By Marci Becking

NORTH BAY – Language teacher Tory Fisher and Princess Edward, Countess of Essex, agreed on one thing for sure at the Sept. 19 event at Nipissing University – that language is what defines us as a people.

“[Language] is a part of our history and who we are – especially within communities where language has not been documented, but passed from generation to generation verbally,” said the Countess to an audience of dignitaries, educators and students. “Technology can help to support and strengthen these languages, offering young people living in their communities as well as in cities and abroad, a chance to retain their native tongue. Education is a fundamental right for all young people.”

Fisher, who teaches Anishinaabemowin as a second language to Grade 1-8 students at St. Alexander’s and Mother St. Bride schools in North Bay says that he’s happy to be teaching and proud that he can bring culture to children who might never be exposed to it in an urban setting.

“Growing up my mentor was language teacher Muriel Sawyer. I also had friends like Blair Beaucage and I thought it was cool that he could speak the language,” said Fisher who is a citizen of Nipissing First Nation, alum of Nbisiing Secondary and obtained his Bachelor of Education from Nipissing University. “We were in the drum group ‘Little Iron’ together. I remember speaking with the Elders of my community and they told me that if I learn about the culture and the language, I will be able to get a job.”

Fisher teaches Anishinaabemowin to 40 students in each school – the primary grades receive 100 minutes of class and the older students receive 200 minutes. “I smudge in my class,” said Fisher. “Sometimes kids will be having a bad day and will come and ask for a smudge at recess.”

Nipissing First Nation Chief Marianna Couchie welcomed the Countess of Essex and spoke about how most people have the concept of treaty rights backwards. “Treaties are living documents,” said Chief Couchie. “Most people think that we are the ones with the treaty rights. In fact, we gave the settlers treaty rights. We need to honour those treaties.”

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne agreed with Chief Couchie – she acknowledged both the Nipissing First Nation traditional territory and the Robinson Huron Treaty. She emphasized the need for partnership between the federal, provincial and First Nation governments.

“Government to government to government discussions have to take place based on the treaties,” said Premier Wynne.
More Anishinabek Nation communities on board developing their own constitutions

By Marci Becking and Faye Sabourin

M’CHIGEENG FIRST NATION – Jenny Restoule-Mallozzi says that community constitutions are made up of fundamental laws that clearly establish jurisdiction, powers, rights and governance.

“A community constitution will promote identity, good governance, empowerment, rights and freedoms,” says Restoule-Mallozzi who is legal counsel for the Union of Ontario Indians. “Communities will be able to be self-sufficient with clarity and certainty.”

The July 17 presentation was given at the Restoration of Jurisdiction Department’s constitutional development project to M’Chigeeng First Nation’s Governance Committee to help them move forward writing and ratifying their own constitution.

UOI Special Projects Coordinator, Faye Sabourin, says that the ROJ team did a presentation to the M’Chigeeng committee about governance, the five stages of constitution development and the responsibility of committee members. Successful ratifications – like in Nipissing and Wikwemikong – are great examples to follow and learn from.

M’Chigeeng First Nation is now at the stage where they will review and revise their draft constitution and start the process of community consultation.

Magnetawan First Nation’s Chief and council are also kick starting their own constitution development this summer.

Chief William Diabo says that next steps for Magnetawan include developing the communication and engagement plan for the constitution, as well as conducting in-depth community engagement.

“We would like to see the ratification of our constitution by next spring,” says Chief Diabo.

UOI legal counsel Fred Bellefeuille says that our constitutions are to be designed by us, for us. They cannot be done by others. They need to be based on community engagement with direct input from our citizens.

“If we don’t create our own constitutions, we open the door for governments to push their own laws on us,” says Bellefeuille. “Community constitutions are essential for sustainable and social development, economic success, environmental protection and human rights.”

Magnetawan’s council has identified Anthony Laforge as the community’s constitution lead. Laforge, who is the land and resource coordinator for Magnetawan, says that they had a successful community engagement with the land code and will use that experience to help them engage community members with the draft constitution.

Pow-wow raises Fetal Alcohol Spectrum disorder awareness

By Rick Garrick

THUNDER BAY – Patience is the key to parenting children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, according to a grandmother from Long Lake #58.

“We are very kind and loving and caring with them, but it can also become very challenging for us as adults with our children, particularly with the short-term memory,” says Elder Corrine Nabigon, who has grandchildren with FASD.

“You teach them in the way we were raised and they forget, like in a few minutes, and then you have to say it over and over and be very repetitive. You have to have lots of patience, but it is fulfilling too. It’s rewarding, especially when you see them able to tie their shoes or even dry themselves off no matter what age they are after taking a bath.”

Nabigon was one of the dancers who participated in the Honouring Mothers Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day 6th Annual Mini Pow-wow, held Sept. 9 at Marina Park in Thunder Bay. The Pow-wow featured drumming by Animi Gwisheh, hand drumming by a group of women singers, information about FASD, giveaways and a feast at noon.

“This is our sixth annual (Pow-wow) and I think it has come a long way in raising awareness about the danger of using alcohol during pregnancy,” says Lynda Banning, FASD regional program worker for Northern Superior and Fort William First Nation citizen. “We have had sometimes over 200 people participate, so that is reaching a lot of people.”

Banning wants to see more people at the annual Pow-wow in the future.

“I would like to see more participation and more awareness of the issue of FASD and stronger support from men to help the women,” Banning says.
By Nicole Latulippe

The single biggest source of frustration, distrust, and ill-feeling among aboriginal people in Ontario is our failure to deal in a just and expeditious way with breaches of treaty … If the governments of Ontario and Canada want to avoid future confrontations like Ipperwash or Caledonia, they will have to deal with land and treaty claims effectively and fairly. (Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry 2007, Executive Summary, pg 81)

To avoid violence in similar circumstances, the number one recommendation made in volume 2 of the Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry was for the establishment of a Treaty Commission in Ontario (TCO). A permanent, independent and impartial body would facilitate and oversee the settling of land and treaty claims in Ontario in a spirit of fairness and expediency.

The cornerstone of the Report’s recommendations, the creation of a TCO would generate the conditions necessary for the implementation of subsequent recommendations.

It would provide a much-needed mechanism for treaty partners to relate on a nation-to-nation basis. Currently, the First Nations-Crown relationship is plagued by divergent treaty interpretations: the province of Ontario holds that historic treaties extinguish Indigenous claims to lands and resources, whereas, from a First Nations perspective, treaties are about sharing the land. In this context, there is no mechanism to address grievances outside of narrow state negotiation frameworks or costly litigation. A TCO could address this gap.

With a mandate including public education, an independent and impartial TCO would provide a balanced perspective on the treaty relationship and amplify growing awareness that all peoples are beneficiaries of the treaties in Ontario, that we are all treaty people.

The Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry was release in 2007. Seven years on, there is still no TCO.

Seven years to the month, the most recent report by United Nations on the situation of Indigenous peoples was released. In May of this year, James Anaya, Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, deposed Canada for its poor implementation of existing rights and treaties.

Sadly, the message is all too familiar.

Since the last visit by the UN in 2004 – the same year evidentiary hearings began on the events surrounding the death of Dudley George – Anaya reports that relations between the Crown and its former First Nations allies have deteriorated. Treaty and aboriginal claims remain persistently unresolved and there is a high level of distrust among indigenous peoples toward government at both federal and provincial levels.

Meanwhile, it took less than one month following the release of the Ipperwash report for the new Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (MAA) to be created. Indeed, Linden recognized that a stand-alone Ministry was needed. However, this need was preceded by 31 recommendations. Minimal if any progress has been achieved in those priority areas, including provisions for a TCO; the duty to consult and accommodate; resource revenue sharing and resource co-management; the protection of Indigenous heritage and burial sites; and public education on First Nations perspectives.

A post-Ipperwash Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has committed to forging stronger relationships with First Nations and to foster their meaningful participation in decision-making. Yet, in 2011, the Ontario Federation of Labour reported that conditions were set for another Ipperwash in the making, this time in Northwestern Ontario. In spite of a moratorium on development and calls on the province to intervene, Ontario failed to halt mineral exploration taking place on sacred burial grounds belonging to Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI). A long-standing conflict, Linden cited previous incidents at KI and the Platinex case in order to highlight Ontario’s chronic disregard for First Nations land rights and failure to protect sacred burial grounds, and to underscore the right of First Nations to participate in the management of their lands and natural resources.

So, it appears that the provincial government has balked at the implementation of recommendations that challenge established beliefs that Indigenous lands are anything but Open for Business, colonial residue that a TCO would help to correct.

The Ipperwash report recommended that a TCO be established and operate through a tripartite process, one that includes First Nations, Canada and Ontario. More recently, the UN has called on Canada to assign a higher priority to its relationship with Indigenous peoples, and to build real partnerships based on mutual understanding and full respect for constitutional, treaty, and internationally-recognized Indigenous rights.


To learn more about the events surrounding Ipperwash Park, visit http://www.anishinabek.ca/iperwash.asp

Nicole Latulippe is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto. In partnership with Nipissing First Nation, her dissertation research is on the Lake Nipissing fishery, Indigenous knowledge and governance systems, and the treaty relationship.
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Alumni Profile

Aanii, my name is Denice Corbiere,

My husband and I were foster parents and then adopted two children in Alberta. Returning to Manitoulin, I wanted to find very limited supports on the Island. I researched FASD courses in the west, and found that AEI had the best one available, the first of its kind. I found the course tremendously helpful, up to date and interesting. I use my new knowledge with my own children and have realized my passion to help caregivers and advocate for kids. The course helps change the way we see FASD, the way we parent and teach kids, the importance of diagnosis and to focus on strengths and potential. I highly recommend it to anyone in a professional or caregiver role.

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