



Wabun Sun

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Matachewan FN Upgrades The Community With Treatment Plant And Subdivision

A new Water Treatment Plant and Sub-division is currently being constructed for Matachewan First Nation with the assistance of Wabun Tribal Council. Construction of the new facility and expansion of ten lots in the new subdivision of the community was started in August 2003. Jason Batise, Technical Services Advisor for Wabun's six communities, assisted in the development of the project.

A new two-kilometre road was constructed on the northeastern end of the community. The road is an extension of an existing one that was originally used for forestry logging. Ten new lots are also being developed for future housing projects for the community.

"We are trying to look after the growth needs of the community for the next 25 years. This growth need is in respect to the water needs of the community and development of future housing," said Batise.

He is conducting the project management and overseeing consultants. Currently, his overall role is to provide project and financial reporting. He explained that most of his work took place before

construction began. Batise was instrumental in negotiating the development of the project with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), which provided the majority of funds. He has been working on developing this major capital project since 1996 as part of a 25-year capital plan for the community. The project was cost shared under INAC's Growth Related Capital Funding formula. In addition, the First Nation also set aside capital for the construction. It is estimated that a total of \$4.2 million has been spent on the project.

"This is a very significant project for a small community like Matachewan First Nation. It is not often that this amount of capital is provided to our communities. This is a real success that Wabun Tribal Council and our local First Nation community have every right to be proud of. It wasn't easy to get to this point but we are now completing the project," said Batise.

Batise explained that 80 percent of the construction has been completed. The finishing of the new subdivision was slowed due

to the winter season. Construction of the new water plant is still ongoing with a planned commissioning of the facility to take place in the spring of 2004.

Fourteen local First Nation members have been directly employed through a general contractor that was hired for the construction. The development of an agreement with contractors included a clause indicating how many local workers were expected to be hired for the construction. Batise explained that the percentage of local First Nation workers to be included in the clause was developed prior to the actual construction through an assessment of the community labour force.

The construction of new building lots includes the creation of road access and installation services for future housing. The First Nation is now considering developing projects such as rental housing. The local administration is also looking at attracting regional service providers such as Nishnawbe-Aski Police

Services (NAPS).

"Before the recent development of housing lots, Matachewan FN leaders could not think of attracting businesses or organisations into their community. Now that they have the potential to create additional infrastructure it is possible to create room for more development. Opportunities have arisen lately to attract First Nation organisations into the community, so the development of additional lot construction is very timely," said Batise.

The new water plant was designed to provide the community with safe drinking water. Batise explained that the new plant features a system that extracts ground water. It includes a chlorination unit and several redundant backup systems to cover if anything should fail. In addition there is a built in emergency diesel generator and pump to provide water resources in critical situations such as fire in the community.

Two local First Nation members are currently in the process of acquiring training as Level One Treatment Plant



JASON BATISE, WABUN TECHNICAL SERVICES ADVISOR

Operators. They are Jason Batisse (is a cousin to Jason Batise Technical Services Advisor) and Lorne Flood. Both trainees are currently participating in the development of the plant to learn about the construction and installation of all the systems. The agreement that was developed with INAC for the project included a directive that any personnel that were hired had to be trained and certified individuals. Once construction is completed, both Batisse and Flood will continue to operate and maintain the new plant.

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Traditional Drum Making Teaching Benefits Many In Matachewan First Nation

Traditional Drum Making Teaching was provided for 12 First Nation members in Matachewan First Nation, through a cultural education workshop, to foster community interest in cultural knowledge and skills. The teaching was provided by Marilyn Debassige, of M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. The cultural education workshop took place in the community on October 25, 2003 and a birthing ceremony to initiate the use of the drums was performed on November 1, 2003.

The 12 community members who took part in

the cultural education workshop were: Chief Elenore Hendrix, Jean Lemieux, Wabun Health Director; Elder Vina Landry, Marie and Aimie Boucher; Sue Collins, Janet Gilbert, Leahan Landry, Jennifer Landry, Edna Hanson, Ellen Bruce and Cynthia Daley.

"There are many people in our community who want to learn about traditional craftwork and the teachings that are associated with them. These teachings are part of our people's cultural past and our members want to know about this knowledge," said Edna Hanson, National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Program (NNADAP)/ Mental Health Worker for Matachewan FN.

She was a key participant in the development of this cultural teaching workshop. As part of her work as a Health Care worker she strives to encourage others in her community to take advantage of their interest in traditional teachings. Previous to the Traditional Drum Making Teaching, Hanson had invited Debassige into the community to provide Fancy Quill Box Traditional Teaching.

Hanson has also worked with Elders in the community to provide cul-

tural skills teachings in animal hide sowing, bead work and traditional crafts. Elder Vina Landry regularly volunteers her time to teach traditional craft and bead work for others in her community.

"I work with the Elders to find out what our members would like to learn. There were many people, especially our Elders, who wanted their own drum and wanted to learn how to make them.

One of our Elders had mentioned that there hadn't been a drum made in our community since he was a young boy," said Hanson.

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EDNA HANSON, MATACHEWAN FN, NNADAP/MENTAL HEALTH WORKER

Matachewan First Nation Moving Ahead With Major Projects

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"The development of the project plan identified the need for additional training of Water Plant Operators. The training that both Batisse and Flood needed is covered under this project by INAC. Trained individuals will also provide Matachewan First Nation with certified individuals who will help ensure a safe source of drinking water," said Batisse.

He explained that, in terms of developing water treatment plant services, this is the third multi million dollar project that

Wabun has helped produce for its communities. Wabun Tribal Council has also assisted in the development of major upgrades for Mattagami FN and Chapleau Ojibwe FN.

"Our major priority is to provide safe drinking water for our communities. We all know what the consequences can be of not having safe water after what happened in Walkerton Ontario. The development of additional infrastructure also allows our communities to grow. Our smaller communities rely on these capital projects to spur growth in the First

Nations," said Batisse.

Once water treatment upgrades are completed in Mattagami FN and Chapleau Ojibwe FN, all of Wabun's communities will have state of the art systems to ensure safe drinking water.

"The work that has been done to make sure that all our communities have the proper water treatment services has come a long way. We should be proud of what we have accomplished. Our Wabun Chiefs and Councils worked hard to lobby the right people and our staff here at

Wabun have also done a lot to make sure we would reach our goal and add to

the quality of life for our community members," said Batisse.

Reflections

By Shawn Batisse, Executive Director



In this issue of Wabun Sun I want to remind all Wabun Community Members that we are still progressing through the Self Governance Process with the Canadian Government. Many people are confused about this process and what it means for our First Nations. I will try to explain this issue in easy to understand terms.

Let me start with a little history. As Aboriginal people in this country we have never given up our right to make our own decisions and to plan our own destiny. The Government Of Canada developed and imposed the Indian Act on us with no input or consultation with us and over the decades we have had to live within a process that more or less kept our hands tied in terms of much decision making.

Developments in recent years have resulted in the Canadian Government coming to terms with our dissatisfaction with the basis of operation when it came to making decisions for ourselves. Out of Canada's Inherent Right Policy we saw the development of Self Governance Negotiations. It was and is a plan put forward by the Canadian Government that represents one way that Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN), of which we are part of, will work out with the Federal Government how we can govern ourselves and take control over our own affairs.

In 1997 the NAN Chiefs In Assembly passed a resolution to mandate the NAN Executive to enter into sectoral negotiation concerning jurisdiction in many areas including, but not limited to, governance, education, justice, economic development, social services and health. The main focus has been on governance and education over the past few years.

There are three main stages in the Self Governance Negotiations. The first was the Framework Agreement which involved laying out the agenda for what would be discussed in the negotiations. As a result, Framework Agreements for Governance and Education Jurisdiction

were signed by NAN and the Government Of Canada in 1999. The second stage which we are experiencing right now has to do with the Agreement In Principle (AIP). This stage has to do with working out a full range of issues to be covered in the Final Agreement. Once this has been done it will be sent back to NAN First Nations for discussion and ratification. The AIP is not binding. As part of this stage Jennifer Constant, Regional Governance Coordinator will be holding community consultations in all Wabun First Nations.

The third stage is the Final Agreement phase at which time the NAN and the Government of Canada will discuss how things will be administered under a Self Governance Agreement. Now once a final agreement is reached every NAN First Nation will have the choice of whether to sign it. Those that sign will be bound by the Self Governance agreement and no longer operate under the Indian Act while those that do not sign will continue to be governed by the Indian Act or another form of Federal Government legislation that could be put in place. We still have years to go before we reach this stage and you can count on NAN and our leadership here at Wabun to make sure that nothing will proceed unless we feel satisfied that we can live with any new agreements.

So far we have held consultation with our First Nations and that has resulted in valuable input. I want to make sure that everyone understands that as this process goes forward, we turn to all of our members, in all of our Wabun Tribal Council First Nations for consultation. We need your input. Now is the time to act and have your say. When Jennifer visits your community take the time to meet with her and let her know what your concerns and thoughts are on Self Governance issues. If you need more information you can also contact Jason Batisse, Wabun's Technical Services Advisor. He is a member of the NAN Governance Negotiation Steering Committee. In addition you can go to NAN's website at www.nan.on.ca To make sure you are getting all the information you need we are also inserting a NAN publication into the Wabun Sun. So take the time to have your say. Our future generations will reap the benefit of your input.

Morris Wheesk - Working For Mattagami FN



Morris Wheesk, Water Plant Operator for Mattagami First Nation, is the featured Community Person for this issue of Wabun Sun. He has worked in this position since August 2002.

"I enjoy the responsibility and challenge that comes with this position. There is a sense of accomplishment when I know I am directly serving our whole community. Water is an important resource for everyone and used on a daily basis so there is a great importance and significance to my work," said Wheesk.

He is responsible for the operation and maintenance of a Level One water treatment plant in Mattagami FN. This type of treatment plant is recognized as one of the smaller plants that are designed to service small communities. The plant basically operates as a pumping station to extract ground water, then chlorinates and distributes the water to the entire community. Wheesk works with an Environmental Health Officer on regular water analysis to ensure that drinking water is safe. The First Nation also has a laboratory that is used to check and identify several parameters to maintain safe drinking water

on a regular basis. Wheesk is also responsible for keeping and maintaining records of daily activities.

He attended training as a Water Plant Operator in Orillia, Ontario where he received an Operator In Training (OIT) certificate. Wheesk attended additional training in Niagara Falls to add to his experience and previous training. In the spring, he is hoping to complete another level of training to acquire certification as a Level One Operator Water Plant and Distribution.

Wheesk is a hard worker and has been employed in numerous fields over the years. He attended a three year program at Northern College in Timmins. When the Ontario Northland Railway (ONR) operated in Timmins during the early 1980s, he worked for the company's railway maintenance shop as a Car-man's Assistant and Machinist Trainee for four and half years. In addition he worked as an Underground Shaft Service-man for Detour Lake Mine for two years. Previous to this he worked as part of a Road Maintenance Crew and as a Loader Operator and Plow Truck Operator for the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) in Gogama. Later on, he attended training to acquire his AZ Truck Drivers License and certification as a Heavy Equipment Operator.

In 1988 Wheesk, originally from Fort Albany First Nation, transferred his First Nation membership to Mattagami First Nation and soon after became an elected representative for the community as a First Nation Councillor. He has also served the community as an equipment operator including school bus driver

and heavy equipment operator for numerous projects taking place in the First Nation. In the 1990s, he moved his family to North Bay for two years where he was employed by Pioneer Construction as a Plow and Salt Truck Operator for the city's multilane highways.

Currently, Wheesk is a member of the First Nation's volunteer Fire Department. He describes himself as a very competitive person who enjoys taking part in sporting activities including hockey. As a Water Plant Operator he takes part in regularly held challenge competitions for water and waste operators in Ontario. These competitions were established to simulate working conditions by requiring competitors to dismantle pump units, install equipment, conduct pressure testing, ensure accuracy of their work, identify different components and quickly provide an analysis of a water sample.

At 41 years of age, Wheesk is originally from Fort Albany First Nation on the James Bay coast. He is a First Nation Cree person and is a member of Mattagami First Nation. His parents John and Annie Wheesk moved their family years ago to Timmins to attend secondary school education. Morris Wheesk explained that he attributes his skills and abilities to what his father taught him.

He and his wife Betty have three sons Johnathon, 15; Kory, 13 and 12 year old Leiland. Morris Wheesk lives in Mattagami First Nation and in his spare time offers his assistance to help others in the community. In addition, he continues to take part in traditional activities such as moose hunting and fishing.

Drum Making Workshop In Matachewan FN

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There were two parts to the Traditional Drum Making Teaching. The first half took place during a five hour period on October 25, 2003. This was necessary as the assembly and construction of the hand drum had to be done in a short period of time. The day before construction, the participants soaked their raw hide in water overnight. In the morning the participants each constructed their drum under the guidance of Debassige. Participants were shown how to cut the hide for their drum, how to construct a frame out of cedar wood and how to assemble and tie the whole drum together.

"Once we started the construction process it was crucial that we did not stop. After we were done we had to keep our drum by our side until the birthing ceremony. We also learned that we had to take excess material from the construction of the drum and offer

this back to mother earth in the forest," said Hanson.

On November 1, 2003, all the participants gathered for the birthing ceremony with Debassige. During the ceremony the drums were laid out in front of the participants. Debassige, with the help of her daughter, performed a traditional drum song along with tobacco offerings to birth each drum. As each drum was birthed this new drum was played along with Debassige and her daughter.

"It was an amazing experience for all of us and everyone enjoyed the whole event. We learned about what responsibilities came with having a traditional drum and how to care for it. All of us were overwhelmed by the ceremony. It was a very beautiful and special experience for all of us to go through," said Hanson.

She believes that offering traditional teachings and knowledge to her community is an important

learning experience.

"A lot of our culture has been lost over the years. Now there are many people who want to learn about our past. I was very pleased with the participation we received for the Traditional Drum Making Teaching. We would also like to thank Chief and Council for their support in this traditional teaching," said Hanson.

She continues to work with Elders in her community to provide an opportunity for traditional people in the First Nation to share their knowledge with others.

Debassige is a traditional person who is part of the Bear Clan and a member of the Ojibwa, Odawa and Pottawatami Nation. She has served First Nation families for the past twenty years in the areas of mental health and child welfare. She attributes her skills and knowledge to teachings she learned from the late Elder Bernadette-Ba Pangowish of the Wikwemikong First



TRADITIONAL DRUM MAKING PARTICIPANTS ARE STANDING AT BACK ROW FROM L-R: JANET GILBERT, EDNA HANSON, MARILYN DEBASSIGE, VINA LANDRY, AIMIE BOUCHER, MARIE BOUCHER, JEAN LEMIEUX, WABUN HEALTH DIRECTOR AND ELLEN BRUCE. SECOND ROW FROM L-R: LEAHAN LANDRY, JENNIFER LANDRY, CHIEF ELENORE HENDRIX, NIIBIN (DAUGHTER OF MARILYN DEBASSIGE) AND CYNTHIA DALEY. FRONT ROW FROM L-R: JESSICA PARROT, CHELSEA DALEY AND KRISTEN PARROTT.

Nation on Manitoulin Island. Debassige continues to offer traditional teachings to Elders, adults, youth and adolescence.

Elder George Naveau Passes On Traditional Knowledge



Elder George Naveau of Mattagami First Nation is one of several Elders in his community who have a great deal of knowledge about life on the land as a traditional trapper. As an Elder he passes on his knowledge and skills to youth in the community. He is a retired pensioner who has regularly trapped for animals during the winter months every year since he was a young man. Elder Naveau explained that because of the unusually cold season this year he has not been able to go out to tend to his traditional trap line near the community.

Elder Naveau was born in 1934 at a Sudbury hospital but was brought back to his family's traditional territories after his birth. His mother was Elizabeth (Wayne) Naveau originally from Moosonee on the James Bay coast. He and his family grew up in a traditional setting on their own trapping area in Roblin Township about 30 kilometres southwest of Mattagami FN. Elder Naveau learned how to hunt and trap from his father Louis Naveau from a young age. He started his traditional education when he was 12 by walking

with his father along their family trapping grounds.

"Our family lived off the land and we spent most of our time during the year trapping. In the winter we used snowshoes or dog sled to travel but most of the time we walked to where we wanted to go. We were all in good shape and healthy because of the amount of work and exercise we had to do," said Elder George Naveau.

He added that he remembers many good memories of his life on the land.

"I enjoyed being with my family back then. I also miss spending long periods of time in the bush to work on our trap line. There were many hardships we had to live with but it was also a good life in other ways," said Elder George Naveau.

He also learned how to trap from his uncle Sidney Naveau who regularly took Elder George Naveau as a boy to further hunting grounds away from their home. His family had a regular schedule they followed during the year. They lived in small communities in the summer months with other families and then left for their trapping territory in September and did not return until the following spring in May. He explained that his family carried few supplies with them such as tea, sugar and flour. Their primary source of food and nourishment came from the land. They trapped for beaver, otter, martin, mink and lynx. The family's only source of

income was to sell their furs to the Hudson's Bay Company in Gogama, Ontario.

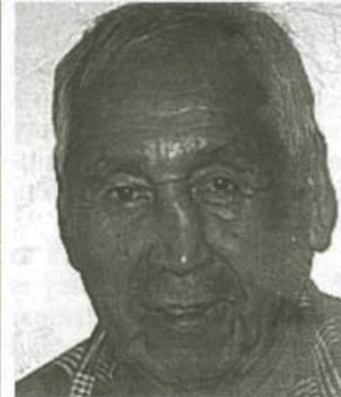
"We survived by selling our furs to the store. Some years the trapping was good and sometimes it was not. For instance, this year the price of a beaver pelt was 57 dollars, which is really low and only a few years ago it was 257 dollars," said Elder George Naveau.

He explained that community members do not have enough time to take part in traditional activities as they now have regular local jobs that keep them busy. However, there are still a few trappers in the community that take the time to go out near the First Nation. Elder George Naveau's own trap line is located near the community and is a short ride by all terrain vehicle or by boat.

In recent years Elder George Naveau has been busy passing on his trapping knowledge to a young man from Mattagami FN by the name of Johnathon Wheesk. Elder George Naveau started taking Johnathon out to tend to his traps at the age of eight. He explained that it is important to hold to this knowledge and to remember what the people had to go through to survive in the past.

Elder George Naveau continues to spend time with local youth like Johnathon to tell them about their people's traditional past and pass down knowledge about trapping.

Thomas Saunders Featured Elder



Elder Thomas Saunders is the featured Elder of the Issue for this edition of Wabun Sun. He was born in 1925 and raised at their family's traditional territories on Missanabie Lake northeast of Wawa Ontario.

His family lived in an area known as Franz, a railway junction of the Algoma Central Railway (ACR) and the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), just on the border of the Chapleau Game Preserve which was established in 1925. The creation of this game preserve greatly affected the Ojibway people who lived in this area as they were forced off their lands for the creation of a wildlife sanctuary. However, Elder Saunders' family was able to continue living on adjacent lands as their traditional territories were on the boundary of the new game preserve.

After this change to their hunting territories, his family of 13 brothers and a sister with their parents, lived just outside of the community of Missanabie, a Canadian National Railway (CNR) stop. He remembers a time when every family held their own trap lines to survive. They traded their furs at a fur depot in Franz and also sold them to stores in Missanabie and in Chapleau. In addition, Elder Saunders' parents Philip and Harriet Saunders fed their family by maintaining a small plot of land to grow

mainly potatoes as well as other vegetables.

As a young man he helped his family maintain their traditional trap line in the winter months. He also worked in seasonal employment for Lands and Forestry for five years as a Forest Fire Fighter. In addition, he worked during the summer months as a guide. Elder Saunders was also employed as a Section Man for the CPR for many years.

He is concerned that the traditional Ojibway language is disappearing in his community and would like to see his people develop ways to keep their language.

"My family and I grew up in a time when all we could speak was our language. Now there are only a few people I can speak to in Ojibway. I want to be able to speak in my own language with others in the community. We should revive the language and teach our young people. Maybe they could learn from older people such as myself who still remember the language," said Elder Saunders.

He is hopeful that the community will provide more opportunities and assistance for local youth. The First Nation is planning on going back to their original community on Missanabie Lake to hold a ceremony there with youth and Elders. Elder Saunders will lead the ceremony as a spiritual leader for the event.

At the age of 80, he currently resides in Brunswick House FN in his own home. His only surviving sibling is Robert Saunders who is 78 years of age.

"Elders Thomas is a valuable member of our community. He is very capable man for his age and provides our people with much guidance and assistance," said Alfred Ojebah, First Nation Councillor for Brunswick House FN and Wabun Board Chairperson.

Ojebah is thanked for his assistance in making this feature possible.

Health Canada Announces New Approach To Consent For The Non-Insured Health Benefits Program

OTTAWA - Health Canada announced today a new approach to the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program's Consent Initiative. The new approach means that the March 1, 2004, deadline for the submission of consent forms by NIHB First Nations and Inuit clients no longer applies.

Health Canada consulted widely with First Nations, Inuit and other stakeholders and appreciates the extensive input and advice received.

Under this new approach, the NIHB Program will not require a signed consent form for day-to-day processing activities and program administration. NIHB clients will therefore continue to receive benefits for which they are eligible even if they have not signed a consent form.

Several factors have

made this new approach possible. These include an evolving privacy environment, feedback from First Nations, Inuit and other stakeholders, and insights gained during the past three years. This approach respects the privacy rights of clients and is consistent with current privacy legislation.

In a few instances, where client safety or inappropriate use of the system may be a concern, the NIHB Program will seek the express consent of clients to share their personal information with health care providers. This consent may be provided verbally or in writing. In a few cases, NIHB may refuse to pay for prescriptions until a patient safety plan is in place.

One of the keys to this approach to privacy is providing clients with clear information on how and

why their personal health information will be collected, used and protected. Health Canada will continue its privacy awareness efforts in collaboration with First Nations and Inuit to ensure that clients know how their information is used and protected.

To help NIHB clients understand how the Program approaches privacy issues, NIHB has outlined the rules that guide the collection, storage, use, sharing and protection of clients' personal health information in a comprehensive NIHB Privacy Code. A draft of the NIHB Privacy Code has been circulated to First Nations and Inuit organizations and will be posted on the Health Canada website for comment.

For more information go to http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/media/releases/2004/2004_03.htm

e-SDRT Training To Improve Efficiency

Training with a focus on improving efficiency in reporting for Home and Community Care workers and on privacy was presented to the Wabun Health Team members January 7, 2004. This training was facilitated by Ann Marie MacAulay, e-Health Education Manager for the Ontario Region and the co-facilitator was Lily Batise.

The training concerned the on line e-Service Delivery Reporting Template (e-SDRT). In short this training was provided to bring those involved in Home and Community Care up to date with on line reporting and privacy issues.

"This new system allows for more efficiency and provides our membership with more ownership in their health care delivery. I was also happy that we had the extra benefit of Privacy Training so that we were brought up to speed with latest in privacy issues as they relate to our clients," said Jean Lemieux, Executive Director, Wabun Health.

The First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care program in collaboration with the e-

Health Solutions Unit, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB), developed a spreadsheet software based tool for the e-SDRT/HCC application to enable the submission of program information electronically. This was done with the idea of generating reports for community planning purposes, funding reporting requirements and to meet program accountability requirements including evaluation.

The actual data elements contained in the spreadsheet have been generated by: the program accountability requirements generated from the program evaluation framework, the Treasury Board authorities for the program and Ministerial reporting requirements.

Simply put, the training on this new process will result in better data collection flow and in a very direct manner. The Privacy Training was provided before the e-SDRT training to make sure everyone understood the latest in terms of protecting the privacy of clients in regards to any type of reporting.

Wabun Health staff

was joined by the Home and Community Care program workers, Marilyn Tangie of Brunswick House First Nation, Eileen Boissoneau of Mattagami First Nation, Sue Collins of Matachewan FN and Anne Gunner from Wahgoshig First Nation.

Collins, Home and Community Care program worker for Matachewan First Nation called the training informative.

"I am happy to have received this training as it will make everything much more efficient with reporting on line. It allows us to gather and report information in a better way," said Collins.

Marilyn Tangie of Brunswick House FN, also noted that the training was very well received and would add to better reporting in a more efficient way and as well keep everyone up to date with information.

Lemieux commented that this form of reporting would assist in keeping up to date information and statistics and that would result in justification for more funding as needs increase.

Health Matters



by Jean Lemieux,
Health Director,
Wabun Health

Welcome to this issue of Wabun Sun. There are many ways we keep in touch with our First Nations and our community members. We do this through constant contact through the direction of the Wabun Chiefs, Community Health Nurses, Community Health Representatives, other health related community agencies and workshops. Wabun Sun and our Website,

Recently Wabun First Nations members have had the opportunity to provide feedback and provide direction for Wabun Health as part of the process of the Health Transfer Evaluation Process. This initiative which has been developed and overseen by Wabun Health is currently in its final phases. Health Canada requests this evaluation at the end of every five year period. We look forward to this process as it provides us with important feedback.

We have had our consultant out in the field surveying our members as part of this Health Transfer Evaluation Process. That part of the consultation process is finalized and I now have a Final Draft. I want to thank all those community members who participated in providing us with valuable feedback. Once we have analyzed this final draft it is fine tuned and presented to the Wabun Chiefs and to Shawn Batise, Wabun Tribal Council, Executive Director for input and approval. We also put it forth for discussion and input from our Wabun Health Staff.

At this point we incorporate any changes made through these final reviews and consultations and our consultant produces the final document which we present to Health Canada. On the basis of this evaluation a work plan will be devel-

oped. The evaluation process really helps us in developing community health plans. Our results also reinforces the fact that aboriginal people servicing aboriginal people in terms of health care services is the best operational model.

I would like to see a longer term commitment rather than simply five years from the government and hopefully we will see this development at some point. Our evaluation process also points to the need for increased funding and additional funding for needs as expressed by our First Nations. Generally I am very happy with the results of our evaluation process this time around. We had better participation than ever before.

We focused on three areas including the health levels of community members, the health needs of the communities and health services effectiveness and areas in need of improvement. I am happy to report that our First Nations members feedback has shown us that our health recommendations by and large from our last evaluation were met. Of course we can always make improvements and we will strive to do so.

One of the main points of concern raised was the need for a mental health program which we are actively developing. An additional concern was for the development of a more comprehensive traditional program. Our feedback also identified drug and alcohol problems as a major concern in communities. Suicide potential was also a concern of many of our members. Concern for diabetes was also identified in our feedback. We believe that much of the concerns with these issues have arisen out of more awareness due to various programs and workshops addressing them. We are getting the message that we need more programs and longer term commitments of funding to address these particular needs or our communities. There is a healing taking place and good things are happening in our communities but we need to do more. Thanks to the input from our First Nation members we can work with Health Canada to make sure that their needs are met.

Wabun Sun



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