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WATSON LAKE STEPS UP! CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY'S ANTI-VIOLENCE LEADERS

LAWS is pleased to acknowledge and celebrate our community's anti-violence leaders who are participating in 2 new LAWS programs to address violence and build community safety and justice. There are many achievements to celebrate from this past year - here is an overview of the great work of our youth and Advocates.

Ts'idane a' nezen? : Youth for Dignity (YFD)

A youth for leadership and empowerment program for students at Watson Lake Secondary School to build community safety and justice.

- ◆ 24 AMAZING Youth taking part in YFD
- ◆ 7 workshops (2 days each) led by facilitators Renee Claude-Carrier and Julie Laliberte.
- ◆ Youth learning about Dene A Nazen, planning campaigns, gendered violence, activism, and social action.
- ◆ Students created buttons, information cards and posters with information and calling for action on missing and Indigenous women.
- ◆ YFD Instagram account was created! @youthfordignity
- ◆ YFD students used the Idle No More logo to design a Youth for Dignity logo. Students received hoodies with the logo on it.
- ◆ Dennis and Jenny Shorty from Ross joined the group in March and led a drum making workshop with the youth and taught Kaska songs. This was a huge highlight for the youth, who now have their own drum.
- ◆ Elders Mary Charlie and Mary Porter joined all the youth workshops. They shared stories and teachings with the youth.



Gudene K'eh Gus'ani: Building a Circle of Dignity and Justice

A team of advocates who are ant-violence leaders that support, respond to, and help restore dignity and safety among those harmed by violence.

Dr. Allan Wade and Dr. Shelly Bonnah talked about response-based practice and Kaska Dena principles and teachings of dignity, justice and healing.

Elders joined and supported Advocates - Mary Charlie, Mary Maje, Dorothy Smith, Mary Porter, Rose Caesar.

Advocates are learning more about recognizing oppression in institutional actions and responses, through the sharing of personal knowledge, facilitator presentations, reading reports and documents, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Advocates took on leadership roles in organizing community events and writing letters to governments and industry related to gender-based violence prevention.

Advocates met with the Mayor of the Town of Watson Lake, Cheryl O'Brien, to discuss priorities and ways we can work together to prevent violence and support survivors.

HIGHLIGHTS

December 6th Vigil

On December 6, Youth and Advocates organized a powerful vigil for Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. 106 people attended the gathering, including a mix of youth, Advocates, leadership, service providers, RCMP, family members and community members.

Red Dress

As part of the Dec 6th vigil, the students and Elders created a formed model of a red dress that is made of chicken wire and adorned with red strips of fabric tied onto the chicken wire. The red strips of fabric were available at the vigil for guests to write messages on and then tie onto the dress. The youth are applying for additional funding for a glass case for the dress to be permanently displayed in the lobby of Watson Lake Secondary School (WLSS) along with a plaque with information on the initiative.



Social Media Campaign

On May 5th, the youth participated in an online campaign through social media for the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirit people. They created and used the hashtag #MMIWG2STMAY5

What can you do to support our Youth and Advocates?

Join our Annual Community event. We are hoping to host in the fall (it was postponed from May due to COVID-19) which will include a procession to the sign-post forest where the YFD mural will be unveiled along with speeches, drumming and singing. All community members, service providers, leadership, and youth will be invited to attend. Stay tuned!

Join the YFD Instagram account! Follow the @youthfordignity Instagram account to stay up to date on activities.

Hang up a Deckle! YFD will be creating and handing out deckles to help raise awareness on the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Once these are created and given out (in the fall), please hang one up in your home, business, or car window to show your support.

Thank our youth and Advocates. When you see a youth with the YFD hoodie, or Advocate with their jacket, thank them for their work to build a supportive and safe community for everyone.

Souga Sinla

Souga Sinla to the youth and Advocates for your courage and hard work to make our community safe. We would like also thank Elders, leadership, staff at agencies, partners, and family and community members who have supported the Youth and Advocates throughout the year. We look forward to continuing to working together in solidarity.



Breaking the Silence: A Therapeutic Lifeline in a Time of Isolation

The social distancing measures designed to protect us during the coronavirus pandemic also isolates us at a time of increasing stress. We cannot rely on each other for support as much as we do in normal times, and our access to face-to-face mental wellness support is limited.

In response, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society is offering a temporary counselling-by-phone service for Kaska members living in Watson Lake, Ross River, Lower Post, Good Hope Lake. The service provides a remote response to the mental health needs of Kaska members that recognizes the need for trust and safety, while accounting for limited access to technology.

Who are the counsellors?

The service allows Kaska members to access the support of any one of three professional counselors by phone. The family therapist-- Shelly Bonnah, Cathy Richardson, and Allan Wade --are professionals in response-based practice with many years of experience working with First Nations, providing therapeutic and social justice support to the Kaska membership over the past two decades. They are known for strict confidentiality, safe and caring practice, and are viewed with a high level of trust.

How do I access the service?

Step One: Call the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society at 867-536-2097 providing your name, the phone number where you can be reached, and the counsellor of your choice. You are not required to provide any information to the Society about your issues or needs. Your name and contact information are strictly confidential.

Step Two: The Liard Aboriginal Society will forward your contact information to the counsellor of your choice who will then call you as soon as possible to arrange a convenient appointment time for an over-the-phone counselling session. In this call, you will be asked to identify your issues or needs.

Step Three: The counsellor of your choice will contact you at the agreed appointment time for your session. Sessions are conducted in a trusted, safe, and confidential manner.

What if my issues or needs are immediate?

If your issues or needs are immediate, you are advised to contact an appropriate resource from the following list:

Counselling:

Kate Odgers at 867-332-2968

Leslie Knight at 867-334-6246.

Other support lines:

Crisis Service Canada at 1-833-456-4566

Kaushee's Place at 867-668-5733

Crisis Centre Chat at <https://crisiscentrechat.ca> for adults and <https://youthinbc.com> for youth

Crisis Text Line for young people in crisis, which can be reached by texting 686868.

Can I Comment on the Service?

Yes. We will contact you at a future time to ask a few simple questions about your experience with the service. The information you provide will help us to improve our service and meet the accountability requirements of our funders. The information you provide is strictly confidential and cannot be individually identified.