



Thunder Bay **URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY**

Winter 2013 Issue #2
What's NEWS

TBUAS UPDATE

The Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy will be updating its community plan.

In 2003, the Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy Pilot was launched with a focus on child and family poverty issues. A community plan was developed to identify factors contributing to the poverty levels of Aboriginal families and children. An extensive community review and consultations took place identifying the gaps and barriers in services and solutions were identified to address these issues. As a result of the review, the Strategic Community Action Plan; "Circle of Certainty" was completed. The priority areas identified were the following: food and shelter, information services; children's programming (7-13 years of age); and life skills and family supports. A proposal "Neighbourhood Capacity Building Project" was developed to achieve these goals that would support the needs of the urban Aboriginal community in the city of Thunder Bay.

In 2007 the UAS program was extended and the Thunder Bay UAS determined the need to update the community plan to reaffirm the priorities set out in 2004.



Following a series of focus group meetings, key priorities were identified:

- The need to continue the program and services under the Neighbourhood Capacity Building Project emerged throughout the focus group discussions.
- To strengthen community capacity by engaging Aboriginal families to gain leadership and organizational skills so that they can do their own planning and identify their own needs within their neighbourhoods.
- To develop a one stop shop and a cultural centre.
- Expand services to include youth between the ages of 14-17 years of age by offering mentorship programs within in the schools as well as counselling services.
- Work with employment groups to facilitate partnerships to promote job training and skills to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.
- Strengthen connections with other community agencies; enhance existing partnerships.
- Create new opportunities for the ongoing sustainability of the UAS.

What do you think the key priorities of TBUAS should be moving forward?

TBUAS will be hosting a series of focus groups to gain this valuable information. Please visit our website at www.uasthunderbay.ca and our facebook page to see upcoming dates. You can also send your input and recommendations to: fwesley@shkoday.com

A Community Forum to discuss the next chapter of the TBUAS will be held on December 12, 2012 at the Italian Cultural Centre, from 9:30AM - 4:00PM.

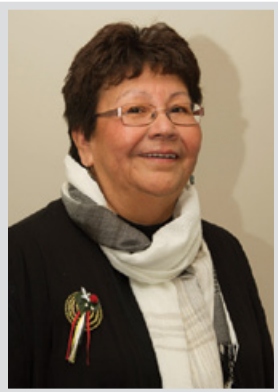
Community leaders, agencies and families are encouraged to attend. There will be prizes awarded to families in attendance including a chance to win Christmas Dinner.

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- Meet Michelle McGuire - Aboriginal Circle Coordinator

TBUAS PLANNER BLOG

Youth Leadership Wanted



In Thunder Bay more than half of our Aboriginal population is under the age of 25. As TBUAS has identified in the past, youth initiatives are a key priority in our strategic plan and moving forward. Youth are the future of this community and need community support to guide them. When you give youth your respect, attention,

support and time, you help them to develop new positive opportunities.

In the New Year, TBUAS is hoping to announce a new joint venture with Leadership Thunder Bay. Youth are looking for leadership development, support and skills for the future. An Aboriginal Youth Leadership Pilot Program based on the Leadership Thunder Bay model, can provide just that. Our idea is to have each participant supported and mentored through a curriculum that will be based on Aboriginal traditions.

This will help Aboriginal youth find their way on local boards and committees, engage new voices in the community, and even connect young people to their roots; really giving them that extra boost to become leaders in addition to participants.

We know Aboriginal youth in Thunder Bay face many challenges, but rather than focusing on the negatives, we must start to focus on developing assets. This pilot program can help Aboriginal youth contribute to their community in a positive productive way, while increasing self-esteem and confidence.

Mentoring has been a part of Aboriginal culture for centuries as families have always been guided by their mentors-our Elders. Perhaps it is time to take a lesson from our past and place more of a focus on this traditional method to help our youth succeed. This new pilot program can give our youth access to strong role models and hear first hand from local Elders and teachers.

Right now the status of this potential project with Leadership Thunder Bay really depends on funding. Keep your fingers crossed for us, and hopefully we will be seeking participants to take part in this exciting new venture in the New Year.

Frances Wesley
TBUAS Planner

Keep an eye out for regular blog posts from Frances Wesley on the new TBUAS Website. ■

ACTION CIRCLE PROFILE

Justice Circle: Waa bi zhe shi (Marten) Clan

CHAIR: Roseanna Hudson

Long ago, warriors fought to defend their village or hunting territory. The people of the Marten Clan were the hunters, food gatherers and warriors who defended their people. The members of this Clan were known as master strategists.

WHAT WE DO:

The Justice Circle's overall goal is to ensure Aboriginal people have access to justice and to reduce the percentage of Aboriginal people in conflict with the law by developing a better understanding and trust within the system by aligning practices to reflect Aboriginal culture.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

October 2010: Hosted Community Justice Forum, "Engaging Change – Being Part of the Solution"

This event brought together justice advocates, front line workers, lawyers, law enforcement people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community agencies, government representatives and concerned community members. Discussion was on current justice challenges, what is working and what are the gaps. Some key challenges articulated were poverty, racism and criminalization of addictions. Access to treatment options, programs for youth and options to incarceration were some priority needs identified.

June 2011: Hosted visit to Thunder Bay by Jonathan Rudin of Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto

Mr. Rudin provided TBUAS Circles with background on the R. v. Gladue case and shared on the experiences when developing the current Gladue Courts in Toronto.

February 2012: Hosted meeting with community elders

This gathering was a dialogue between the Justice Circle and community elders to explore how conflict and justice was handled traditionally in communities.

December 2011 to March 2012: Ah Wa Neyn Nin (Who Am I?) Project

The project was developed by the Justice Circle and delivered by the Ontario Native Women's Association. Objective was to engage and empower Aboriginal youth at risk and youth involved in the justice system through providing cultural supports and programming such as regalia making, traditional teachings and drum making. Some of the 29 youth participants had the opportunity to introduce the regalia they designed and made, when they took part in the Lakehead University Pow Wow on March 17, 2012.

May 2012: Visit to Gladue Courts in Toronto

Justice Circle members visited the Gladue Courts in Toronto, to get a first hand look at how they are being conducted.

October 2011 to October 2012: Meetings with local judiciary

Meetings have been held between the Justice Circle and local judiciary to dialogue on alternatives to incarceration for Aboriginal people in conflict with the law and on implementing Gladue principles.

CURRENT PROJECT:

The Justice Circle is proposing to complete a mapping of First Nation communities in Northwestern Ontario, which will highlight available community services and resources. ■

TBUAS IN THE COMMUNITY



Overwhelming Response to ID Clinics

The Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic is overwhelmed by the response they have experienced to a new project they launched last May. The clinic has been hosting drop-in ID clinics to help people obtain basic identification such as birth certificates and social insurance numbers.

To date, the clinic has helped over 150 people acquire documentation. "The last time we held the ID clinic there was a huge lineup," says Beth Ponka of Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic. "We see a lot of mothers with their children coming in, some of whom lost their documents when fleeing an unsafe situation at home."

Basic ID is critical to access many programs and services including health care, social assistance, education, and obtaining Indian status. Clinic staff have heard stories where people have been denied basic services and there have been many positive outcomes as a result of obtaining basic ID for people. One of the first families to come to the ID clinic was a mother with three high-school aged children. She explained that her three children had all been excluded from school for the last year for not having proper identification. "It is devastating to see that families fall through the cracks like this," says Ponka. The clinic was able to get the birth certificates for the children so that they would be able to return to school next semester.

Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic provides the ID clinics with assistance from a variety of partners in the community. Bay Credit Union provides funding for bus tickets and refreshments, while the District of Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board provides reimbursements for the fees of clients eligible for reimbursement through Ontario Works. Service Ontario has provided staff to assist with completing birth certificate applications and Service Canada has provided staff to assist with replacing Social Insurance Number cards. Additional fees are paid by the legal clinic through a housing security program of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario.

The ID Clinic is available to anyone who is living with low income. You do not have to be a previous or existing client of the legal clinic. For further information please contact Beth Ponka at (807) 766-7093. ■

MEET ELIZABETH MOORE

Aboriginal Circle Coordinator

WHAT IS YOUR NEW ROLE AT THE TBUAS?

As the Aboriginal Circle Coordinator my main role will be to provide leadership in addressing the issues of family poverty and the challenges faced by Aboriginal children in the City of Thunder Bay. I have been assigned to the Justice Circle

and the Employment and Training Circle. I will help develop projects and outreach to the community where I seek to improve Aboriginal services by partnering with profit and non-profit organizations, municipal, federal and provincial governments to attain improved support.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE TBUAS?

I wanted to get involved with TBUAS to get results and become involved in the community by making a difference in the lives of children and families. When I read in the local newspaper that employment is a concern and unemployment rates are high, I realized that we cannot ignore this trend but rather we need to regroup and rebuild our community and economic structures. In order to make this happen we must involve both levels of Government, in collaboration with community agencies, to listen to our needs. As First Nations we are committed to progress and change.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE WILL BE?

My greatest challenge as a Circle Coordinator will be getting results, staying focused and providing a service that is unique and relevant to the people.

PAST ROLES, HOBBIES, INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

My past roles include social services, health and education, coordination in tourism, and politics. Currently, I am keenly interested in First Nations culture, medicine, trapping and hunting. I started to sew a jingle dress; the colours I dreamt are yellow and blue. I also serve as Board of Director at the Ka-Na-Chi-Hih Solvent Abuse Treatment Centre. ■



DID YOU KNOW?

The Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre (TBIFC) is one of the "original six" Friendship Centres in Ontario, founded in 1964 and incorporated on February 15, 1968. The TBIFC recently announced its new Executive Director - Wilfred King. ■

IMPORTANT DATES

TBUAS Justice Circle Meeting Dates:

Meeting location: to be determined

Monday December 17, 2012 | 1:30-3:30 pm

Monday January 21, 2013 | 1:30-3:30 pm

TBUAS Access to Social Services Circle:

Meeting location: The Learning Cafe 501. Victoria Avenue East

Wednesday December 19, 2012 | 9:30-11:30 am

Wednesday January 23, 2013 | 9:30-11:30 am

TBUAS Housing Circle Meeting Dates:

Meeting Location: Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoan 1610 John Street Road

Tuesday December 18, 2012 | 10:00 am -12:00 pm

Meeting Location: To Be Determined

Tuesday January 15, 2013 | 10:00 am- 12:00 pm
(Tentative)

TBUAS Employment and Training Circle Meeting Dates:

Meeting Location: North Superior Workforce Planning Board- 107B Johnson Avenue

Wednesday January 30, 2013 | 2:00-4:00 pm

The Thunder Bay Urban Aboriginal Strategy is on Facebook!



Like our page today to stay up to date with any TBUAS events, the latest news and information.

www.facebook.com/TBayUrbanAboriginalStrategy

If you have any questions or would like more information on the Action Circles, please contact:
mmcguire@shkoday.com or emoore@shkoday.com

MEET MICHELLE MCGUIRE

Aboriginal Circle Coordinator

WHAT IS YOUR NEW ROLE AT THE TBUAS?

My main role is to provide support, promote the growth and facilitate action plans for their Actions Circles in the areas of Housing, Justice, Access to Social Services and Employment & Training.

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN GOALS WHILE FULFILLING THIS ROLE?

Ensuring that the objectives of each Circle is met, for example the Access to Social Services Circle vision is to have an Aboriginal Welcoming Centre. This has always been an initiative that I've worked towards as I can remember how tough the transition was moving from my home community to the city at age 11.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH TBUAS?

I respect the work that is being done with and for the Urban Aboriginal community.

The goal and vision of the strategy aligns with my own, as my career has been for the advancement of Aboriginal people particularly Urban Aboriginals.

I have roots with the initiative. I started working with the Neighbourhood Capacity Building Project (now known as Biwaase'aa) from 2006 to 2009 in various roles and capacities. I've worked with the TBUAS on such projects as the 'Rising Aboriginal Voices' youth forum that was held in 2009 where over 200 youth came together to discuss issues and strategies for change.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE WILL BE AS A CIRCLE COORDINATOR?

Time, there is only so much of it in one day!



TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF? PAST ROLES, HOBBIES, INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

I have worked closely within the Thunder Bay Aboriginal community over the years through a variety of venues i.e. committees, workshops, events etc.

One of my favourite events was working on the Aboriginal Secondary Student Orientation. The event was designed to ease the transition from remote communities to an urban centre by highlighting the various community programs and services available. I worked closely with the Thunder Bay District Catholic School Board, the Lakehead Public School Board, Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School as well as the City of Thunder Bay to welcome Aboriginal high school students; I am a firm believer in working together and combining resources to make a huge difference in people's lives.

On a personal note, I am originally from MacDiarmid, Ontario; my band affiliation is Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay First Nation). I have two beautiful teen-aged daughters; I also have an Akita Shepherd named Ben. I enjoy reading, writing, traveling and am presently teaching myself acoustic guitar. This year, I started jingle dress dancing and have recently made my own hand drum. It has been a wonderful, rewarding experience reconnecting with my Aboriginal culture. ■



Thunder Bay
**URBAN
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