
IN THE SPIRIT OF HEALING AND WELLNESS

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This is a newsletter of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS)

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ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

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The provincial government has reaffirmed its commitment to the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (Strategy) for another five years at the current funding level of \$33.325 million. The Minister of Community and Social Services and the Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Native Affairs advised the leaders of the provincial Aboriginal organizations of the government's ongoing support for the Strategy in letters dated December 18, 1998. In their letters, the Ministers said, "This unique partnership has provided a forum to implement a shared vision of wholistic and seamless services that meet the needs of all Aboriginal people. These efforts are clearly leading to the improvement of health and the reduction of family violence."

The involvement of the Elders from across the province has been integral to the development and implementation of the Strategy. Elders provide ongoing guidance and traditional support to all aspects of the Strategy, including community projects, programs and services. When informed of the government's decision to renew the Strategy, one of our Elders, Lillian McGregor said, "I am very pleased that we have had the opportunity to continue our work. It is a testimony to our collective work and spirit that the provincial government has agreed to maintain the funding. It is also important to note that Elders in many communities across the province actively participate in the Strategy on a day-to-day basis. ☞
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AHWS Thanksgiving Feast, November 1998. Seated from left, Lucille Roch - JSC's Government Co-Chair, Lillian McGregor - JSC's Elder and Frank Bruyere - JSC's Aboriginal Co-Chair

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY THE ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) is beginning to make its presence felt in the Aboriginal community.

With the first phase of Healing and Wellness almost near completion many of the programs under the umbrella of the AHWS, have been up and running for a while.

How is the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy touching communities? How is the AHWS affecting change in Aboriginal peoples' lives?

The **Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)** receives funding from AHWS to implement a number of different programs and services. One of its programs is the community health outreach worker. The outreach worker coordinates the efforts of a group of approximately 16 volunteers known as the Megezhee Anishinabeque Local.

These volunteers and the health outreach worker provide everyday helping services to over 200 clients in the Thunder Bay area including the elderly, people with disabilities and single parents. The volunteers shovel driveways, provide home maintenance, drive people to doctor's appointments, shop, bathe the elderly, visit seniors' homes, bring elders to Pow Wows and gatherings and provide respite for young mothers. These are only some of the services they provide.

"Where every other organization has failed, they help," says Donna Simon, Policy Analyst, ONWA.

Besides coordinating this work, the health outreach worker coordinates training for the volunteers such as CPR and First Aid Training.

"They've been trying to provide a service that the other groups haven't been able to offer because they're so swamped," says Ms. Simon. "We get lots of calls. The volunteers are just a small group but very dedicated."

"This group is a real role model for other groups. They're doing a lot with very little resources and they're making a difference in their communities. Some of the volunteers have been down and out and on the street and now they're giving back to the community what they received in support. They're a really good bunch out there," says Ms. Simon.

The AHWS provides funding for 4 health outreach workers which are urban Aboriginal community representatives located in areas of the province which don't have Community Health Access Centres. These workers are based in women's locals and friendship centres.

In the **Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN)**, which represents 47 First Nations, the AHWS has greatly made its presence felt. "Communities are more willing to talk about family violence, health and suicide," says Helen Cromarty, Health Liaison, NAN. "The elders and everyone are more open. Men and women are more willing to access counselling. Victims of abuse are more willing to identify perpetrators but not always to press charges -- rather, they want to begin healing. Women are using shelters but women still have to leave the community to use these shelters and this can lead to family breakdown," says Ms. Cromarty.

In the NAN territory, 3 Health Authorities have been established, a patient hostel has opened in Timmins,

Treatment Centres in Cat Lake and Attawapiskat have been developed and the number of suicides has decreased by 50% in part due to the efforts of the crisis teams established through the Strategy.

"There's greater confidence among the crisis teams to provide more immediate response to situations in the communities," says Ms. Cromarty. "We don't have to send volunteers to another First Nation anymore. Communities are helping themselves. The money AHWS has contributed has helped us to assist in these areas."

The Weeneebayko Health Ahtuskaywin within NAN, with funding from the AHWS, developed a referral video called "People Helping Each Other: The Referral Process." Available in both Cree and English, "the video was developed to educate about and illustrate the referral process to patients that leave their communities to access appropriate medical care," said Fred Hunter, Chief Executive Officer, Weeneebayko Health Ahtuskaywin (WHA).

The video is such a popular tool throughout the province that organizations such as the Ontario Hospital Association and the Hospital for Six Children in Toronto have requested copies!

From Ottawa, to North Bay to Sudbury and Toronto, "the response from the video recipients has been phenomenal," says Debbie McLeod of the WHA.

Through the AHWS, the **Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC)** provided funding for the establishment of healing circles for men for managing anger, aggression and their feelings. The healing circles are located at Friendship Centres.

With funding support from AHWS, a

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KII-KEE-WAN-NII-KAAN CELEBRATES

Chief Mark Peters has come full circle! As he spoke with pride at the opening of Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan, the southwest regional healing centre, he recalled his days as a member of the Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee in the early 1990's. "It's not often that you work on a project in an early stage of your life and then have the opportunity to lead the community in which one of the key initiatives is located," said Chief Peters.

To the sound of the Bishkabi Drum, and joined by the community's jingle dancers, over 100 assembled Elders and guests came to Munsee-Deleware to celebrate the centre's opening on October 28, 1998.

Following Sugarbear's opening prayer, Bob Antone, Executive Director of the centre, welcomed Diane Snake who, along with Beulah Timothy, named the facility. Diane gave the audience a Delaware language lesson as she helped them to learn to say Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan's name which means "A Healing Place".

Grand Chief Vernon Roote, of the Anishinabek Nation, commended Munsee, the area First Nations, Southwest Regional Metis and N'Amerind and Can'Am Friendship Centres for their unique partnership. Chief Roote commented, "There are no boundaries in our healing lodges. The opening of this centre is an opportunity to break down old boundaries between people. This is a good thing".

Joining Chief Peters and Bob Antone, were representatives of the various funding agencies who had contributed towards the construction costs of the building. Guests included Carrie Hayward from the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy and Gloria

Morrison, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Gloria said, "it takes dedication and the heart of the community to help healing take place in southwestern Ontario". Also present were Daryl Hill from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Howard Green from Human Resources Development Canada whose contribution included labour training funding. From the City of London, Gord Hume and Susan Eagle, brought greetings and acknowledged that Aboriginal people are reclaiming their heritage of wholistic healing while the non-Native community is just beginning to think of wholistic healing as a progressive ideal. Tribute was paid to Councillor Patrick Waddilove for his commitment and perseverance in coordinating the funding from the different agencies and departments.

Jingle Dancers celebrate the opening of the healing centre

Rick Peters, representing the Assembly of First Nations on behalf of National Chief Phil Fontaine, said, "this facility shows that partnership can work among all

levels of government and among different Aboriginal communities." He went on to say, "the real success of this initiative will be with our children and grandchildren".

Sugarbear, a well known Elder from southwestern Ontario, was joined by Merle Assance-Beedie from southwestern Ontario and an advisor to the Enaahtig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre, Frank Lewis and Louis Kwissiwa from Pic Mobert in the Robinson-Superior region. Louis reminded everyone that this was a good day, but we have much more work to do.

Bob Antone, talked about the work of the centre. "Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan will offer two and four week residential programs as well as weekend and day programs for adults and families." One of the innovations of this centre will be to offer a week long program for the area's human services workers - or said another way - care for the caregivers. Staff of the centre also talked about their landscaping plans and intent to use berry bushes and fruit trees to remind everyone of the natural gifts around us. In addition, they plan to grow an herb/medicine garden and a community vegetable garden with volunteers from the local area.

The healing lodge has four wings or pods, three of which contain bedrooms and offices. The fourth wing includes reception, the kitchen and the dining room. Joining the four sections is a large circle healing room in the shape of a teepi, surrounded by large windows and containing a fireplace. This will be the central meeting room for many activities, group sessions and relaxation. While the finishing touches are being done on the facility, staff are offering workshops and other smaller programs around the catchment area that reaches as far as Sarnia and Windsor. The Centre will be open for residential programs within the next few months and referrals are

beginning to come in.

HEALTH CARE REGISTRATION TOUR TARGETS REMOTE COMMUNITIES

A tour of the most remote communities in the province to register First Nations residents for health cards and birth certificates is well underway and should be complete by the end of March 1999.

The first leg of the tour along the James Bay Coast has just been completed and an average of 70% of the population were registered for both health cards and birth certificates.

“This tour was developed because First Nations residents in the most remote communities did not have health cards needed to access provincial health services,” says Phil Jackson, Coordinator for the Aboriginal Health Office. “So, after consulting with the Aboriginal community, it was agreed that the registration process should go out to the communities directly.”

The tour is a partnership of Weeneebayko Health Authority along the James Bay Coast and the Sioux Lookout Health Authority in the Sioux Lookout Zone, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (MCCR). Additional funding for the tour has been provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Medical Services Branch of Health Canada.

Along the James Bay Coast as well as in the Sioux Lookout Zone, First Nations residents were hired and trained to register people for health cards. These health card registration clerks worked together with clerks from the MCCR and visit First Nations communities in teams of approximately three or four to register First Nations resident for both health

For more information about Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan call 519-289-0148. ■
cards and birth certificates.

“As the regional Aboriginal health authority for the isolated, western James and Hudson Bay communities in the traditional Mushkegowuk Territory, the Weeneebayko Health Ahtuskaywin (WHA) was pleased with the cooperation of both the MOH’s Aboriginal Health Office and the Northern Registration and Claims Branch,” said Fred Hunter, their Chief Executive Officer. “The Ministry of Health demonstrated an appreciation of the geographic isolation of the communities, and the culture of its mostly Cree residents, by conducting an outreach registration tour in the clients’ communities as well as by employing and training resident Cree-speaking Outreach clerks. The Ministry was also influential in bringing the Office of the Register General to the communities to update important vital statistics for about one third of the population.”

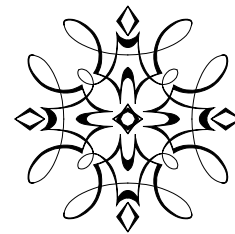
“More than half the population received new photo health cards. This success exemplifies that a real need existed for the Registration Tour. The WHA looks forward to continuing to work together with these ministries to provide accessible and culturally appropriate care to the James Bay clients.”

“Because we’re dealing with the most remote First Nations and covering an expansive territory, extensive planning and coordination were required,” says Brenda McCauley, Regional Manager, Registration and Claims Branch, MOH. “The Ministry has worked closely with First Nations representatives to develop an innovative and flexible outreach tour which tried to register as many people as possible for their health cards.”

Based on preliminary statistics, over 50% of residents have been registered for health cards in the Sioux Lookout First

Nations communities that have been visited by the team of clerks to date.

“Everyone involved in the health card and birth registration should be acknowledged for their hard work and dedication,” said Ms. McCauley. “The clerks, especially, deserve our recognition for the hard work and long hours they put



in to ensure that people are registered for their health cards.”

The tour will continue until approximately March 1999 when it is expected that all the 28 First Nations communities in Sioux Lookout will have been visited by a team. ■

AHWS HAS NEW PROGRAM CONSULTANT

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) team has a new member. Valerie Galley joined the team in December 1998 as a Program Consultant. Valerie, a Toronto resident, is of Ojibway and Canadian ancestry. She has visited many communities in Canada from as far east as Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador to as far west as Tofino, British Columbia.

Valerie has worked with Aboriginal organizations in both Ontario and British Columbia. Her experience includes being a Program Consultant with the Aboriginal Head Start Initiative, a Policy Analyst

IMPLEMENTING A COMMUNITY HEALING MODEL

The Nickickousemenecaning First Nation has been exploring and developing a Community Healing Model (CHM) which will be based on Anishinabe Culture, culturally competent and congruent. "Culturally competent" means that the First Nation will incorporate cultural methods of healing in all levels of service delivery. It also implies that the cultural ways and traditional law of the Anishinabe will become a key element in providing services to the community. "Cultural congruence", on the other hand, implies that all service delivery elements must be derived from the cultural systems and harmoniously integrated into services provided to the community. The CHM is being designed to blend conventional and customary therapeutic approaches into social casework practice which will be used by tribal social services. The Model is supported and endorsed by Elders and healers from the community who will provide the support necessary to achieve this goal.

The organization of the Model will be based on cultural and community desires.



Cultural knowledge is being researched with the Elders and traditional medicinal approaches are being examined with the healers. The information gained will be applied to the development of the Model and will be responsive to both the needs of tribal members. The plan to develop culturally competent and congruent social services is a comprehensive exercise in community and organization

with the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) and Production Co-ordinator with the Native Participation Committee of the XV Commonwealth Games, 1994.

development while promoting wholistic health. The First Nation is restructuring the social service organization around cultural expectations and refining the present service management structure and systems.

To facilitate, coordinate, and integrate the resources of the Anishinabe and mainstream systems into a comprehensive healing program, the First Nation has hired Ernie Morrison, as the Community Planner to explore and develop ways in the design and delivery of a Community Healing Model.

Mr. Morrison will be looking at the types of wholistic services that members would like to see offered and to increase awareness and availability of ceremonial healing services. Morrison says, "we have been busy organizing ceremonial healing sessions and looking at the possibility of constructing a ceremonial healing lodge. Helpers in the Lodge will use healing services and will also organize specialized ceremonial healing services for clients as well as help gather and prepare traditional medicines." Morrison promotes holistic health by arranging and facilitating sacred, healing, talking and sharing circles.

Morrison is examining the management structure and service delivery system in the community to see how it can be improved and to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the social services organization.

"Members of the community are learning about cultural and traditional healing processes and practices", says Morrison. Training sessions are arranged and facilitated by Elders and healers.

Valerie is very committed to Aboriginal organizations and will build on past experience to contribute to the AHWS. ■

Mr. Morrison has been involved in the organization of the spring healing ceremony to help celebrate the return and leaving of the animals and the birds from their winter abroad. The ceremony enables the Ishioonun (sacred items) to feast and cleanses the Teaching Lodge. Tribal and community Elders guide the ceremonies with support from the community members.

Morrison also facilitates community conferences with local and tribal Elders. The purpose of these conferences is to enable community members to interact with Elders and partake in ceremonial events. The conferences have proven to be very successful with a lot of community participation.

"The impacts of the Community Healing Model have been positive," says Morrison. Services to clients are improving, reliance on outside services is decreasing, professional confidence of the human and social services staff is improving, and case management is proving to be effective.

For more information contact Ernie Morrison, Community Planner, Nickickousemenecaning First Nation, at (807) 481-2536. ■

AHWS ON THE INTERNET

Ever wondered how the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy began?

Lost your old copies of the newsletter and remember a story with good ideas?

Trying to find out where Ontario's Aboriginal Health Access Centre's are located?

Have a question that you think someone else can help to answer?

VISIT THE AHWS WEBSITE!!

Find us at:

<http://www.anishinabek.ca/ahws>

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We have been involved since the early consultations that lead to the creation of the Strategy and continue to be available to provide guidance and traditional support.”

The Executive Director of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, Sylvia Maracle echoed the sentiments of many members of the Joint Steering Committee of the Strategy (JSC) when she learned of the government's decision, she said, “I am happy that the Strategy will continue for another five years. Lobbying by our organizations and communities has been effective. Of course, it is my goal to see the government commit to an ongoing funding formula. We must maintain our vigilance. We must also endeavour in our day-to-day work to regularly assess our activities with the goal of ensuring that we are managing services and programs for our communities effectively.”

In the early months of 1999, the JSC will be developing a new Implementation Agreement between the provincial Aboriginal organizations and the Ontario



government. The Agreement governs the administrative relationships (e.g. funding, reporting, etc.) between the participants in the Strategy. Each provincial Aboriginal organization involved in the Strategy signs an Agreement with the government that is specific to its membership.

As well, the JSC will be determining the Strategy's workplan for the next five years. This process includes identifying priorities, emerging issues and matters to be researched. Frank Bruyere, Aboriginal Co-Chair of the JSC said, “These next few months will be intensive and time consuming. However, it is critical that we work together to ensure that we reflect the needs of our communities and continue to work toward the development of appropriate programs and services.”

(Further information is available through the PTOs or the AHWS project team.) ■

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member of Friendship Centre of the OFIFC has also established a traditional healing circle for families with a focus on cancer and long term support to Aboriginal families affected by cancer.

The Fort Frances Friendship Centre established a Children and Youth program funded by the AHWS. The program was established to work with schools and social agencies to address teen violence in schools. The program focused on cultural teachings. A

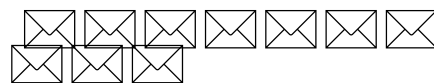
drumming and singing youth group was established and performs for community groups such as seniors homes, Girl Guides and as well as for local banks. The children and youth also provide craft workshops and presentations for non-Aboriginal services in the area.

“It's been a really good program, “ says Susan Barberstock, Healing and Wellness Program Developer at the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. “Their ‘drop in’ attendance has increased by over 100 participants.”

These are just some of the over 200 programs that have been implemented through the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

If you have a story you would like to share about how the AHWS has made a difference in your community, please contact Ed Bennett, Community Liaison Officer at (416) 326-7900. ■

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Stories and Tidbits

You are invited to send in stories or tidbits about healing and wellness activities for the newsletter (No announcements please). Send or fax your articles to:

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