

**MARCH 2011**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be in Watson Lake on May 26<sup>th</sup> to hear your stories of resistance and courage.

This woman has been kind,  
gentle,  
and has much love,  
All of this has been given  
with  
the blessing of the Great  
Spirit above,  
But Great Spirit gave her  
something  
else and she didn't know  
it...

The Great Spirit gave her  
the blessing of being a  
warrior woman  
as now her light is lit

Excerpt from Woman Warrior has  
Fully Awoken  
By Lady J-Ann

## INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL HEALTH SUPPORT PROGRAM UPDATE

In our last issue we reported that we were working with Health Canada to have a Therapist, from Whitehorse, work closely with Lower Post, Good Hope Lake and Watson Lake.

We are pleased to report that Mary Ann Stein, registered therapist from Whitehorse, is willing to serve our communities.

Mary Ann has worked as a nurse in several northern/Arctic communities and has served as a supervisor

in Health Stations in the Yukon from 1987-1997. Since then she has obtained a Masters in Counseling and has been counseling for 10 years with her latest focus on trauma of the Residential Schools.

Mary Ann will be in Watson Lake on the week of March 28th. We will be introducing her to key resources personnel in Good Hope Lake on March 28th and Lower Post on the morning of March 29th.

She will be available for counseling and seeing clients on the afternoon of March 29th and March 30th in Watson Lake.

If you are interested in seeing Mary Ann please call our office 536-2097 or call her directly at 867-334-5763.



## HEALTH CANADA TO OFFER CULTURAL SUPPORT TRAINING MAY 16 & 17

### What is Cultural Support

Cultural supports seek to assist students and their families to safely address issues related to Indian Residential Schools as well as the disclosure of abuse during the Truth & Reconciliation and Settlement Agreement process. Specific services are determined by the needs of the individual and include dialogue, ceremonies, prayers, or traditional healing.

- knowledge of Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement and related issues, and the impacts on former students, families and communities.

- knowledge of the Resolution Health Support Program and services offered, and the role of RHSWs and CSPs.

- Understand the scope of the event and the sensitive issues that will be openly discussed.

Following the training individuals that have addressed their own Residential School issues may be selected to provide emotional support at the hearings.

***If you are interested, from Watson Lake, Good Hope Lake and Lower Post, please contact LAWS at 536-2097.***

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## YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP PROJECT



***“BE A VOICE,  
NOT AN  
ECHO”***

The Youth Violence project is going well. We have 19 youth and two parents that are involved in the project. The youth involved are from Denetia Elementary and Watson Lake High School.

The youth involved are creating their own key message about violence in the Yukon communities, on Healthy Relationship, Healthy Families, and Residential Schools.

So far the project has been fun and the students are having a lot of creative ideas creating a media message. The youth have discussed photo shots with the photographer and once

that is complete then the project will be sent to printing.

The project coordinator has engaged youth by meeting in the gym and discussing issues around violence and then having snacks and ending the session with some games.

The youth coordinator and NADAPP worker will be doing workshops that youth are interested in such as healthy relationships, the effects of violence with alcohol and drugs, self esteem and bullying. These workshops will be held after spring break in April 2011.

The youth and project coordinator are also

working on a “Youth Violence March” that will be held in April 2011 and posters will be out in the community with more information.

The Campaign design will be completed at the end of March and the printing will begin. The printing will take a month to complete so the Opening of the launch is going to be in May 2011.

The youth are excited and can’t wait to have the opening of the project so they can present a slideshow for the schools and for the community.

In Unity,  
Kristel Vance



## TRADITIONAL CRAFTS COMING AGAIN SOON



We are pleased to announce we have received some funding from The Art's Fund for traditional crafts.

We plan to start the workshop in May and will send out posters when we have the ex-

act dates. We would like to send a special invitation to our young mothers and youth.

If you plan to attend, we ask that you do your projects at the workshops. These workshops are an excellent

opportunity for us to get together to share our stories and have some fun! See you out there soon!



# newsletter

## Liard Aboriginal Women's Society

01/08

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MARCH 2011

## Bridging the Gap: Watson Lake Report

On March 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, thirty-six people gathered at Two Mile Hall for "Bridging the Gap: Creating safety in community." The vision of Liard Aboriginal Women's Society's (LAWS) *Together for Justice: On Violence, Language and Responsibility* project is to hold a series of training workshops that bring together Kaska women, RCMP, Help and Hope for Families shelter workers, Liard First Nation representatives, and Watson Lake frontline workers in justice and social services.

LAWS' goal is to facilitate honest cross-cultural conversations between community members and the RCMP so that all segments of the community can work together to create safety. This was the first of three sessions that all of the participants are encouraged to attend.

Presenter Dr. Cathy Richardson notes that "Working together with a foundation and spirit of human dignity, we can create positive social responses to those who have been harmed by violence.

. Within this work lies a respect for culture, for diversity and for the land." After the opening prayer, presenters Allan Wade and Cathy Richardson led a discussion about safety, collective ethics, and agreements. Working in small groups and around the table, participants identify points of connection and common purpose. Sharing stories of our families and what we have learned from our grandparents began to build relationships. This work will continue over the next two workshops.

Understanding violence in a social and historical context requires learning about the colonial code of relationship whereby the dominant culture assumes the right to educate, diagnose, fix or assimilate what is seen as "deficient" First Nations culture. The racial Indian Act legalized the theft of land and resources from indigenous peoples and institutionalized the collective humiliation of Aboriginal peoples. The destruction of culture creates conditions for violence. Honouring culture and caring for one another creates conditions for safety.

On Tuesday, people learned about the unilateral nature of violence, and people's responses and

resistance to violence to protect human dignity. In a majority of cases, victims of sexualized assault, wife-assault, and other violence report receiving negative social responses from friends and family, and from professionals in human services, medicine, and criminal justice.

Sometimes this is deliberate and prejudicial, other times it is done out of habit or is inadvertent and careless. Allan and Cathy presented examples of how to use clear language to accurately describe violence and resistance, which can result in better social responses and safer outcomes for victims.

Talking in the group, there was enough safety for elders to share their stories of resistance to violence. An elder showed us by example the way to witness and respond.

**"What good is this going to do?"**

In closing, everyone was invited to name concrete things they would do before the next gathering. In small groups, participants talked about what they would be thinking and doing differently to carry on our work. They were asked to think about who would notice a difference, and how their actions would

create more safety in the community. Some of the ideas shared were to listen more, to be more open to hearing what people are really thinking, to accept instead of judging or directing others what to do, and to talk to youth about what happened in the prison camps that were called "residential schools."

A longer report on the workshop will soon be available for distribution.

Following the workshop, Dr. Allan Wade observed that many of the participants talked in quite personal terms about their experiences and aspirations. Though hopeful, this is a very first step. It remains to be seen if meaningful change can be achieved. A great deal cannot yet be said due to the history of violence and concerns of community members who have faced very negative social responses. We are encouraged by the tone of the conversation and by the level of respect and engagement shown by all who came.

**"Some of the ideas shared were to listen more, to be more open to hearing what people are really thinking, to accept instead of judging or directing others what to do, and to talk to youth about what happened in the prison camps that were called residential schools."**



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"We cared enough to get together to change things for the better."

## Bridging the Gap: Whitehorse Workshop Update

On March 3rd and 4th, approx. 30 participants attended "Bridging the Gap," A cross-cultural conversation with First Nations, RCMP, Service Providers, Women's organizations, Kaska women and Women's Shelters at the NakwaTaKu Potlatch House in Whitehorse. The project's focus is an introduction to the workshops that will be presented in the two year project *"Together for Justice: On Violence, Language and Responsibility"*. Dr. Allan Wade and Dr. Catherine Richardson delivered powerful and well-received messages about understanding violence in a historical and social context and how to improve social responses to women report-

ing violence. Whitehorse participants reported that training together with RCMP and community members, sharing food, and hearing wisdom from the elders all help to build good personal relationships and a sense of trust and respect. They noted the need for action and for justice system personnel to be fully involved. Participants appreciated the teachings about the effective use of language. The evaluations stated that the radical notion of positive social change and acknowledging the resistance and strength of survivors is a great change from blaming and undermin-

ing victims. It was important to have youth involved. One evaluation said our grandchildren would like the fact that "We cared enough to get together to change things for the better."

