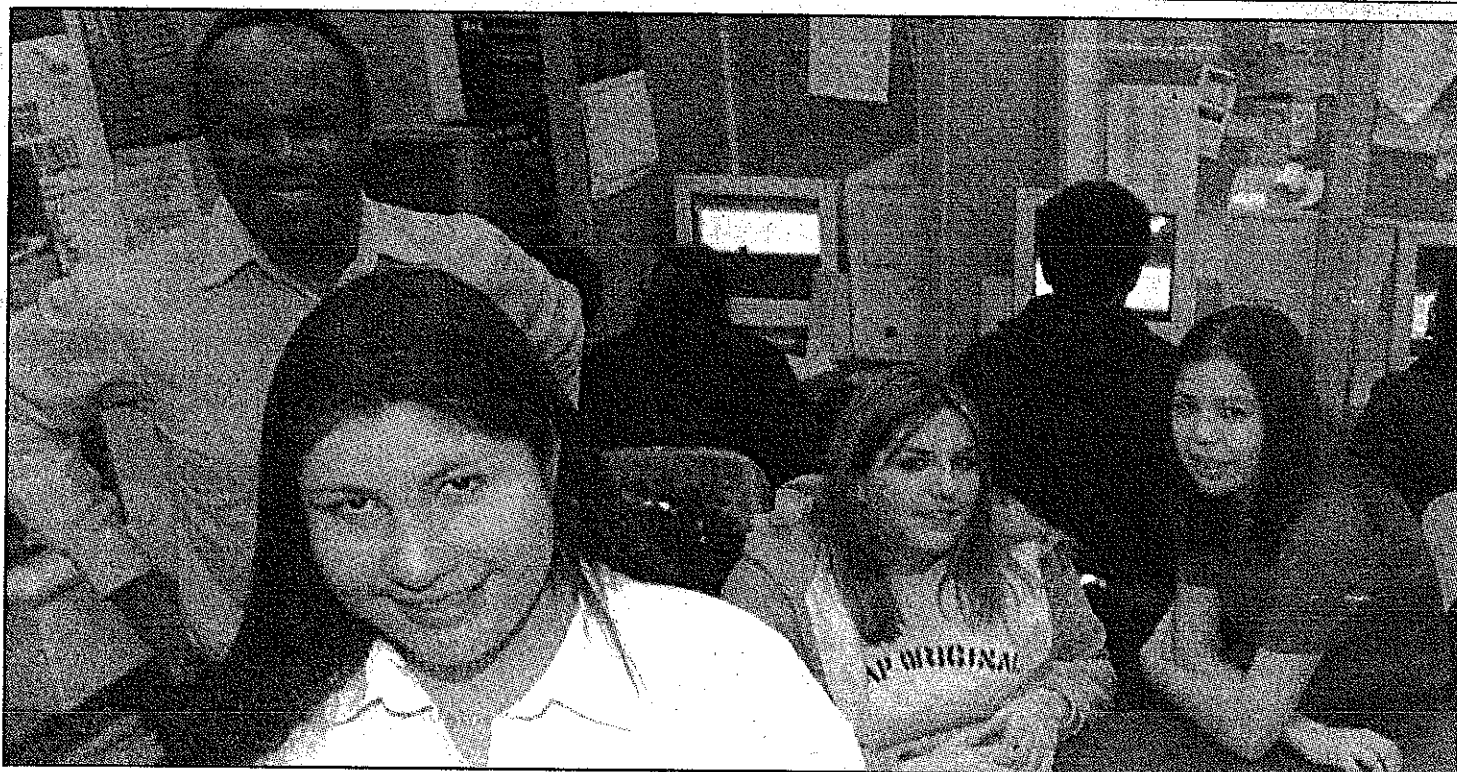
Makuto said he can't understand why kids in the city are not a consistent priority for the provincial and city governments — why there's no stable funding for this organization to maintain its important youth activities in the city.

In Dryden, the former youth centre at the North Dryden site closed in February 2006 after just three months due to lack of funding. It had reopened with municipal help in December 2005 after closing in August that year when grants and donations dried up, and fundraising efforts fell short.

It was resurrected again this summer, in an effort spearheaded by the Dryden Police Service, with a \$30,000 grant from the city and another \$9,000 donated from individuals and organizations for operational costs. There is no provincial core funding for an important after-school program that is now helping hundreds of Dryden kids keep active and off the streets.

What is needed is a real commitment for stable funding for youth centres. The occasional funding initiative is not enough to keep at-risk kids out of trouble.

The provincial government has to replace occasional funding announcements with long-range commitments. It just makes sense.



BRENT LINTON/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Moffat Makuto and Tamara MacDonald, president of the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre, are shown in the computer room with a group of teens last evening.

Youth centre's days numbered

Casino blamed for facility's grim financial picture

BY WARD HOLLAND
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The Thunder Bay Charity Casino has had such an effect on local non-profit groups that Moffat Makuto is using his own money to keep a city youth centre open.

"To be honest, I have never met a person that is as dedicated to the youth as (Makuto) is," Peter Monks, vice-president of the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario, said yesterday.

"If you were to take any person in history that has the reputation of being a saint in the church's eyes . . . the man is the epitome of everything that (sainthood) embodies."

Makuto, who is originally

from Zimbabwe, runs the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre during the day and delivers for the Mandarin Chinese Restaurant during the evening.

Makuto hasn't been paid for the work he does at the youth drop-in centre for the past two or three years, Monks said.

"He has worked every hour available," Monks said. "He's very often worked to the extent of not being paid or (he's) sacrificed his family time and anything else to support the youth."

"The man himself is the most dedicated individual I have ever met."

The Regional Multicultural Youth Centre, which caters to young people of all races and backgrounds, is to close by Dec. 31 because of financial problems.

"Unless we get some help, we are definitely closing," Makuto said yesterday.

Since the opening of the Thunder Bay Charity Casino in August 2000, the centre has seen its revenue from bingos and raving casinos continuously shrink.

Last year, the centre asked for and got \$10,000 from the City of Thunder Bay, but received nothing from the Trillium Foundation, the organization which doles out money from the province's five casinos to local charities.

"When the casino opened, we were told to go to the Trillium Foundation," Makuto said. "But now we find out Trillium won't compensate us for what we are losing."

Makuto said the centre has a

debt of \$35,000 and he'll likely have to pay those expenses partly with his own earnings.

Makuto said he has been using his own money to help pay for rent, which is about \$4,000 a month, and telephone charges.

The youth centre in Victoriaville Centre needs about \$60,000 a year to operate, Monks said.

The facility is open weekdays until 10 p.m. to help keep young people off the streets, Makuto said. On Fridays and Saturdays, it's open until midnight.

"We are shaking our heads that the charity casino that was supposed to help local charities is actually killing us," Makuto said.

"Where is the rest of the (casino) money going when the Multicultural Youth Centre has to close?"

NAN calls on city to back youth centre

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

THUNDER BAY

It's up to the City of Thunder Bay to step in to save the Multicultural Youth Centre from closing, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy says.

The youth centre is set to close by Dec. 31 because of financial troubles.

The centre's troubles and those of other non-profit organizations have been blamed on Thunder Bay Charity Casino. The centre can no longer offer roving casinos and it says its bingo revenues have been shrinking since the casino opened.

Those fundraisers previously covered the centre's \$60,000 in annual operating costs. It now has a debt of about \$35,000 and the centre's director often uses his own

money to keep it open.

NAN has contributed some funding, a news release stated.

"More people have to step up to the plate," Beardy said in the release. "The way that the casino money is dispersed to charities has to be revisited."

"The city of Thunder Bay should be striving to help these important charity organizations survive."

The city should be using some of the \$4 million it has received from casino revenues to help local charities, Beardy said.

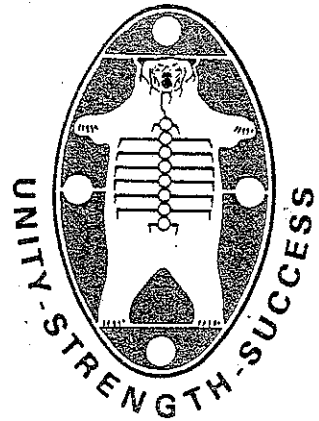
"When our youth do well, we all do well," he said.

"The centre helps keep youth off the streets and focused on positive activities."

NISHNAWBE ASKI NATION

100 Backstreet Road, Unit #200
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7J 1L2

(807) 623-8228
(807) 623-7730 Fax
Website: www.nan.on.ca



RESOLUTION 03/30 NISHNAWBE ASKI NATION SUPPORTS THE REGIONAL YOUTH CENTRE

WHEREAS the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre provides many Nishnawbe Aski Nation Youth who reside in Thunder Bay while attending Dennis Cromarty High School and other secondary schools in the city with safe, healthy, and culturally appropriate services;

WHEREAS the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Decade for Youth Council strongly supports the work of the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre;

WHEREAS the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre provides youth programming for many members of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, both on and off-reserve;

WHEREAS the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre empowers young people by developing leadership skills through social, cultural and recreational activities that are conceived, developed and executed by the youth themselves;

WHEREAS the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre receives no core funding from any level of government;

WHEREAS in the past the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre had successfully raised all of its operational money for faxes, telephone etc through bingos;

WHEREAS the opening of the Thunder Bay Charity Casino caused a dramatic decline in bingo revenues for the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre;

WHEREAS the Ontario Government and the City of Thunder Bay have failed to financially compensate the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre for the loss of its bingo revenues;

WHEREAS the loss of the bingo revenues has forced the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre to substantially reduce the level of service and programming to its members, including a large number of NAN Youth;

WHEREAS without these services and programs, youth may have nowhere to go after school but the streets, where they will be exposed to drugs, alcohol and violence;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Nishnawbe Aski Nation Chiefs-in-Assembly mandate the Executive Council to continue its work to assist the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre lobby all levels of government to adequately fund this worthwhile youth organization;

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that Nishnawbe Aski Nations Chiefs-in-Assembly recommend that each member First Nation send in resolutions or letters of support for the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre;


FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED that Nishnawbe Aski Chiefs-in-Assembly recommend that each member First Nation donate a small sum of money to the Multicultural Regional Youth Centre to continue its work providing services and programming to urban youth, including those NAN members attending Dennis Cromarty High School and other secondary schools in Thunder Bay.

DATED AT THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, THIS 27TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2003.

MOVED BY: Chief Glenn Nolan
Missanabie Cree First Nation

SECONDED BY: Proxy Wally McKay
Whitewater First Nation

CARRIED.


Grand Chief


Deputy Grand Chief

Life-changing experience

Man mentors youths in way he was helped years ago

BY BRYAN MEADOWS
NORTHWEST BUREAU

Daniel Sakchekapo says he is "living proof that something as simple as a youth drop-in centre can save lives."

Since being hired last February by the Sioux Lookout anti-racism committee as the local youth centre co-ordinator, the 23-year-old former resident of Weagomow Lake First Nation has been involved in helping to shape the futures of local youth.

"Having a fun and safe place for youth to come learn and be educated in a different perspective is crucial (to their well-being)," Sakchekapo says.

"We all know that children and youth need to have a sense of belonging, not just in their families, but also their community as well — the youth centre gives them that sense of belonging in Sioux Lookout," he says.

"I have seen highly guarded 'youth at risk' become role models, and take initiative and responsibility to do their part in making the youth centre a fun and safe atmosphere."

That's as personal a statement that the youth centre co-ordinator could utter.

Rewind a few years . . .

"As a youth I grew up with all the issues that youth face today, and more," Sakchekapo says. "I was homeless at a young age and I was not doing positive things with my life. I was introduced to youth street gangs and many other negative things that would have for sure killed me, or put me behind bars."

That was until he happened upon the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre in Thunder Bay.

"I was hungry, so I walked in and asked for a doughnut," Sakchekapo says.

The centre's executive director, Moffat Makuto, made sure he got one. Better yet, says Sakchekapo, Moffat sat with him and told him about what could be.

"He asked me to come in and volunteer for bingos and get free Chinese food. That was good enough

for me, so I did. He soon began to trust me more and more and I became a member of the executive council and started to work there."

The experience changed Sakchekapo's life.

"How I started to work with youth and become the young leader that I was meant to be . . . was because of a drop-in centre."

"I had people mentor me and show me a different path, a better path, a healing path," he says, adding that "now I have the chance to influence and mentor our younger generation and give them the chance to shine, learn, grow and become the young leaders that they were meant to be."

Located in the town's recreation centre, the Sioux Lookout Youth Centre gets up to 50 young people dropping in per night depending on what's is happening in the community.

"Since I started (at the centre) I have had many discussions about safe sex; healthy choices, alcoholism, drug abuse and its effects, diabetes, young parenting, homelessness, racism and cultural teachings," Sakchekapo says. "We have also touched on the topic of life skills — money management, team building, and personality clashes. I have also done more serious workshops that include suicide, residential schools and the '60s scoop."

Sakchekapo has also helped youth with resume writing, employment searching, homework, and finding educational programs that suit their needs.

In terms of recreation and activities, the centre hosts movie and game nights, poetry readings, Guitar Hero tournaments, pool tournaments, pizza parties, self-esteem boosters, guitar lessons and arts and crafts.

It's a busy place — sometimes too busy and cramped for space.

That's why the Sioux Lookout anti-racism committee is working to redevelop part of the former Sioux Hotel into a new and larger youth centre.

Youth group feels heat

BY SARAH ELIZABETH BROWN
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

For the first time in years, youth have not had a drop-in centre on Thunder Bay's south side this winter.

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council, which has long run a drop-in centre in Victoriaville or the immediate area, couldn't pay the centre's heating bill this winter, which relegated their drop-in centre to storage status.

Once it warms up, the Victoria Avenue centre will be reopened for the summer as usual, said Moffat Makuto, executive director of the Regional Multicultural Association, the youth council's parent organization.

About \$300 to \$500 each month would cover the cost of opening the doors in winter, particularly heating, he said.

"If you are poor, that's a lot of money," he said. "If you are rich, it's not a lot."

The group moved into the space two years ago, its fourth move in about as many years.

Last winter, Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Dennis Franklin Cromarty high school helped with the heating bill, Makuto said. This year, the youth council didn't want to go back begging to the same organizations.

Currently, the multicultural youth council members meet on Saturday's at the school to plan activities for their peers.

Another group, the Boys and Girls Club, bought a larger space at the closed Forest Park school, moving from its East End location, Makuto pointed out, leaving no drop-in facility for young people on the south side this winter.

There's funding out there for programs, but not much for the space to hold them, said Pauline Fogarty, 26, a past president of the youth council and a current council member.

Previously, the Regional Multicultural Youth Council came up with its drop-in centre's operating costs through charity bingos that brought in up to \$100,000, Makuto said. But that revenue dropped when the casino arrived on Cumberland Street, he said, and now the youth council doesn't do bingo fundraising any more.

Some casino revenue is put back into the community through Trillium Foundation grants, but they don't provide ongoing funding, he said, and they aren't given to one organization more than a couple of times.

The association has appealed to organizations like the City of Thunder Bay and the chamber of commerce, but with few results so far.

The multicultural association operates a restaurant that pays for Makuto's salary and the youth centre's rent, but it doesn't generate enough for heat.

One dilemma is the youth who work with the council have talents and empathy best used to help other young people, he said, but they're spending their time raising small bits of money through events like garage sales.

"You can't consistently fund a youth centre with that," said 18-year-old Martin Zhang, the current youth council president. "You can only have a certain number of garage sales before all your stuff is gone."

Youth centre pleads for support

OUR youth centre is located in the south core where the problems of drug-dealing and drug-use are evident. Syringes are scattered in alleyways, side streets and shrubs making them a health-hazard for pedestrians. These dangerous materials are scaring customers away from local businesses, and many young people we serve are afraid to attend our after-school activities because of rowdy patrons at the bar which opened next door.

We have just completed reviewing information the Youth Council compiled during weekly barbecues we hosted in July and August to get acquainted with residents.

The people we talked with praised the refurbished City Hall, liked the new improvements in Victoriaville Mall, and commented that they are looking forward to the proposed courthouse and Thunder Bay Social Services Board building. They also welcome the increased police presence in the area as a positive move to make the area safer.

On the deteriorating security situation, solutions included more prevention and social programs to deal with addictions, mental health issues, poverty and homelessness, as well as providing supervised activities for children and youth.

While appreciating more police patrols to deter criminal activity, protect property and enforce the

law, participants noted that police officers are not social workers. They are not equipped to deal with the appetite for drugs and alcohol, counsel drug addicts and alcoholics, help the homeless, those who are mentally challenged, or the destitute. How many times can we expect police officers to arrest the same people over and over? How many officers do we need to keep the whole city under check, and at what cost?

Our governments are allocating millions of dollars in infrastructure funding to revive the economy, and cutting back on services and social supports that leave our neighbourhoods at risk.

We need similar investment in prevention programs to make our communities safer, reduce risk factors that make kids vulnerable, and keep the cycle of crime and violence from expanding.

The harm done to Aboriginal communities by residential schools and the inter-generational impacts are now being publicly acknowledged, yet healing programs are not being adequately funded.

Families living in poverty are increasing, and more people are relying on food banks, soup kitchens and emergency shelters, while some top executives and decision makers are keeping big pieces of the economic pie for themselves. Those entrusted to look after our well-being

are becoming greedy, and rewarding themselves with big bonuses creating a bigger gap between the haves and have-nots.

As more families struggle financially, and some parents deal with personal challenges, there is a need for safe places for kids to hang out with positive peers. Children require structured activities and discipline.

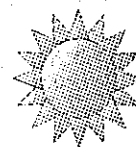
Some kids no longer get love, nurturing and nourishment at home, and gangs become their new family. There are no role-model parents to hold them accountable for their actions, teach them responsibility to be caring citizens, or offer essential lifeskills to survive in today's society.

It may already be too late to change the criminal minds and violent lifestyles of some young people. But we should strive to engage children as stakeholders for positive change. Creating and supporting youth centres as safe alternatives to hanging out on the streets will help to prevent juvenile delinquents and troubled teens from getting into trouble, and creating more dysfunctional families when they become parents.

Julaine Trudeau

Vice president, Regional Multicultural Youth Council
THUNDER BAY

Saturday



High 20
Details on A2

THUNDER BAY AND NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

May 28, 1994



BETH ROBINS/SATURDAY

Getting together

Members of the Youth Development training program play a game called "shed the snake skin," one of the exercises intended to

eventually help them become leaders in their communities. The program, in its third season, brings youths from reserva-

tions across Northwestern Ontario, teaching them how to set up recreational activities when they return home. See story A3.

Youth enjoy summer camp



The Big Grassy Variety Show brought talent galore and provided a stage for would-be artists.

By Jerri McDougall
BIG GRASSY FIRST NATION -

"The summer camp program is a pilot project," explained Mary Jean Cormier, one of four counselors who spent last week at Big Grassy working with the reserve's young people. "In the past, the Regional Multicultural Youth Council has always brought youth from around the region to Thunder Bay. We thought it would be better for us to come to the reserves and work with the kids."

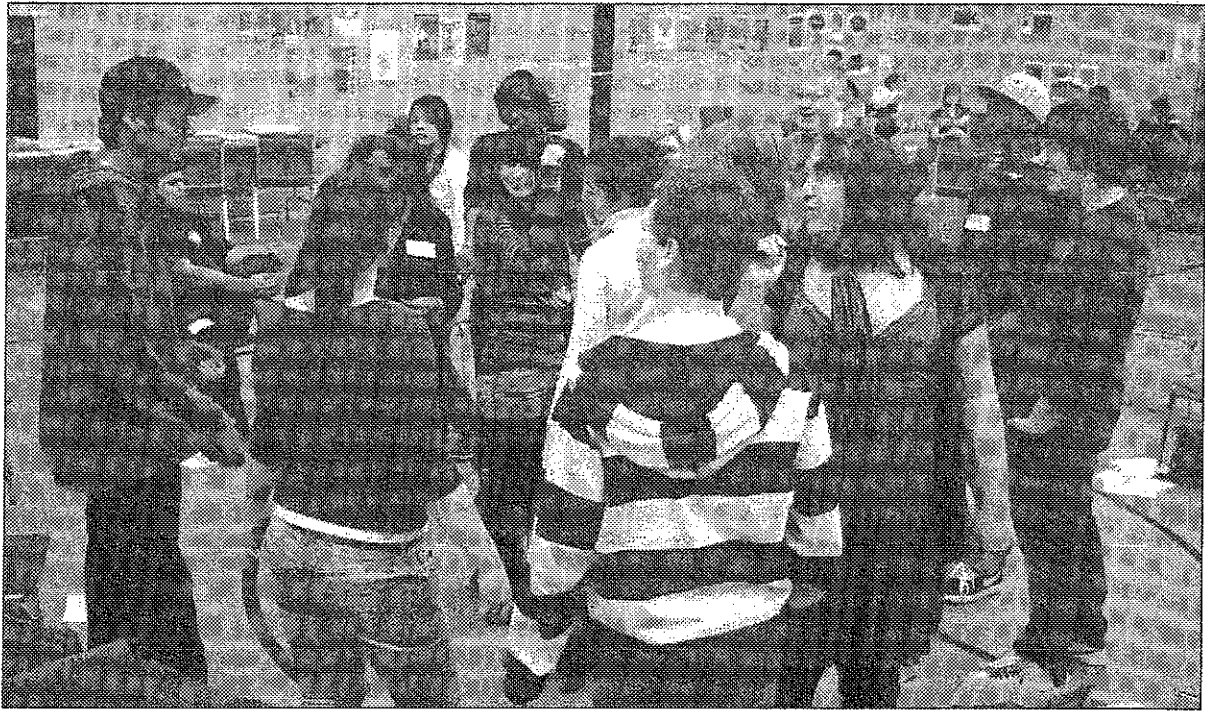
During the week, the youngsters participated in indoor and outdoor games, craft making, and activities aimed at developing self-esteem. On Wednesday evening, they entertained their family and friends with a variety show.

Melinda Copenace, a family service worker, applied to the Youth Council to have the sum-

mer camp program brought to Big Grassy. Her daughter Melanie Goodchild, who was the Native Counselor at Rainy River High School in 1990-91, is a past president of the Council.

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council is under the umbrella of the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario. "They are big promoters of youth empowerment," said Melanie. "Members of the Youth Council are afforded opportunities that they couldn't get anywhere else. The priority is that young people are allowed to take the initiative."

The goals of self-esteem and multicultural harmony were promoted in the variety show's finale. The program's leaders and participants joined together and sang "One Heart, Many Colours."



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

About 60-70 high school student peer leaders from schools across Thunder Bay took part in the Drug Buzz/Influence in Action conference March 3-4 at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School.

Getting buzzed on information

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Peer leader students from across Thunder Bay gathered March 3-4 at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School for the Drug Buzz/Influence in Action conference.

"It's an opportunity for all races to communicate," said Elijah Sugarhead, a Drug Buzz/Influence in Action facilitator and role model from Nibinamik.

"This conference is not about telling them don't do this, don't do that; it's about providing them with information about the effects of (drugs and food additives)."

The high school students learned about different additives in foods and drugs, and how those additives can affect them.

"They enjoyed learning some facts, for example, a slice of

pizza contains 1,630 milligrams of sodium," said Cassandra Garrick, a conference co-facilitator. "That is way above and beyond the recommended daily intake of sodium, which is 1,500 milligrams."

How to make healthy choices was the main topic of discussion, Sugarhead said, estimating about 60-70 high school students took part in the conference from DFC, public and Catholic schools across Thunder Bay.

"Drugs is an issue with all our schools – it knows no boundaries and no barriers," said DFC principal Jonathan Kakegamic.

"It's an issue with us and with us taking a lead in partnership with (the Regional Multicultural Youth Council and the Student Commissions of Canada), DFC could play an important role for the City of Thunder Bay for youth.

"We need to stop working in isolation."

Kakegamic said interacting with other students will make the DFC students stronger and give them a voice.

"They enjoyed it," Kakegamic said. "After several hours they are interacting now and feel a lot more comfortable."

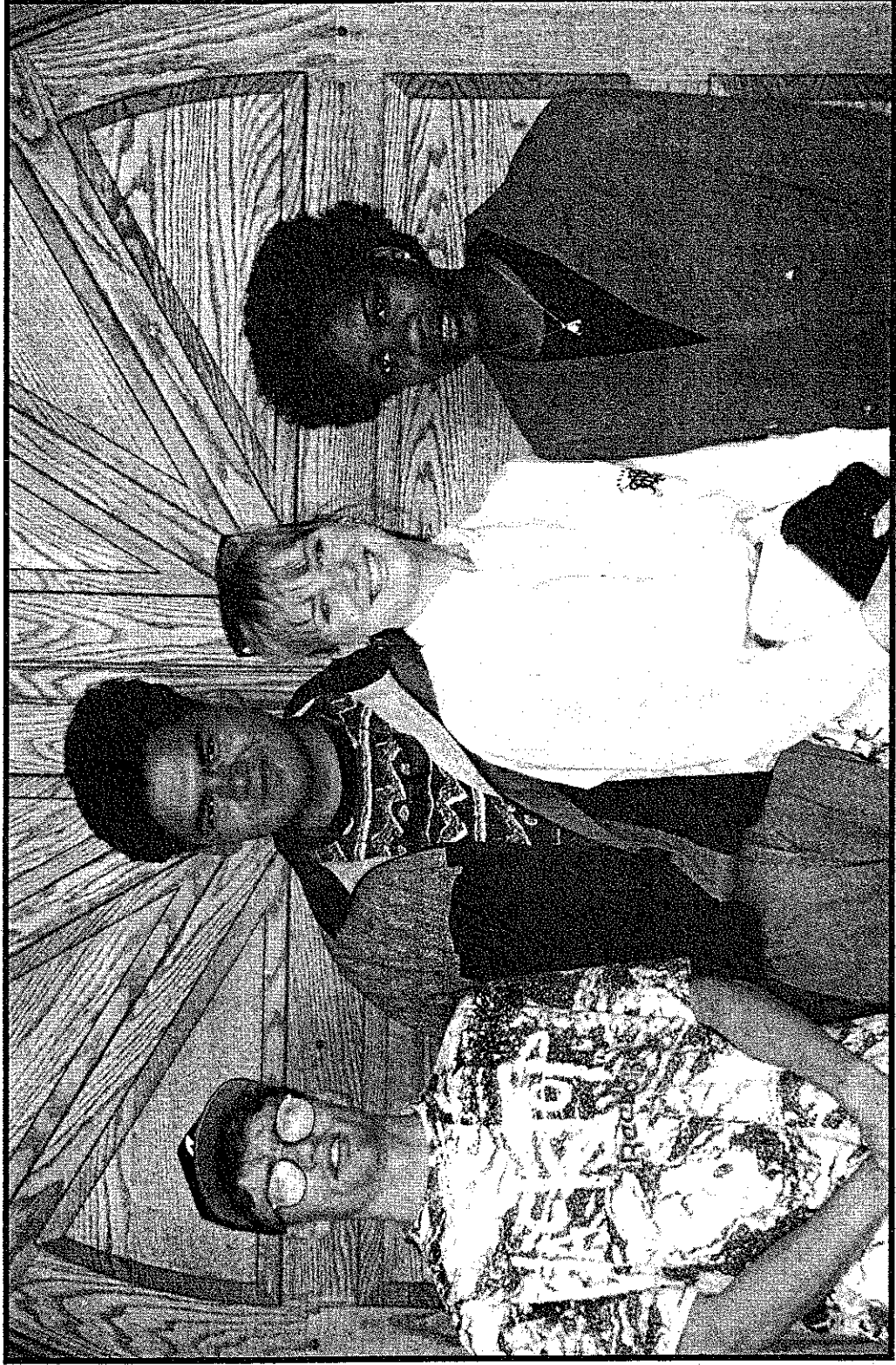
Kakegamic said the students have a plan to implement some of the initiatives they developed during the conference.

DFC students Jonathan Crane, from Weagamow Lake, and Davery Bottle, from Mishkeegogamang, have also been chosen to travel to Ottawa March 24-27 to represent DFC at the Students Commission's National 2011 Unite and Ignite Conference where they will share experiences and learn best practices.

"If you work hard, it's worth it," Crane said.

COURTING JUSTICE

Youth Council proposes courts run by and for teenagers/ Page 4.



**THESE PEOPLE
MAY JUDGE YOU!**

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council-RMYC is proposing a new scheme whereby first time young offenders who have committed misdemeanors would be judged in a teen court by their peers. The program has been highly successful in such

American cities as Indianapolis. Mary Jean Cormier of the Youth Council says it would also help unclog crowded courts. Left to right: Richard Bennett, Bobby Narcisse, Cormier, and Prossy Kawesa.

Photo by Brad Hunter



LEITH DUNICK/THUNDER BAY POST

Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and her husband, author John Ralston Saul, get set to officially start the 22nd annual Terry Fox Run last Sunday at Boulevard Lake Park. Fox had to abandon his run two decades ago just outside of Thunder Bay.

Governor General keeps busy during visit

Sunday was another busy day in Thunder Bay for the Governor General of Canada. After enjoying a breakfast at the Hoito restaurant, Adrienne Clarkson paid tribute to one Canada's most toried heroes.

Joined by her husband, his excellency, John Ralston Saul, the right honourable Clarkson took part in honouring the life Terry Fox at the 22nd annual Terry Fox Run.

They were joined in the five kilometre route by between 600 and 700 other participants. The run began at St. Ignatius High School and ended at 'urrent River Park.

Clarkson says she's pleased to see Thunder Bay honouring Terry Fox's wish of continuing with efforts to raise awareness and money toward finding

a cure for cancer.

She said even though Fox died at a young age, his courage still lives on within the hearts of Canadians. The spread of cancer to Terry's lungs forced him to end his Marathon of Hope 22-years ago, just outside of Thunder Bay. Fox died in June of 1981.

After participating in the run, her excellency arrived at the Multicultural Youth Centre to meet with some of Thunder Bay's most outstanding young people. Clarkson spoke to the youth about their involvement within the community. One program that impressed her was a day camp called 'Revolution Girl Style'. It involved five weekly sessions during the summer, and focussed on helping girls develop a sense of self-worth as women in today's society.

While in Thunder Bay Clarkson also met with city councillors on Saturday afternoon. Their discussion covered a broad range of topics. Clarkson was interested in knowing about the challenges that the community faces. Some members of council mentioned the growing number of youth leaving each year due to a lack of job opportunities.

On a more positive note, Mayor Ken Boshcoff was pleased to let the Governor General know about the new regional hospital and the benefits it will bring not only to the city of Thunder Bay but the entire region. Clarkson said northern communities often have a strong sense of unity. She says that's because they know how to work together. Clarkson plans to meet with many members of the community over the next few days.

Westgate's award-winning newspaper: made by students.

Eye of the Tig

Westgate C.V.I.

Most excellent!

Alyssa Kwasny

On September 15th Adrienne Clarkson, the Governor General of Canada and John Ralston Saul visited the Regional Multicultural Youth Center for an hour long discussion with the Youth Leaders of Thunder Bay. Thirty people currently involved with the Youth Center participated in discussions that

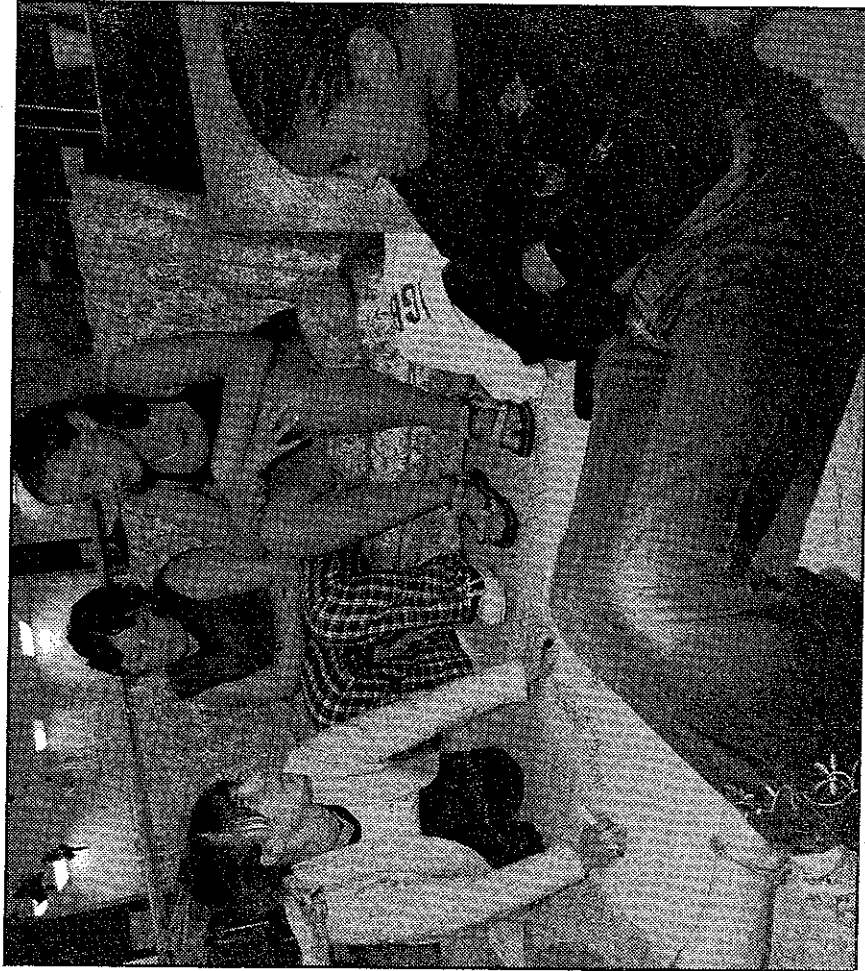


focused on controversial issues that youth must face everyday. A lot questions were asked by His and Her Excellency. Not many solutions to the problems surfaced. The topics discussed included, Racism, Multiculturalism, Revolution Girl Style, RMYC related organiza-

tions, and local concerts held at the Youth Center. His and Her Excellency were very interested in all the volunteering and activities the council creates for Youth in Northwestern Ontario. It was a

unique experience to have the opportunity to meet the Governor General who represents the Queen in Canada. For those interested, the Regional

Multicultural Youth Council holds general meetings every Wednesday at The Youth Center at Victoria Ville mall at 4:30 PM. Steff Ritch and I are both part of the Regional Multicultural Youth Council. Everybody is welcome and it is a great opportunity to earn volunteer hours.



BRENT LINTON/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

From left, Ashley Jonasson, 16, Carly Ducharme-Skinner, 12, Nicole Armstrong, 14, and Ruth Teclemansiam, 11, work in a group on issues affecting women during a girls' leadership training camp at the Multicultural Youth Centre this week.

Girl power camp helps self-image

BY WARD HOLLAND
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

About a year ago, Nicole Armstrong wouldn't consider speaking up against those who stepped on another girl's confidence.

However, after two consecutive years of attending the Revolution Girl Style summer camp at the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre, the Grade 9 student is a different person now.

"I was one of those people who sat back and didn't do much," Armstrong said.

"Now, I'll put my foot in the door and make sure it doesn't slam shut."

Girls between the ages of 11 and 18 paid a \$75 registration fee for five days of camp, which started Monday, to learn about feminism, media images, dating and sexuality, among other things.

Trained guest speakers also come in to talk about role models, emotional health and nutrition.

The walls of the music-filled room are adorned with positive-image signs like "Marilyn Monroe wore a size 14." A marker board bears the names of notable women throughout history, from Anne Frank to Ani DiFranco, from Joan of Arc to Joan Baez.

Definitely no Cosmopolitan magazines for these girls.

"We only use (fashion magazines) as examples of things that are bad for women," Armstrong said.

Revolution Girl Style is a youth-run organization, where none of the girls reveal their ages to maintain a sense of equality.

One of the organizers, Grade 12 student Tiina Kivonen, said feminism isn't as contentious an issue as people make it out to be.

"It's about equality more than anything," she said.

"You just have to know what the word means," Armstrong added. "It means equal empowerment for everyone."

While they still hear comments like "Go to the kitchen, woman," or "Don't you have to shave your legs?" at school, they think that women are being treated better than 100 years ago.

"When you think about it, the right to vote is quite amazing," Kivonen said.

Other five-day seminars are scheduled in August.

Summer camp an esteem builder

BY KIMBERLY HICKS
THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

With constant pressures to have a figure, face and hair as perfect as Barbie, Carly Ducharme-Skinner finds it difficult at times to keep up her self-esteem:

That's why she thought a summer camp specifically for young women would be a way to not only boost her own self-image but also to have a chance to talk to other young women about the pressure to keep up with fashion.

The camp, being tried for the first time at the Multicultural Youth Centre in Victoriaville was developed and is solely operated by young women.

Pauline Fogarty and a few other volunteers came up with the idea after noticing that many young women go through a stage of low self-esteem. A brainstorming session came up with the name, Revolution Girl Style, for the young women's camp and Fogarty ran with the idea.

"We want to educate and empower them to speak up. We want to make a connection as women so we can bring out their passions," said Fogarty, the coordinator of the camp that runs in one-week sessions for four weeks.

Fogarty said young women aged 11-17 have so many influences in their lives to deal with. They receive a variety of conflicting messages from advertisers, family and friends of how they should look, how they should act and what they should become.

Ducharme-Skinner said self-esteem building will give her the confidence to do anything. She was teamed up with a small group of young women who became her family for the week.

On Tuesday this week, they participated in a game called the human knot where they are twisted together and joined by their hands. She said the exercise teaches the strength and togetherness that can come from teamwork.

Joanne Ryan, 12, heard about the camp from a friend at school who planned to attend. She said the discussions are intense and bring out a lot of pointers about self-esteem and body image that aren't learned in the school classroom.

Ryan said the discussions about self-esteem building and talks about people who over- and under-eat gave her a better understanding of why young women often suffer from low self-esteem.

"It's given me a higher self-esteem," said Ryan.

Fogarty said the style of the camp is very open to encourage everyone to share their feelings.

"We hope they leave knowing their passions and where they want to go and feeling very empowered and confident."

After this week, there are still two more weeks left for interested girls aged 11 to 17. Call 622-4666 to register. The cost is \$50 for one week.

Girl power catches on

BY ROB LEWIS

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

The idea arose during a bus ride on the way back from Lilith Fair, a concert promoting the music of women.

Two Thunder Bay teens had been racking their brains for a name for their girl-power organization, run by young women for young women.

Somewhere along Highway 11-17, with the empowering music of Sarah McLoughlin still ringing in their ears, Revolution Girl Style (RGS) was born.

From there, member Tamara McDonald said, "it just snowballed."

After three years of hosting successful leadership training day camps for young women aged 11-18, the RGS coterie of 10 teenaged girls is taking the show on the road.

"We've affected in the last few years over 100 girls," RGS public relations manager Nicole Armstrong said.

"Already we have other girl groups that want to set up across Northwestern Ontario."

Word has quickly spread about the camps, which "promote equal opportunity for females through training and organizational development to enhance the status of women in society," the group's pamphlet reads.

Dubbed Rev on the Road, RGS's summer tour will take the team to four Northwest communities where members will discuss with other teen girls the problems they face, and teach them how to set up their own RGS-like support groups.

They left yesterday for Fort Frances, with stops in Dryden, Manitouwadge and Sioux Lookout planned.

Adapting their program to target different problems facing young women in each community will be the key on this trip.

"A lot of this stuff isn't specific to natives," said McDonald, who is also president of the Regional Multicultural Youth Centre.

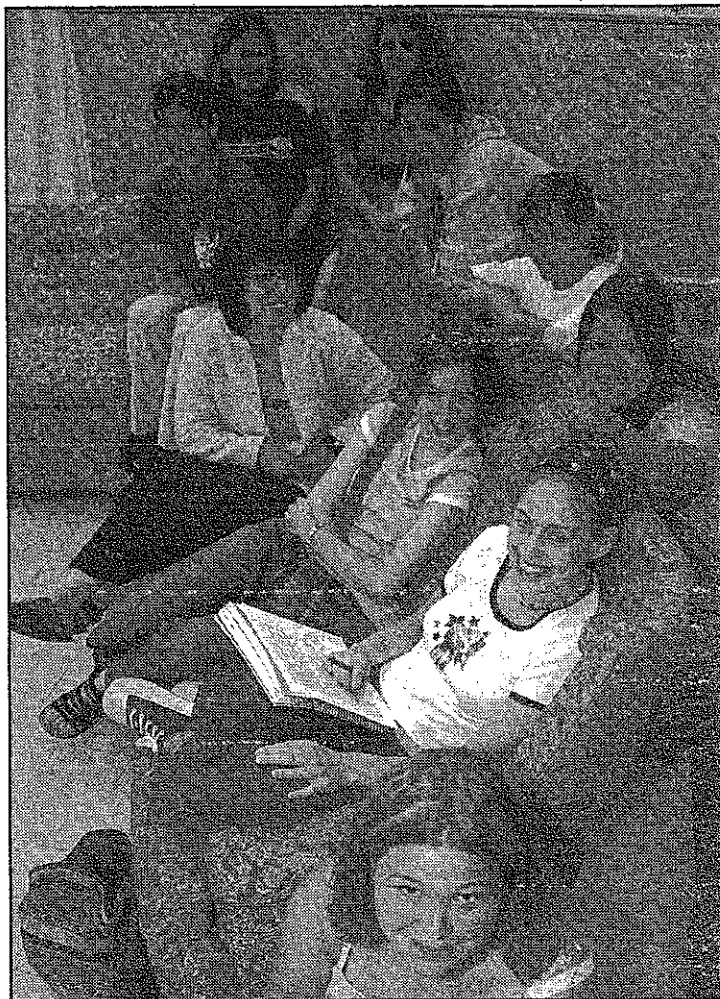
She is one of two aboriginal teens involved with RGS.

"They focus more on body image, we focus more on social and health issues (such as) teen pregnancy, suicide, and drug and alcohol abuse," she said.

RGS will be back in Thunder Bay in time to host its third annual leadership training day camps.

Phase One (ages 11-14, July 16-20) aims to educate young women about body image, media portrayal of women and relationships, and help them develop the courage to stand up for themselves.

Phase Two (ages 14-15; July 30 to Aug. 3, Aug. 6-10) deals with the issues of Phase One on a more mature level, with a focus on women taking action



BRENT LINTON/THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Members of Revolution Girl Style got together this week for a leadership training camp at the Multicultural Youth Centre in Victoriaville Mall.

to create and use available opportunities in society.

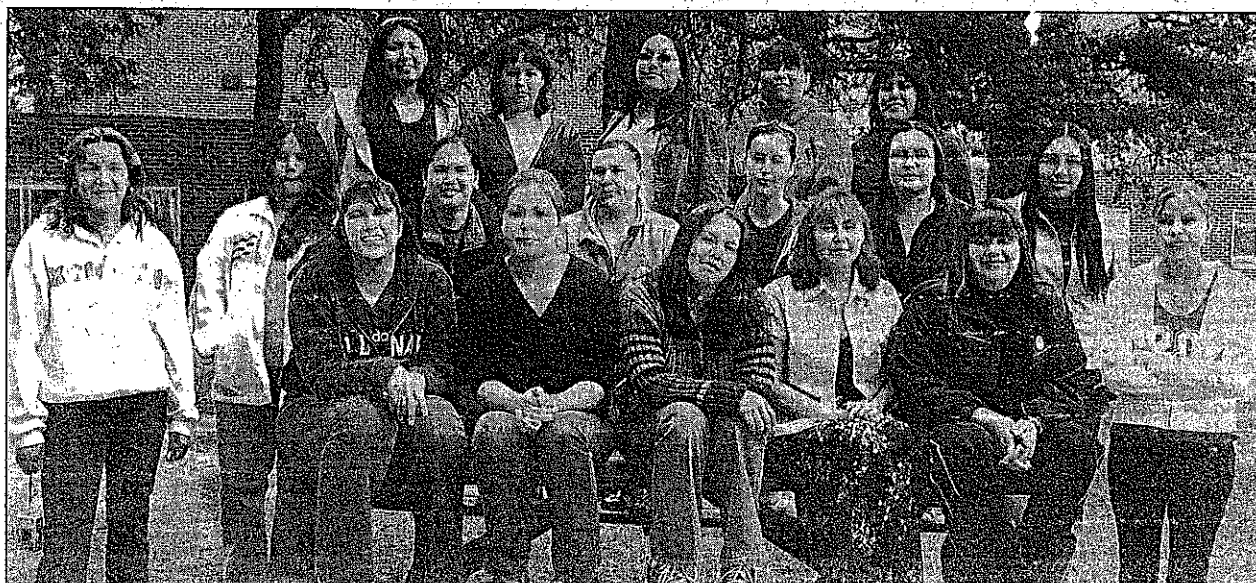
There's still room in the programs, McDonald said. People can register as late as Monday, July 16 by calling the Multicultural Youth Centre at 622-4666.

Armstrong also said she recently discovered a group in British Columbia has heard of RGS and is interested in creating a similar organization.

"We had no idea it would be this big of a success," she reflected.

So "revolution" might not be too strong a term to describe this movement.

"What can I say, it's a good idea," she beamed.



Melanie Goodchild/NAN Decade for Youth & Development

Girl Power training participants, front row, from left: Rachael Fiddler, Sandy Lake (standing); Catherine Cheechoo, Moose Factory; Ashley Kowtiash, Long Lake #58; Jennifer Wynn, Kashechewan; Karen Ossibens, Long Lake #58; Gail Anishinabie, Sandy Lake; and Jamie-Lee Ossibens, Long Lake #58 (standing). Second row, from left: Garrie Meekis, Keewaywin; Violet Chum, Moose Cree; Amanda Isaac, Moose Factory NAPS; Dianne Buchan, Bearskin Lake; Nita Quequish, North Caribou Lake; and Esther McKay, Bearskin Lake. Back row, from left: Alana Dixon, Mishkeegogamang NAPS; Beverly Perrault, Brunswick House; Rita Kenny, Lac Seul; April Cheechoo, Fort Albany; and Mary-Jane Archibald, Taykwa Tagamou.

Ready to run Girl Power camps

24 women trained to lead empowerment activities for girls

by Melanie Goodchild

Did you know that up to 75 per cent of victims of sex crimes in First Nation communities are females under the age of 18; 50 per cent of those are under 14; and almost 25 per cent of those are younger than seven years of age? The incidence of child sexual abuse in some First Nation communities is as high as 75 to 80 per cent for girls under eight years old.

Tragic.

Statistics like these have led to the creation of a NAN Girl Power initiative.

A positive step towards community healing is raising the level of consciousness of young women and girls. The emotional scars of family violence and domestic and sexual abuse take longer to heal than broken bones. Teaching young women and girls to be aware of their rights and to speak up for themselves is a protective measure against violence. That is the rationale underlying the new Girl Power initiative under the NAN Decade for Youth & Development office.

The program was launched with the training of 24 young women in Girl Power programming from May 18 to 21 on the campus of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. The Ontario Women's Directorate provided funding for the training.

Many studies have shown that people who are abused in family relationships are more likely to experience low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Given the statistics on domestic violence against women in First Nation communities, it is a valid conclusion that girls are the most vulnerable members of our communities to suffer these long-term effects.

Girl Power activities based upon holistic principles of wellness, as given to us in traditional teachings, help expose young women and girls to the impacts of family violence on their personal and community well-being.

The young women receiving the Girl Power training flew, drove, and hopped the cross-town bus to spend three days and four nights living in the university residence and participating in a

variety of workshops. A healthy dose of apprehension and first-day jitters characterized the first evening spent together. What followed though were three days of bonding, learning, teaching, sharing, and enlightenment.

"It was so empowering to have the security of knowing that there are other women and girls who care," said one participant.

Elder Frieda McDonald opened the session with a traditional smudge ceremony. She spoke of the sacred role of women as life-givers and protectors of the water. She thanked the grandmothers and grandfathers and honoured the four directions. For some trainers it was a moving preamble to what became a personal spiritual and healing journey.

"Empowerment is so important for girls," one of them said, "because girls in our communities need the skills to be able to come together collectively to help themselves and to help each other."

Reaching out to each other may help change the suicide rate of adolescent Aboriginal girls who are eight times more likely than non-Aboriginal adolescent girls in Canada to commit suicide.

"Girl Power activities will give the girls a sense of belonging and that people do care for young girls," explained a participant. "Maybe they will think and feel differently."

'Violence not normal'

Trainers received a Girl Power training manual that featured a multitude of resources and activities to pursue with young girls aged 9-15.

Participants heard about topics as diverse as eating disorders, media images of women and media literacy, self-defence, healthy eating and nutrition, HIV/AIDS and healthy sexuality, self-mutilation, domestic violence, and program planning.

They also learned about their rights.

"I am not completely sure that girls are aware of their rights, as long as they are told over and over that something is not acceptable then maybe it will help in the future," said one participant.

Another said she learned "that girls don't have to change and they don't have to hurt their bodies in any way, to respect themselves, and to show others that they are proud of who they

are."

Added another participant: "Young women need to know that violence is NOT NORMAL! Through leadership and empowerment we can spread the word."

At the end of the second day trainers joined for a sharing circle. The necessity for this type of programming was apparent throughout the training, as participants were encouraged to share their own personal experiences. Some had lived the experience of violence and abuse.

"Girl Power teaches girls about self-esteem so they can be prepared to face things that come their way," explained one trainer. "I learned a lot and the workshop gave me a chance to speak because I'm very shy."

A young participant referred to the workshop as "awesome and informative."

Several young women particularly appreciated the opportunities to learn traditional teachings, such as the role of women and hand drumming.

"In the future," said one young woman, "I would like to learn how to make medicine bags and make drums. I am just learning about my culture and some day want to carry my own medicine bundle."

Girl Power camps

The overall result was that most participants were ready to return home and run Girl Power camps or programs for their peers.

"I now feel confident that I could run a camp for girls back home," said a trainer.

The Girl Power "train the trainers" symposium will be an annual event with a longer timeframe.

"We needed more time to learn so many things," said one trainer. "We learned the knowledge and the skills to help me run a camp. From the over-arching theories and ideas to the little practicalities, it will all prove useful when I start to organize a Girl Power program."

Ultimately the training accomplished the task of informing young women about their rights, as evidenced by these participant comments: "Girl Power will help girls boost their self-esteem and self-awareness. Hopefully, they will know it's wrong what their boyfriends are doing to them and it will create knowledge of what they are capable of doing."

Well said.

RMYC



MANWO

Regional Youth Link

Regional Multicultural Youth Council

Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario

Have an IDEA?

think you're *too young*
to make it happen?



[807] 622-4666

We Can Help You Make
Your Idea A Reality!

RMYC

MULTICULTURAL YOUTH CENTRE, 511 VICTORIA AVENUE, EAST, THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO P7C 1A8 • TEL. (807) 622-4666 • FAX (807) 622-7271

TOLL FREE 1-800-692-7692

<http://my.tbaytel.net/manwoyc>

manwoyc@tbaytel.net



511 E. Victoria Avenue, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 1A8 Tel: (807) 622-4666 Fax: (807) 622-7271

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES, INITIATIVES, SERVICES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) is a youth-led group formed in 1985 to commemorate the United Nations International Youth Year. The RMYC links children and youth across Northwestern Ontario, engages, mobilizes and empowers them to make a difference.

The Youth Council uses a youth-to-youth approach to connect with peers, share information, and provide training to run meetings, develop programs, and organize activities. Current initiatives and services include the following:

- Leadership and Organizational Development Training to provide skills for youths to plan, organize and run their own activities, and create role models who use positive peer influence to make a difference.
- Orientation program to welcome newcomer children and youth to Canada, rural and Aboriginal students from small towns/reserves to urban centres, as well as help them to adjust to the community and integrate into a new society.
- Revolution Girl Style and Girl Power Program and Band of Brothers to empower young women and boys respectively, support them to believe in themselves, realize their potential, set goals, follow their passions and fulfill their dreams.
- Multiculturalism to celebrate diversity, promote equity, inclusion and social justice, combat racism and discrimination, and enhance good responsible citizenship.
- Stay-in-School Program to help students do well in their studies, encourage them to stay in school, graduate and pursue careers and professions of their choice
- Safer Communities Campaign to promote personal and public safety, initiate crime and violence prevention programs, as well as drug, alcohol and gang awareness.
- Recreation and entertainment to keep children and youth busy after school, encourage fitness, foster wellness, and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Entrepreneurship and Business Ventures for fund-raising, self-reliance, sustenance, business orientation, and self employment.
- Environmental Issues for conservation, social consciousness and caring for Mother Earth
- Volunteering to gain work experience explore careers, learn lifeskills, gain practical work experience, share talents, participate in community development, help others, develop a resume, and contribute to society.

- Multicultural Youth Centre -- a safe friendly drop-in space for youths to meet, hang out, get information, access services and supports, plan and organize their own activities, and participate in proactive programs including a breakfast club, food and clothing bank.

For the youth to have a voice, the RMYC has been involved with the following:

- Thunder Bay City Council's Advisory Committee on Anti-Racism.
- Thunder Chamber of Commerce Community Issues Committee
- The Community Advisory Committee on Race Relations to the Thunder Bay Police
- Lakehead Public & Catholic School boards' Anti-racism Policy Development Committees
- Diversity Thunder Bay
- Thunder Bay Aboriginal Inter-agency Council
- Community Coalition Unified for the Protection of our Children and Youth –CCUPCY
- Town Youth Participation Strategies (TYPs) Board

Notable accomplishments for institutional and community change include:

- Making promotional/publicity materials for Lakehead University, Confederation College, and the City of Thunder Bay inclusive to reflect our diversity – so that all children are represented in the pictures, brochures, leaflets, resource materials, and so forth.
- Developing a position paper on school uniforms that was adopted and used by the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board in 1999, as a hand-out to enlighten parents on the benefits of school uniforms during the dress-code debate, and the school board's school uniform campaign.
- Creating Multicultural Bows in 1992 -- black, red, white and yellow ribbons intertwined to symbolize the beauty of the human race co-existing in harmony -- a youth-led campaign to improve race relations, and promote March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- Launching the Revolution Girl-Style/Girl Power Program in 1998 in Thunder Bay, and expanding it across the region to empower young women and encourage them to realize their potential and fulfill their dreams, and Band of Brothers in 2009 to do the same for boys and young men.
- Initiating the RMYC Race Relations Breakfast and Awards in 2002, to recognize exemplary work and leadership by individuals, organizations, institutions, businesses, etc. to combat racial discrimination and improve race relations in the community.

For engaging children and youth in community development, improving race relations, advancing social justice and creating peer leaders, the RMYC has earned the following:

- Certificate of Recognition from the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Status of Women in 1995 for Ten Years of Service to the Youth of Canada.
- Recognition by the Laidlaw Foundation as a model group on youth governance, and youth engagement in decision making -- in 2001.
- The Lakehead Social Planning Council Award for Equality and Social Justice - 2002.
- The J.S. Woodsworth Award for Social Justice in 2002.
- The 2002 Royal Commonwealth Youth Service Award for RMYC Orientation Program to welcome and support First Nations students
- 2003 Canadian Race Relations Foundation Award of Distinction
- Unanimous Resolution by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Chiefs in Assembly in 2003, supporting RMYC's initiatives for Aboriginal children and youth.
- 2008 Aboriginal Youth Achievement and Recognition Award: Career Guidance/Training

During their terms as RMYC officers, the following members were acknowledged for exemplary leadership:

- * Founding RMYC president, Melanie Goodchild was the first Aboriginal youth to get the YTV Award for leadership and exemplary work with the Youth Council
- * As RMYC president, Pauline Fogarty and Heather McMullen won the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers in 2000 and 2001 respectively.
- * RMYC President Naana Jumah, received the '97 Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education Youth Award.
- * RMYC President, Sasha Sky was a recipient of the 2006 Lincoln M. Alexander Award for Leadership in the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Three other RMYC executive officers—Tamara McDonald, Miriam Figueroa and Terra Campbell received the same award in 2002, 1999, and 1993 respectively. A total of four RMYC members have received the Award since being introduced in 1993.
- * RMYC Vice President Bobby Narcisse received the Assembly of First Nations Aboriginal Role Model Award in 1997.
- * RMYC President Lina Mayer was invited by Premier Bob Rae to sit on Premier's Committee on Ontario in Confederation in 1994.

- * As RMYC President and Programs Co-ordinator, Mary-Jean Cormier received the Canada 125 Award in 1992, and was the first youth to sit as a director on the boards of the Ontario Multicultural Association, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.
- * Wendy Partnoy was the first RMYC officer to receive the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award in 1999.
- * Jennifer Manitowabi, team leader with the RMYC Orientation Program, Native Friendship Circle at Hillcrest High School, and Indian Friendship Centre, was the first Aboriginal young female in the region to be awarded the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award - 2000.
- * Pauline Forgarty received the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award in 2000, and the Gold Award in 2002.
- * As President of the RMYC, Tara Syed received the 2005 Soroptimist International Youth Award for her involvement with the Revolution Girl-Style/Girl Power Program, and volunteer service in the community.
- * Vice President Melanie Godecki received the Community Race Relations Award in 2002.
- * Pauline Fogarty won the Governor General's 2009 Person's Case Youth Award for creating the Revolution Girl-Style/Girl Power Program in 1998.
- * RMYC Vice President, Julaine Trudeau, and Correen Kakegamic, co-ordinators of the RMYC Girl Power Support Groups at their schools, received the Nishnawbe Aski Nation 2009 Youth Leadership / Community Involvement Award for youth leadership and being positive role models among Aboriginal youth
- * Tiina Kivinen, RMYC Vice President, received the City of Thunder Bay Student of Exceptional Achievement Award in 2002. Other RMYC officers--Mohammed Isse, Michael Sklazeski, and Sara Swerdlyk were given the same award in 2003, Farida Abu-Bakare--2005, Sasha Sky--2006, and Martin Zhang --2009.
- * Michael Sklazeski received the 2004 Canada Youth Award for peer leadership as RMYC President, and Lakehead Public Schools Student Trustee.
- * Farida Abu-Bakare, as RMYC Vice President received the Jane Callwood Harmony Scholarship Award in 2005, and her younger sister Amal Abu-Bakare, serving as RMYC President received the same Award in 2010.

Many young volunteers at the Multicultural Youth Centre and across the region have received the Ontario Volunteer Youth Service Awards (we lobbied the Ministry of Citizenship to introduce) to recognize young people involved in projects, and services to improve our communities.

Other RMYC members have since been recipients of the Canada Day Youth Award, the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and various Community Appreciation Awards-.

Youth Council wants training store

BY MICHAEL SCOTT

Helping youngsters develop work skills and business knowledge is an idea most people would agree with. The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) is hoping to start a program that would do just that.

The RMYC wants to buy a general store in Victoriaville Mall and use it as a training centre for young students. Moffat Makuto, the executive director for the RMYC, says that the store would be used to teach life skills to youth.

"We want to give them experience in all aspects of operating a business, customer service, buying, selling, accounting, bookkeeping, management, all of it,"

Makuto said. He also said the RMYC wanted to use any profits to support on-going youth programs.

The program would have students working in the store during both school semesters. The RMYC and its parent organization, the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario, would work with the schools to arrange the student's training schedule and an evaluation system.

Makuto said that the RMYC had some experience selling arts and crafts in the Mall and became convinced that they could use an actual store to get more experience. He's also positive that they can make it a viable venture.

The RMYC plans to use an established store in the mall, rather than starting their own.

Makuto says that they have been negotiating with a store already, and have been shown a lot of support for the idea from different sectors.

"We've had a lot of support from the mall merchants; they've never had anything negative to say about us. We've also had strong support from the Royal Bank, and we have support from Lyn McLeod as well."

City council voted down a resolution to support the idea last month.

The RMYC is applying to Jobs Ontario for \$130,000 in funding; fundraising, donations and assistance from the Royal Bank will take care of the other \$128,000. If they are successful, Makuto says they hope to have the program started in the upcoming school year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council gratefully acknowledges our sponsors/supporters:

- * YES Employment Services
- * Urban Aboriginal Strategy
- * Ontario Native Women's Association
- * Net Newsledger/Junot Café
- * Nishnawbe Aski Nation & Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School
- * Mandarin Restaurant
- * Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario
- * Take a Hike – Diane Petryna & Sharon Wingfield
- * Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Society
- * Tim Horton's (Waterloo Street)
- * Wasaya Group Inc.

Special thanks to the following Summer Experience Students and RMYC volunteers:

Amal Abu-Bakare, Cherokii Agawa, Elton Beardy, Talon Bird, Brittney Buchanan, Skylar Cameron, Jonathan Campeau, Trent Campeau, Gurleen Chahal, Brandon Desmoulin, Taren Desmoulin, Alex Eaton, Pauline Fogarty, Sarah Foglia, Chelsea Gogal, Jeremy Kakegamic, Robyn Kakegamic, Stephanie Kawei, Kaine Kindla, Joanne Magiskan, Nyasha Makuto, Casie Matthewson, Marella Meekis, Jackie Mersch, Sarah Nascimben, Nathan Ogden, Kay Ostamas, Quinn Spyрка, Ashley Stoney, Shane Turtle and Martin Zhang for conducting the surveys and preparing the reports...and Moffat Makuto for support and guidance

For more information please contact:

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC)
Multicultural Youth Centre (MYC)
511 E. Victoria Avenue
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7C 1A8

Tel: (807) 622-4666

Toll Free: 1-800-692-7692
1-800-MYC-RMYC

Fax: (807) 622-7271

E-mail: manwoyc@tbaytel.net

Website: <http://my.tbaytel.net/manwoyc>