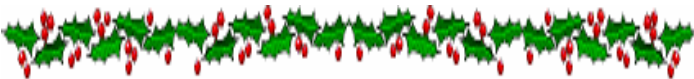




Merry Christmas
December 2009

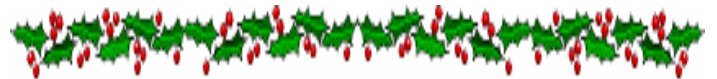


2009 Conference a Success!

Well, our provincial training event is over for another year and if the evaluation comments are anything to go by, it was a very good conference.

Here are a few comments taken from the final evaluation report prepared by the outside evaluation team.

- With each year the conference becomes more welcoming and fulfilling. Boosting my spirits. Meeting together renews my ambitions to do good work.
- The sessions were all good but it is good to be able to meet with the other programs to share our experiences
- The stories, the sharing, caring, passion and dedication and inspiration. This is a whole help in our work.
- This conference has been an excellent event. I like the idea that the practitioners have time to work on their needs to be able to go back to their programs with a feeling of renewal
- Therapeutic, encouraging, beneficial
- Reconnecting with colleagues and reconnecting with Mide spirituality; new learning's and making important new contacts



For those who were not at the conference, the gentleman with Ellen in the picture below is Armand McKenzie, the incoming Executive Director of the ONLC. Ellen welcomed him warmly at the conference.



At the Annual General Meeting on Saturday afternoon, the new board of the ONLC was elected. The new 2010-11 Board of Directors for the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition comprises:

- Lynn Mooney - President
- Kirk Fournier - Vice President
- Clara Corbiere - Secretary
- Darlene King - Treasurer
- Peter Fergus-Moore - Director

One of the special things that happened at the conference was a celebration in honour of Ellen's retirement in March 2010 which was held after dinner on Saturday evening. Ellen was totally surprised to see all her family already seated in the dining room when she arrived for dinner and here they are.



Front Row: Ellen and John Paterson
 Middle Row: Theresa (niece), Audrey (sister), Fran (sister)
 Back Row: Al (son-in-law), Martin (nephew), Cindy (daughter), Graham (nephew), Cheryl (niece), Tom (brother-in-law).

One of the highlights of the evening came when the current Board of Directors presented Ellen with a beautiful, hand embroidered quilt made for the occasion by Bernice Ireland. On the quilt a border of embroidered satin flowers framed the names of all the programs and below that the words:

Chi Miigwetch Ellen

For your years of dedication as Executive Director of the ONLC



More pictures from the conference will be posted on the ONLC website and if you have any pictures you would like to share, please send them to the ONLC office. Please remember we must have the permission of anyone shown in the pictures before we can use them publicly.

During the evening Kirk Fournier hosted a 'Roast 'N Toast' for Ellen and he invited anyone who wanted to either roast or toast Ellen to come forward. Many came up and told stories of their

experiences with Ellen over the years, some funny and many touching. Among them was a very special presentation made by Cathy Noganosh, on behalf of the Wasauksing First Nation Learning Program in Parry Sound. Cathy presented Ellen with a beautiful Eagle feather in a sweet grass basket woven especially for it by Irene Makadebin, an Elder from Sagamok First Nation. The fact that Cathy has since left the program made this presentation even more special. Ellen's face says everything you need to know about the power of this gift.



On Sunday morning Katherine Shine, who had been given the ONLC's Eagle feather to hold during her time as a board member, passed the feather on to Darlene King who had just been elected to the board. Unfortunately we don't have a picture of that but the poem below was written by Terry Plain from the Aamjiwnaang program in Sarnia to honour both events.

Eagle Feather

A precious gift
 Given to the people,
 Shared through the great Creator of all.
 The Power of its awesome roots.
 Humbling to the touch,
 Healing us.

By Terry Plain

**Dedicated to the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition*

2010 is right around the corner!

The 2010 provincial conference has tentatively been scheduled for Oct 28-31 and will likely be held at Kempenfelt again.

If you are interested in serving as a volunteer member of the Advisory Group for the next conference let the ONLC know. Planning will begin early in the new year.

Kelly's Journey

During a project update session at the conference Jonathan Baum introduced Kelly Anderson, a learner from the Sioux Hudson Literacy Council program, who shared her story.

For those who could not be with us at the conference, and for all those who wanted a copy of Kelly's touching story, here is the story of **Kelly's Journey**.

Hi, my name is Kelly Anderson. I am a 32-year-old First Nations woman from Lac Seul First Nation in Northwestern Ontario. I was born and raised in a small town named Sioux Lookout, Ontario. Although I have had many struggles and obstacles to overcome, I am in the process of furthering my education and improving my life with the help and support of many people. I first came to Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council to regain my confidence of going back to school, and to help give my life some direction on how to reach my goals. To reach this point, I had to examine many parts of my life and the choices I made that brought me here.

At a very young age, I was exposed to a life of alcohol, drugs, teen pregnancy, and abuse. When I first began drinking and doing drugs I was 16 years of age. It was during this time I began my way down a destructive path. I became a high school drop-out, starting getting in trouble with the law, and began hating the world and people around me. Within these first few months, I was to learn of my first pregnancy with my daughter Mary, which was shortly followed by my second pregnancy with my son Arn.

In these first few years of very young adulthood, I found myself, as a teen mother in an abusive relationship, trying to cope with an alcoholic and drug addicted spouse. Although I was now attending high school full-time during the day, and had a full-time job in the evenings, I was still screaming inside to get out, and found myself lost and confused with no one to turn to for guidance. I found myself searching for people to fill an empty void in my life.

It was during this time, I had completely lost control of my life. My children were taken away, my marriage had ended and I started going in and out of different relationships. Never really knowing I was getting physically, emotionally, and mentally abused, which in turn affected my spirituality of who I was. As I was engulfed into this downward spiral, I was greeted with the loss of my mother.

Losing my mother in a tragic car accident, I began to feel a lot of emotions I never expected. All of them ranging in severity from loneliness, depression, and abandonment which was fuelled by the anger, frustration, and hatred at the people involved around my mother's sudden passing. I found myself unable to feel or think of anything. I was in shock and did not know how to pick up the pieces in my life. Not knowing how to or where to start, I began drinking and doing drugs even more to kill the heart-wrenching pain I felt.

As I learnt how to become a functional working alcoholic and drug addict, where I would work all day, and party every

night. I started turning to people around me for support, as I tried with many unsuccessful attempts of treatment centers, detoxification centers, counseling, and never really knowing how I was holding down my job, my residence, and my sanity. All I knew at this time was that I was going into an early grave with no remorse of what I was doing to myself or to the people around me and how and what they were feeling from my actions. It was at this point I began searching for the family I thought I had lost throughout my struggles.

Shortly after my 30th birthday, I went and visited my older brother Kevin in Winnipeg, Manitoba. When I arrived, we started talking about our mother along with the events and circumstances that changed our lives and the direction our lives took. We both knew we had lost a great deal in our lives and both of us had to change drastically to heal ourselves and move towards a path of healing. It was during this visit that I decided I needed a change in my life, and before I knew it, I was packed and moving to Winnipeg two days later to begin a new life, still not knowing where I was going. Once again, I soon noticed that I began to seek out people who were also alcoholics and drug addicts.

New to the city and not knowing the dangers around me, I found this new life exciting and unfamiliar and was in awe with my surroundings. Since I had no income or a place to stay in Winnipeg, I began to seek employment at a call centre and moved into a rooming house, trying to survive on my last paycheck from Ontario. Soon after my move to the city, my brother and I began to argue over the past and what happened to us. I noticed I still had a lot of anger within me that I never dealt with, but somehow managed to stuff it down so I didn't feel it or it did not affect my everyday life. Not knowing, I was headed towards my own disaster.

Within a few months and without any warning, I found myself in a situation with life changing circumstances. Because of my proximity and involvement in the alcohol and drug world in a new and strange environment, on my way home one evening, I was brutally assaulted by six gang members well known in the city. I woke up in the hospital, with no recollection how I got there and unable to see. I later found out I had four surgeries to my left eye which was eventually enucleated and had to be fitted with a prosthetic eye. I spent about a month in two different hospitals throughout this ordeal. With no one ever knowing where I was or what had happened to me.

Going through the ordeal was really surreal for me. It was like it didn't really happen. The thoughts and images racing through my mind were scary, frightening, and at times explosive to me. All I thought about was the fear of getting assaulted again by those people, would they recognize me, do they know where I live, were they going to kill me. I thought about my kids, family and friends and began worrying about their safety and lives. Especially when I came out of a week drug-induced coma and was unaware of my left eye gone, due to the bandages wrapped around my head, and not getting told what had happened to me, until two weeks later. It was here I felt truly alone and for the first time in my life genuinely afraid of my future and well-being.

Never knowing why it happened or why it had occurred to me. I was left wondering with the questions, "Why me?", and "What did I do to deserve this?" Blaming everyone around me, thinking it was their fault and they were to blame for my misfortunes. During my hospitalization for this short time I became a person unknown to myself to the point of isolating myself from the world and my family and friends. Early on I spent time alone crying, eventually becoming suicidal from being depressed. When I was not doing this, I was constantly sleeping all day and refused to do my daily living activities.

Being diagnosed with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), depression, and insomnia from my hospitalization, I could not leave my house unless I had two or three people with me, my neighbors would mostly do my grocery shopping, and when I did leave my house it was only to go to my counseling sessions or doctor's appointments. It was through this experience, I was forced to take a good look at myself. I soon found myself trying desperately to regain control of my life.

Here I was a 30 year old woman, no job, no education, no future as I looked from the outside in, wishing I had the things everyone else had in life. Not realizing I had the tools to help myself if I had just looked in the right places and asked for help along the way. As I stand here today and now realize why I never saw any of this? It was because I was not ready to see it and did not want any help from no one, as I thought nobody cared about me.

My proximity and involvement with the alcohol and drug world would once again attack me, in the form of three people, and I spent about a week in the hospital. Although, this time I had the support around me, I once again did not notify anyone about my whereabouts until I got home from the hospital. All the thoughts and emotions from the first assault came flooding back and all I could do was relive it in my mind and think about all the progress I had made. This is when I realized that I really had to change my life and could not go back to the place where I have struggled so hard to leave.

It was during these last two years that made me realize what I had to offer the world. Through, all the heartache, tears, disappointments, triumphs and happiness I now find my self among people who care greatly about me and my life, and that they are right. I do have something to offer the world. I was a victim but now I know I am a survivor, and no one can take that away from me.

Through the help of Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council in Sioux Lookout and the EAGLE Urban Transition Centre in Winnipeg, I was able to regain myself and my life to fulfill a dream I never thought was possible. It was through their guidance, understanding, and belief in me that I could do it that made it all possible. Without their help in this transition in my life, I never would have begun my new life or became the woman I know today. I am now a Health Care Aide/Unit Clerk Graduate from the Urban Circle Training Centre.

Thank you for listening to my story.

By: Kelly Anderson
November 2009



On Sunday morning we were privileged to have Shy-Anne Hovorka, a very gifted Aboriginal musician from Thunder Bay, deliver a most inspiring presentation. It was a true gift of love which overwhelmed everyone who was lucky enough to be there.

Her words and stories were inspiring, heartfelt, painfully honest, and punctuated by beautiful vocals which were backed up by Jordan Elcheson on Guitar.

Karen J. Pheasant, a research consultant working on one of the ONLC projects, was so moved by the experience that she wrote the following piece and sent it to ONLC for this newsletter.

I Am Unlovable

She sat there with a body that people—men and women, spend billions of dollars to achieve, with her delicate frame topped with flowing dark ember locks of wavy hair. As she spoke, her audience listened attentively, with glistening eyes—almost unbelieving of her heart-rending personal experiences.

She shared how she waited on the other side of the world, for her sweat heart to arrive to finally join her, after months of separation. Their phone call the previous evening had been breathless and passionate, leaving her a sleepless night awaiting his arrival and to be in his arms again. She waited and waited at the airport, finally calling North America fearing the worst had happened to him enroute to the airport, to find out from his mother, that "yes, he did leave to see his girlfriend, and it's not you". One after another boyfriend experience, she continued on with what seemed eternity, telling another story of desertion and deceit and wondered "why". She cried and cried, and recalled the stories of her students, the one's that say "no one wants me", she could identify, she had spent time in the system as a foster child wondering about "no one wants me", and asking herself why am I unlovable and untouchable. Now, as an adult, she still asked herself, why "no one wants me".

The guitar strummed as her voice soothed with the release of the words "unlovable and untouchable". As she sang, the bodies in the room relaxed from the tension of her emotional story. Her next line was a familiar line, which many of us share, "run, run, run, while you can". Her song and story admit to the protective wall she built to protect herself. Her engaging voice and emotion filled song came to silky end as the guitar was placed back in its case.

The intimate audience of the 2009 Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC) conference members sat with disbelief that this 120 lb beautiful gal could be rejected. Her face and body was young and beautiful, but her wisdom and approach to life was established and reflective of her true beauty, her gifts that were

bestowed to her by the creator—her gift of music, through her song writing and singing.

Shy-Anne Hovorka (www.shy-anne.com) had arrived to the ONLC conference, the previous evening from the Aboriginal People's Choice Award in Winnipeg, where she was nominated last year for best new artist, best song writer, and single of the year. Wearing her beaded Black Thunder Bird necklace, that reflects her name, and comfortable in her jeans and sweater, she revealed layers of personal stories that struck a chord with each and every audience member. Her intimacy is not only revealed for the cozy crowd of several dozen, but also her website reflects her personal integrity, as expressed; *The biggest dream for Shy-Anne is that her music will help others understand life, and realize they are not alone. Especially the children that are in foster care. She also wants Educators, Parents, Foster Parents, Children's Aid and care-givers know how much they can impact one life, and how that one life can in turn hopefully impact many others in a positive way thanks to their love and determination.*

After her song "Unlovable" ends, she shares with the audience that those experiences were learning lesson's from her relationships, and realized it had to do with her choices and to not settle for less, and that we are deserving of better; that the building of walls wasn't a part of healing, that the walls must be taken down and be open to be loved.

Shy-Anne's song reminds me of many First Nations, who have lived a life of bare existence and are happy with the soup bone and not ever expecting the Prime Rib dinner. As long as there are enough potatoes and turnips to put into the soup, my mother would be happy.

"These songs are my life. My life is in my music." says Shy-Anne, "To bare your heart to perfect strangers is hard to do, so I have been reluctant to share my music in the past. But music is meant to be shared and listened to. I hope that there are people out there who can relate and feel through my music the way that I do."

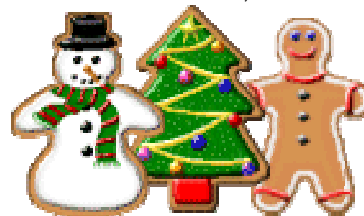
Likewise, the 2009 ONLC conference was about passionate, committed individuals who devote their time, energy and devotion as literacy practitioners; bringing their enthusiasm to each of their learners, with intentions to bring a world of better choices and a life that is not about settling for less. Hats off to Shy-Anne Hovorka and the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (www.onlc.ca) who bring love to all those, and know there are none that are unlovable.

Karen can be reached at kj_pheasant@msn.com or www.karenjpheasant.com



Learner Submissions

Articles from Learners are truly the icing on the cake, or in this case icing on the Christmas cookies, for our newsletter.



Deadline for the next newsletter is March 12th, 2010

Hello my name is Chenoa. I am 19 years old I have been attending the Aamjiwnaang Alternative & Continuing Education Program for one year this December. I am currently working on my grade 12 diploma almost completed with five credits left. With the help of the teachers and staff of this program I am getting closer to completing my education and getting my diploma and should be moving to higher education sometime next year. One of the most important things that I have learned within this past year is don't waste time. The longer you wait of finish school the longer it takes and the more you forget. So stay in school have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!

By: Chenoa
Literacy & Basic Skills Student
Aamjiwnaang Alternative & Continuing
Education Program, Sarnia



Article from the

Niagara Regional Native Centre

Literacy & Basic Skills has had a very busy fall and we are looking forward to a packed program for the coming winter too. We had a workshop for our learners on Cheque Writing and Balancing Your Bank Account to help learners keep to a budget. Many found that they could keep better control of their money by making sure they always knew the balance in their account. We also found that cheque writing is not always something everyone knows how to do, and we practiced cheque writing for rent payments and other expenses.

We had fun with the Budgeting workshop for our learners, exploring how much money we spend on items we really don't need each month. We talk about buying bottled water and how

much we could save by buying a water bottle and drinking tap water kept in the fridge each day or by buying a case of pop instead of buying one at a time. Learners explored ways to save money and help with their budget by packing a lunch, buying at discount stores and shopping wisely. We went online to coupon websites and printed coupons for items they had on their grocery lists, learning which sites had more coupons.

We took a tour of the St. Catharines Museum at Lock 3 in the afternoon. Learners had fun learning about the history of St. Catharines, the Welland Canal and local heroes. There was even the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame for the learners to tour. Several of our learners have moved on to take the Prep-GED Course and will be ready to write their GED Test in February 2010. We wish them luck!

Christmas Open House

Literacy & Basic Skills and Employment will be having an Open House Holiday Party on December 16th from 12:00—3:00 pm to celebrate the season. Lots of goodies, fruit punch and some cool presents for our learners will be the order of the day!

We hope our learners will enjoy their vacation and spending time with their loved ones.

Learners will look at making some New Year's goals that will move them forward and make 2010 a very special year for all!

Marie & Rebecca wish everyone a very Happy Holiday Season and the very best in the New Year!

Upcoming Courses

Beginning November 19 to December 15, 2009 the Niagara Regional Native Centre will be running a Basic Computer Course from 6:00—9:00 pm for 8 weeks and will run it again from February 4, 2010 to March 25, 2010 on the same day, Wednesday and the same times. This is a course for people who have little or no experience using the computer. You will learn how to turn on the computer, set up an email account, send and receive email, use the Internet, write a letter using Microsoft Word, or use Excel Spreadsheet program, create a Power Point presentation or use Publisher.

This December we will also be running a Cayuga language course for anyone interested in learning to speak that language. Dates and times will be posted so keep a look out for that!

We will also be running a Life Skills Course to motivate and help with self-esteem. This course will begin in January and run for 12 weeks. Sign up early!

Article submitted by Marie Belliveau



**Wishing everyone a safe and enjoyable
Holiday Season and all the best for the New Year!!**



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