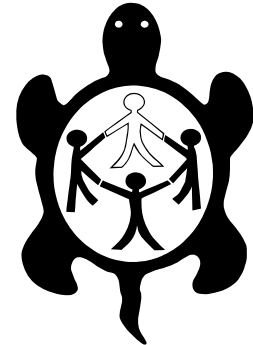


# HEALING & WELLNESS

THIS IS A NEWSLETTER OF THE ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY



Traditional foods are an important part of the Enaahtig diet.



The turtle represents Turtle Island because Turtle Island is Mother Earth. The people are holding hands because it means they will help each other with their problems. They are standing in a circle because it represents the circle of life. They could be our friends, families and strangers that either need help or are helping.

## Enaahtig Serves Up Wholesome Menu of Foods, Programs and Services

### A well-planned approach to nourishment

As host to a variety of residential and non-residential programs, there are many occasions to feed people at Enaahtig Healing Lodge. The Lodge has taken on this responsibility in a way that is both healthy for the clients and good for the health of the organization. From producing their own food, to ensuring wholesome menus, to offering programs about food and nutrition, Enaahtig has a well planned approach to nourishment.

Each spring, staff and community volunteers plant a large garden on the Enaahtig grounds. Produce from this garden supplies the kitchen with food throughout the summer and fall. The garden is also used as a community building tool; volunteers can work together towards the common goal of producing food for the Enaahtig community. Gardening further allows staff and parents to talk to children about the earth and what it offers. Enaahtig has a herb garden as well as a medicine garden that contributes to the many ceremonies that take place at the Lodge.

The in-house farmer and maintenance worker, Tom Leonard, raises beef and takes care of the chickens that supply meat to the Lodge, and Enaahtig has plenty of maple syrup on hand from their sugar bush of 2500 maple trees. The sugar bush has proven to be a very successful economic development venture for the organization. Last year, Enaahtig sold 170 litres of syrup.

In the midst of all this hard work, the Enaahtig community is able to celebrate their relationship with food through festivals and ceremonies, such as their annual harvest feast and their maple water ceremony.

CONT'D PAGE 2

**Healthy Eating and Nutrition** Healthy eating is an essential part of healing and wellness. Epidemic levels of diabetes, food insecurity and historical shifts in diet are just some of the reasons that programs to encourage and facilitate nutritious eating are well received in Aboriginal communities. Traditional foods and approaches can also greatly contribute to Aboriginal wellness. This issue features how AHWS funded programs are promoting healthy eating and nutrition.

## CONTENTS

### FEATURE

Healthy Eating and Nutrition 1-4

AHWS General Information 4-5

The Logo and The Artist 6

OMAA Community Health Outreach 6

Métis Nation of Ontario AHWS Programs 7

Call for Submissions 7

Sage Words 8

*In the Spirit of Healing & Wellness* is a bi-annual publication produced by the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. It offers news, updates and information about AHWS funded projects. We welcome submissions. For more information, please contact:

Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy  
880 Bay Street, 2nd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2B6  
Tel (416) 326-6905 Fax (416) 326-7934

AHWS Website: Under redevelopment



I believe that it is important to put good thoughts and feelings into the food while cooking. It is important to provide good whole foods and fresh ingredients. I constantly balance comfort food and healthy foods, always incorporating traditional foods and traditional ingredients where I can in the daily menus. I also take careful consideration of the special dietary needs of our participants.

Lisa Myers,  
Cook at Enaahtig Healing Lodge

FROM PAGE 1

A key player in the healthy environment at Enaahtig is their cook, Lisa Myers. She understands that people come to Enaahtig to be nurtured, and to replenish and renew themselves. Myers comments “Food provides comfort and energy. It nourishes people physically, but emotionally as well. People need to feel that they are being taken care of, which is important in a healing environment.” She points out that food creates a sense of home, and that people feel good when they know they can depend on someone to have their meals ready.

Myers appreciates the opportunity to engage with the people she cooks for at Enaahtig. The residential programs offer her a chance to determine how people are feeling on a day-to-day basis. She tries to introduce clients to new healthy foods such as legumes, but is responsive to how residents are feeling. After a hard day of emotional work, clients often like to have foods they are most familiar with. On such days, Myers might conclude “Tonight is a spaghetti night.”

On the program side, the children’s program worker Valerie Wood coordinates a monthly community kitchen, where participants decide on the menu they will cook together. This

program has been well attended by young mothers, and has lately been taken up by a number of grandmothers who enjoy the social benefits of collective cooking. Participants also appreciate going home with frozen portions of the food.

In April Enaahtig will offer their second two-week residential weight loss and diabetes program. This program involves education, low fat menus and physical activity such as yoga and walking. The last program included a guest lecture from a Naturopath. Eating disorders are another area of need that have been identified, but this would require more resources than are available at Enaahtig at present.

The staff at Enaahtig make an ongoing effort to work healthy eating into every aspect of regular programming. The successes are starting to show, extending to the lifestyles of clients after they have left the Lodge: “I had one mother tell me that since being here she always puts fresh fruit on the table.” Myers reports, “— because we always have a bowl of fresh fruit out.”

By way of example, Enaahtig is slowly filling the community with everything fresh and whole.

### From the Enaahtig Kitchen: Butternut Squash Soup

- 2 butternut squash
- 1 large Spanish onion
- 1 head of garlic
- 4 Macintosh apples
- 1 sweet potato
- 8 cups of chicken, vegetable or turkey stock
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon

Cut squash in half lengthwise and scoop seeds. Roast cut side down on a cookie sheet at 350° for 30 minutes or until squash is tender and soft. Peel off skin. Cut top off of garlic head and drizzle with oil and roast until garlic is paste like. Peel apples and sweet potato. Cut roughly along with the onion and roast with garlic. Squeeze all garlic from each clove. In a blender, purée garlic with squash, onion, apple, sweet potato, stock, cinnamon and maple syrup. Bring to a boil on stove top. Let simmer for 20 minutes add salt and pepper to taste.

- recipe from Lisa Myers

## NISHNAWBE-ASKI NATION:

# Addressing Food Costs and Shortages

Nutrition is key to the development of healthy children, and Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children workers are particularly challenged to see this happen. Over 36 of the 48 NAN communities are isolated, where food must be flown in. This means that perishable items, like fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products are extremely expensive.

Carmen Blais, the NAN A/HBHC coordinator gives an example: “I was up in North Spirit Lake last week, and bananas were \$4.00 a pound.” She points out that two litres of milk can cost \$4.00, adding, “It’s cheaper to buy pop than to buy milk.”

With type two diabetes on the rise among NAN children, many are surviving on diets dominated by pop and chips. “A lot of the children don’t have access to vegetables that we take for granted, such as fresh broccoli,” says Blais. A/HBHC workers are therefore introducing vegetables early on through baby food making courses. This can be

cheaper and more nutritious, as Blais notes, “A five pound bag of carrots makes a lot of baby food.” Workers have also purchased pre natal vitamins for pregnant mothers. They encourage breastfeeding through pre-natal classes and post-natal support.

It’s cheaper to buy pop than to buy milk in remote communities.

Community kitchens give parents access to nutritious food, as well as knowledge on preparing healthy meals. In these settings, A/HBHC workers promote local/traditional foods, such as wild meats and berries.

Some A/HBHC lay home visitors have noticed food shortages in the homes they visit. Communities are trying to address this through providing milk vouchers, hot breakfast and hot lunch programs for school aged children.

## SIX NATIONS:

# Food For Thought at Traditional Food Gathering

“You can never go back,” is a familiar saying that has woven its way into the fabric of modern times. Returning to the ways of our ancestors may not be feasible for any culture to do but according to Traditional Food Gathering coordinator, Sadie Buck, the Haudenosaunee people of Six Nations have the knowledge to do so. “We are a people based on the cycle of laws and nature. We have a relationship with the Earth and we have a responsibility to it. We have to use those things that the Earth brings forth for us,” she said.

Historically, the Haudenosaunee people are noted for the harmonious relationship they shared with the food cycle. The first Traditional Food Gathering, held at the Six Nations Tourism Building on January 11-12, demonstrated the endurance of this relationship through various workshops facilitated by local Elders.

The gathering which attracted over one-hundred participants was hosted by Six Nations agencies, Tsi Non:we Ionnakeratstha Ona:grahsta’ (The Birthing Centre – an AHWS-funded program), the Long Term Care/Home & Community Care Program and the Prenatal Nutrition Program.

Elder and Mohawk language teacher Ima Johnson led a workshop explaining the continued importance of corn as a nutritional staple in the Haudenosaunee diet and culture. She explained that the way to tell real Ongwehonweh corn from genetically altered hybrids is to count the rows of kernels since real Ongwehonweh corn only has eight rows of kernels. “Corn is sensitive,” she said. The best way to store corn is to pull back the husks, braid cobs together and hang them to dry. “We braid the cobs and hang them so the wind can blow through them easily and dry them.”

Hundreds of years ago, corn was a valued currency used in bartering prior to European contact. It was usually planted together in a trio with beans and squash in order to support and assist each other through the growing process. Hence, the three staples became known as the “three sisters.” Corn was the protector of the other plants and continues to remain the centerpiece of the Haudenosaunee agricultural system today.

Six Nations is a community that still enjoys a diet of corn soup and corn bread. They are fixed items on all local



Elder Ima Johnson explains the importance of corn in Haudenosaunee diet and culture

restaurant menus. The husks are still used by local artisans to make cornhusk dolls that are sold in local craft and gift shops.

Another local Elder, Norma General demonstrated the art of donut doll making and also talked about ‘berries’ as a source of diet. She explained that the Haudenosaunee philosophy of balance and harmony included food as well. “Food has energy properties and sacredness. We take it into our bodies with honour and respect,” she said.

As General prepared to put the donut dolls into the pan of grease, she revealed the trick to donut doll making is to have the grease at the right temperature so the dolls immediately float to the top and do not absorb any grease. After years of practice, General has mastered this technique.

She explained the importance of the wild strawberry in Haudenosaunee culture and ceremonies. “The strawberry is important to the ceremonies and is the berry that grows closest to the earth. When (they) show themselves, then we know others will follow,” she said.

Chronologically, the berries that grow after the strawberry are the raspberry, blueberry, thimbleberry and elderberry. General pointed out how the berries support one another and all are important in the job they do for our survival.

The participants told stories of

picking berries in their favourite berry patch and finding full elderberry bushes from which to pick. “We need to keep going back to pick them,” General said, “or they will leave us.” “Just like our old people, we have to keep asking them to tell us their stories, or they will forget.”

Topics ranging from planting food, the Traditional Food Guide, hunting & fishing and advantages of wild game in the diet were discussed over the two-day event.

Tsi Non:we Ionnakeratstha Ona:grahsta’ Executive Director, Ruby Miller, was pleased with the turnout and feedback received from the event. “The evaluations we received rated the gathering high,” she said.

The participants requested a more hands-on event in the future that would see them making corn bread or smoking fish. Miller announced at the conclusion of the gathering that another food gathering would be organized to accommodate people who wanted to roll up their sleeves and try making corn bread themselves.

Winter is a time of storytelling for Haudenosaunee. The first traditional food gathering definitely reflected this part of the culture as people shared their experiences with one another. “A big part of this conference was listening to stories,” Miller said.

## Health Access Centre

What's in a day for a dietician working out of an Aboriginal Health Access Centre? AHWS caught up with Leticia Santos, dietician for Wassay-Gezig Na-Nahn-Dah-We-Igamig, the Kenora Area Health Access Centre.

Because of the high incidence of diabetes among Aboriginal people, Santos spends a lot of time doing diabetes-related counselling and education. Diabetic clients come to the Health Access Centre through self-referral or through referrals from a CHN, CHR or doctor. Santos helps them adapt and adjust to appropriate meal plans.

**Type 2 diabetes is spreading, but that doesn't mean we can't do anything about it.**

Leticia Santos

Type 2 diabetes is spreading rapidly among Aboriginal people but Santos maintains that prevention is within our control through healthy eating and regular physical activity. Through workshops, group and individual counselling, she encourages people to develop healthy eating habits, telling them "Our body is like a wood stove. We need to burn the dry wood and the green wood to keep the heat going. Green wood represents protein, fats and oil, and extra vegetables. Starch, fruits and vegetables, milk and sugars are

food that is like the dry wood. When you add protein and fats to a meal (green wood) the sugar from the starchy foods (dry wood) will be slowly absorbed."

Balanced meals are as important as regular meals. Santos warns against the common fault of skipping meals and then overeating to compensate later. She also tells people to think of the four food groups as the legs of a chair: if one of the legs is missing we are likely to topple over!

Santos makes the general observation that people are low on fruits and vegetables, as well as milk and milk products in the communities she serves. She periodically does demonstrations on how to buy, prepare, and cook nutritious food. People are slow to make changes in their diet, so she encourages simple changes like adding frozen peas to a soup or macaroni or putting carrots or mushrooms in spaghetti as a way of including more vegetables in a diet. "You have to motivate and empower people," she says. "You have to know what stage they are at, and how to motivate them."

After having worked in a hospital for 16 years, Santos is enjoying doing home visits where she can see the whole picture surrounding a client's diet. Struggles with poverty and food insecurity play into the planning that is necessary for each client. "Maybe there is no food on the table, so you have to deal with the immediate needs. Sometimes you have to invite the social services people in the community to help."

Santos visits schools to talk about the

importance of nutritious snacks and the hazards of eating disorders. This work can be difficult, as she often sees children who don't eat breakfast and/or lunch. But the work with schools also allows her to inspire students to think about healthy eating, not only for themselves, but also in terms of how they can help others. "There are only 12 First Nations dietitians in Canada," she says, "I tell students to think about going into this field of study." With so many health problems related to poor eating, this is sage career advice to Aboriginal youth.

### About the Kenora Area Health Access Centre

Wassay-Gezig Na-Nahn-Dah-We-Igamig serves ten First Nations, as well as Métis and non-status Indians in the Kenora Tribal Area. The Centre brings together traditional and western approaches to health and healing.

The Health Centre workers help their clients in dealing with Lake of the Woods District Hospital, Social Services, Schools and the Judicial System. The Centre provides support to its clients through advocacy and cultural interpretation services. They also promote cultural pride and self-sufficiency for Native people.

## AHWS Updates

### Office bids goodbye to Darlene Roote

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy project office lost one of its longest serving employees when Darlene Roote left in February 2002 to explore new opportunities in her home community of Saugeen First Nation. Darlene was with the project office for more than six years and capably managed the administrative aspects of the office, including support to the Joint Management Committee. The staff deeply misses her operational knowledge, guidance and support that she provided this busy office. We wish Darlene all the best with her future endeavours.

### Draft Traditional Healing Guidelines

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) has received a number of requests for information and advice in developing guidelines and policies relating to accessing traditional healing services. A special sub-committee of the AHWS Joint Management Committee has been working for two

years to develop draft Traditional Healing Guidelines as a resource to AHWS-funded programs and services. This paper is designed to provide a framework to assist AHWS-funded projects to develop community-appropriate guidelines for traditional healing programs. It is intended that projects would use this framework in discussions with local Elders and traditional people, to determine suitable guidelines or policies for their community program.

At the February 13-14, 2002 Joint Management Committee, the Draft Traditional Healing Guidelines were endorsed and it was directed that they be distributed to all AHWS funded programs and services. It is hoped that the circulation of this paper will encourage AHWS funded programs and projects to develop guidelines so people will have increased access to traditional healing. It is not intended to direct policy or establish procedures for traditional healing, as practised by Aboriginal people in Ontario. All AHWS-funded programs and services should receive a copy of this resource document in the mail by June 2002.

# AHWS Performance Measures

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy implements performance measures in a number of different ways:

- at the local/project level through Annual Submissions and Year End Reports
- strategy-wide through the Performance Measures Plan and the Longitudinal Study

Using these measures provide an opportunity for projects to articulate their success by showing the impact the AHWS-funding is having on improving Aboriginal health and/or reducing family violence.

The *Strategy-wide Performance Measure Plan (PMP)* is part of Phase II of the Implementation Agreement. The Performance Measures Plan was expanded from fifty projects in 2000 to one hundred and fifty projects in 2001. Participating projects currently include the Aboriginal Health Access Centres, Healing Lodges, Shelters and one-worker projects sponsored by the Provincial Territorial Organizations under the Community Development Funding Stream (Community Wellness Workers, Health Outreach Workers and Community Services Workers). By June 15, 2002, participating projects will have completed and submitted the three main tools of the Strategy Wide Performance Measures Plan. By combining the data gathered through the **Participant Count** with the information gathered from the **Clients Benefits Questionnaire** and **Client Count**, it will be possible to estimate how many people are benefiting from AHWS-funded programs and services.

The AHWS office delivered Performance Measures Training

entitled “Defining Success” to a total of 160 community workers between November 2001 and February 2002 at seven day-long workshops across the province. Most AHWS-funded programs and workers indicate that their responsibilities include providing a variety of client support services, such as counselling, support groups, referrals, accompanying clients to appointments, advocating for other support services, and crisis intervention. At the training sessions, workers shared stories demonstrating the changes in health or behaviours that have occurred with Aboriginal community members as a result of their program. The Performance Measures Plan will help to capture the value of that work, and document the number of Aboriginal community members who are accessing AHWS-funded programs and services across the province.

Performance Measures Training is currently underway with specialized projects on a sectoral basis – Aboriginal Health Access Centres, Healing Lodges/Treatment Centres, Shelters and the Health Authorities. In addition to increasing understanding of the Strategy Wide Performance Measures Plan, these workshops draw upon the knowledge and experience of the programs to explore the question of what “success” or “positive outcomes” would mean in the context of their work.

The Strategy-wide Performance Measures Plan will continue to provide valuable information and an opportunity to document the need for and success of the AHWS-funded program and services in improving the health and wellness of community members.

## JMC Says Goodbye to Some Long Term Members

The JMC lost two long-term members this winter when both Jane Allen (ONAS) and Pat Reavy (MCSS) retired from public service. Both members had been with the Strategy since it's inception in 1992.

When asked what impressed them the most during their time with the Strategy, they talked about the cooperative effort that has been required to make it a success. As Jane points out, “People from diverse Aboriginal communities came and worked together for a common goal.” She talks about the significance of the way it was born: “...it was truly developed by Aboriginal people with the support of people in government.”

Pat remembers seeing consensus in action at many levels. She notes that the strategy began with real consultation among the Aboriginal population in Ontario, stating, “This is consistent with Aboriginal values, and a much better way to do community development.”

In terms of community successes, Pat mentions how quickly complex projects and initiatives got set up in communities, giving the example of the Health Access Centres. She adds, “Many of the community development initiatives were like a seed, and then other things would

begin to grow around them.”

Upon leaving, Jane remarks “It is one of the things I am most proud of in my work with the government. ...It shows if people have a common vision and work together it can have a big impact. It was an amazing experience, seeing the vision come together.”

**“I think the AHWS principles and the vision behind it are phenomenal – not just because of the morals and ethics, but because it makes incredible business sense.”**

**Pat Reavy, retiring JMC member.**

Jane is now working as a consultant in private practice and Pat is taking some time to decide what she will do next. She reports that it still feels like a long weekend. “I keep thinking there is a courier at the door” she laughs “bringing documents on a specialized project that I have to read.”

AHWS also says goodbye to Michele

Harding who has been the AHWS Manager since May 1999. Michele sees her time at AHWS as a period of “consolidating the AHWS base and refining its operations in preparation for the next phase.” This included sorting out a number of operational policies and developing new ones, implementing performance measures and a management plan, as well as facilitating training for local program workers. In the last few years, AHWS has also been able to enhance Nurse Practitioner funding and to establish an Aboriginal component of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program.

For Michele, the diversity of activities within AHWS is impressive, as is the commitment of many local participants and JMC members. “Most people try to do their best for the collective interest, not just their special vested interest, and it is not easy to keep the big picture in mind when you are faced with a multitude of pressing local demands.” She is pleased that the AHWS staff and Elder won an Amethyst award in 2000 for excellence in public service because “they went the extra mile for the community and the Strategy.” Michele is now working at the Ontario Women's Directorate.

SIX YEARS LATER:

## The Logo and the Artist



The turtle represents Turtle Island because Turtle Island is Mother Earth. The people are holding hands because it means they will help each other with their problems. They are standing in a circle because it represents the circle of life. They could be our friends, families and strangers that either need help or they are helping.

Six years after it was created, does the AHWS logo still fit? The Strategy has grown, but the ideas represented by the turtle drawing seem to be in keeping with the work of today.

The logo was originally created by Liza Hill, a thirteen year-old student at the I.L. Thomas School at Six Nations of the Grand River. Hill's teacher had responded to a call for submissions from the AHWS Joint Management Committee. In their quest for a logo, JMC had set up a contest for schoolchildren, assigning \$120.00 for the first prize.

When the submissions came in they were put up on a wall and voted on during a two-day JMC meeting. The Committee appreciated Hill's drawing, and the fact that it came with the accompanying text:

"The turtle represents Turtle Island because Turtle Island is Mother Earth. The people are holding hands because it means they will help each other with their problems. They are standing in a circle because it represents the circle of life. They could be our friends, families and strangers that either need help or they are helping."

AHWS talked to Liza Hill recently, who is now nineteen and a student at the Kawenni:io Gaweni:yo Immersion High School at Six Nations. In the six years that have passed, she has been able to benefit directly from the services of the Strategy, as she had a baby two years ago and attended pre-natal classes at the Tsi Non:we Ionakeratstha Ona:grahsta'

Maternal and Child Centre. Liza is busy raising her daughter and working on her grade twelve and OAC's, but still manages some time for artistic expression. She has been doing a lot of beading, and is helping her mother start a business that makes beaded corn.

When asked, "What does healing and wellness mean to you now?" Hill replies that she understands it to be "a lot of things" but mostly, "it is still about helping each other out."



Six years later, AHWS logo artist Liza Hill says that to her healing and wellness "is still about helping each other out."

## Community Health Outreach with OMAA

The Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA) receives funding under under Métis Community Services and the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. The Community Health Outreach Program provides services in response to community health needs. Some of the services provided include: improving services to homeless people, hospital visits, home visits, helping clients with housing needs, nutrition awareness, diabetes testing, health promotion and prevention workshops, counseling and assistance to cancer patients, and referrals. They also provide information and referrals to other programs such as Diabetes Education, HIV/AIDS, and Problem Gambling. The six Community Health Outreach Workers maintain satellite offices in Red Lake, Wabigoon, Thunder Bay, Chapleau, Cochrane and Iron Bridge. The Healthy Communities Initiatives Supervisor is located in Sault Ste. Marie, as is the Community Development Support Worker, who provides administrative support to the program.

Métis people in OMAA communities may also take advantage

of the Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children program for off-reserve Aboriginal families. The program is designed so that all Aboriginal children and families have access to community services, supports and information resources. In home visits, referral services, workshops and community awareness campaigns, workers address positive parenting, health before pregnancy, FAS/FAE, smoking, and healthy sexuality.

OMAA sponsors Community Action for Children in selected communities. CAPC is funded by Health Canada. These child-oriented programs include the following services: cultural and traditional teachings, nutrition support (hot lunches), weekly parenting classes, CPR for babies, referral services and visiting Elder programs. Aboriginal family home visitors for OMAA through the Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children program are located in Sault Ste. Marie, Renfrew, Bancroft, Windsor, Wawa, Chapleau, Timmins, Thunder Bay, and Dryden.

► For more information on OMAA communities initiatives, please call 1-800-423-3361.

# MNO AHWS Program Addresses a Variety of Community Needs

The Métis Nation of Ontario has been delivering Aboriginal Healing and Wellness (AHWS) programming since 1996. Janet Harnden and Kim Sicker described the AHWS program for us while they were in Toronto for meetings. Janet, the AHWS Lead for the MNO, is based in Sault Ste. Marie and Thessalon. Kim is the Health Program Supervisor, and works out of the MNO Head Office in Toronto. The office will be relocating to Ottawa in early June.

The MNO has four Health sites in Ontario: Midland, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and Fort Frances. The offices are located in the North because Métis people tend to be more isolated there. The sites are located in MNO community chartered council offices, which are open from 8:30 – 4:30 Monday through Friday. The AHWS coordinators are: Carol Baker, Midland (705-526-6335); Jason Jamieson, North Bay (705-474-0734); Michele Dale, Sault Ste. Marie (705-942-9960); and Tiffany Zub, Fort Frances (807-274-1386). Walk-in clients are always welcome.

The criteria for all the AHWS sites are the same; however, program delivery and priorities vary according to the needs of the community served. Initially, the goal of the MNO AHWS program was to facilitate the prevention of family violence and child abuse and neglect. The MNO has broadened its scope to provide services that encompass a holistic approach to service delivery, promoting the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well being of Métis people. Through education, prevention, and early intervention, the AHWS program addresses prenatal infant mortality, health risks and complications from diabetes, nutrition and fitness, health and safe environments for children, healthy lifestyles, stress management, alcohol and related health problems, and access to government programs for persons with disabilities.



From left to right: MNO President Tony Belcourt, AHWS Health Service Officer Tiffany Zub, MNO Co-Chair France Picotte, AHWS Team Leader Janet Harnden, AHWS Health Service Officer Michele Dale, AHWS Health Service Officer Jason Jamieson.

The staff works in the community to provide client advocacy and referral services and to form linkages with other health-related agencies. In addition, the staff provides outreach visits to those who are isolated or sick, facilitates educational workshops and healing circles, and provides general support to Métis families at risk.

Because the services are provided to the community at no cost, volunteers are important. Many MNO Senators volunteer their time to assist at community gatherings. Senators are vital to the Métis community's healing needs because they provide support and share their knowledge and life experience with the younger generation.

The MNO AHWS programs have formed many linkages and partnerships with other agencies, including Indian Friendship Centers, health units, family service counseling and treatment centers, and a variety of Aboriginal-

specific organizations.

According to Kim and Janet, the greatest need is with young families, especially those with children under age six. Poverty is an important issue for these clients, as well as a need for education. Often these clients are referred to other agencies for assistance and additional support. Diabetes is on the rise among Métis citizens, and there is a need to increase awareness regarding the importance of healthy living and nutrition. Many Métis people with disabilities have benefited from the AHWS programs through easier access to government assistance and equipment.

► For more information, contact **Kim Sicker** toll free at: 1-888-466-6684, or **Janet Harnden** at (705) 842-6000. The toll free office number for Ottawa is 1-800-263-4889.

## Call for Submissions!

The AHWS newsletter is seeking submissions for upcoming issues. Please send any articles, poems, pictures, teachings or other AHWS program-related material that you would like to share. If you know of something you would like us to write about, please let us know! AHWS newsletter information should be directed to:

**Kim Anderson** (519) 823-2614 Fax: (519) 823.0179 Kim\_Anderson@sympatico.ca

# Sage Words Nourishing our Whole Selves

An interview with Shirley Kendall

Shirley Kendall (Mohawk/Ojibway) is the Manager of Prevention Services at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. She holds a diploma in Applied Holistic Nutrition (Certified Nutritional Consultant).

AHWS: Where did you get your interest in working on food issues?

SK: From my own self-healing. Like many people in the Aboriginal community, I was a crown ward and introduced early on to the child welfare system. When this happens, a lot of things aren't nurtured or nourished in your life. As you become older, things that people consider psychosomatic and should go away begin to surface and manifest in your body as very real ailments and illnesses. That's where I ended up in my early twenties; they manifested in the gastro intestine, which is the family basket area. That is your family area.

I was having debilitating pain in my stomach and it just kept increasing as the years went on. When I went to the doctor, she said that I should just get used to it because it's part of aging. I started reading every alternative thing I could get my hands on. I made myself physically well, largely through changes in diet including the elimination of pork, alcohol, and white flour pasta. I adopted a natural diet including organic produce and animal products. When I was able to

do that, it came in really rapid succession to address the spiritual and emotional component of where I was on my journey toward wellness.

If you look at the health system, there is so much money that is poured into it at the point of disease. Disease has six stages to it. You have a little inkling in your body and you go to the doctor and they say that it's nothing but aches and pains. Many of our medicine people have knowledge through spirit. The majority of people don't live in their bodies, but if you are tuned in to your body you can meet things head on.

I see my body as this valuable home that I've been given. It is that which sets everything in motion to do my work. If you don't nourish that, how can your soul grow and evolve?

My vision to work with nutrition came when I was working at Wasagamik [a residence for people visiting Toronto for hospital services]. I saw people who were in such poor health at a young age, and I knew a good portion of it was from nutrition.

When I was watching the horrors on the news last year with children sniffing gas and addictions, nutrition was not addressed. The diet has changed so rapidly that we are now in the fourth generation of a deficiency of the essential fatty acids in the body. One of the long term side affects if you don't eat fish or dark greens is depression and a

sense of hopelessness for the future. It's key. We wonder why obesity is rampant and wonder why we have diabetes. The paradigm has to change for Aboriginal people.

AHWS: How do you incorporate nutrition in the work at NCFST?:

SK: We look at obesity and the links to poverty. I tell clients what they're putting into their body has very few nutrients. You are virtually starving from the inside out. It's your cells that are starving. The more you eat the foods that are full of dense nutrients, the less you are going to need.

We also have cooking classes involving holistic grains and fresh produce. We've slowly been changing the food that we put out; involving clients in the cooking. We explain how it benefits the body and your children, your behaviour and how to go forward in life. The clients are now at the point where they are ready to see it.

## Correction

In the cover story of our last newsletter we misprinted the phone number for Carmen Blais, the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children program coordinator. She can be reached at (807) 623-8228.

## ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

880 Bay St., 2nd Floor | Toronto, Ontario M7A 2B6

Tel: (416) 326-6905 | Fax: (416) 326-7934 | website under redevelopment

**AHWS Manager**  
(currently vacant)

**Administrative Assistant/Reception**  
(416) 326-6905

**Financial Officer**  
Mary Porzio (416) 326-6904  
Mary.Porzio@css.gov.on.ca

**Policy Analyst and Interim Manager**  
Kathy Wakeford (416) 326-6907  
Kathy.Wakeford@css.gov.on.ca

**Community Liaison Officer**  
Ed Bennett (416) 326-7900  
Edward.Bennett@css.gov.on.ca

**Program Consultant**  
Andrea (A.J.) Williams (416) 325-1510  
Andrea.Williams@css.gov.on.ca

**Program Consultant**  
Martin John (416) 326-6902  
Martin.John@css.gov.on.ca

**Interim Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children Coordinator**  
Valerie Packota (416) 326-6903  
Valerie.Packota@css.gov.on.ca