

**Mattagami
First Nation**

DRUM

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**Volume Three
Issue Two**

WORDS FROM THE CHIEF



**Chief
Walter
Naveau
Mattagami
First Nation**

So much has happened over the past several months and as has been the case for many years our people here in Mattagami First Nation have been working together to make things better for all of us. The fact that we have a new Liberal government in place has changed the political landscape right across the country and it is good news for First Nations.

This is a good day, a good time to be Chief. After so many years of struggling under the Conservative government we as a people have survived once again. For myself and so many First Nation leaders this election of a new government is like a dream come true. Justin Trudeau has made many commitments to our people and so far it looks like he is on track for keeping his promises. Of course we have to be fair and give him and his government time to deal with the mess we have been left in as a result of the policies of the Conservative Harper government. Also, we have to keep pushing for our voice to be heard clearly and provide support to this government to make sure all of the good things they have promised do in fact take place.

So far we can see that the new Liberal government will deliver on funding for First Nations and honour education commitments made during the election.

They have moved ahead with the promised enquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Their commitment to education funding and development excites me. Here in Mattagami First Nation we are so grateful for all of the people who have worked so hard to make our education system successful. Unlike many First Nations we have our own school in our community and we are fortunate to have education leadership, staff and administration that provides a first rate education to our children. We have a new federal government in place that promises to provide funding and support so that finally we will be on par with what non-Native education receive in terms of funding.

Myself and my council have been involved in all kinds of negotiations and lobbying and over the years that has resulted in many opportunities in the resource development sector and business in general. Our people have had access to training and employment recently. Myself and many of our past and present leadership had to work hard in concert with Wabun Tribal Council and at times with our other Wabun First Nations to take advantage of new government and resource development initiatives that have paved the way to a future of self sufficiency. That makes me very proud.

The fact is that we still have a long way to go as we have had some setbacks. Our path has been difficult for the past decade as our Native political organizations, tribal councils and communities right across the country have had to deal with cuts to funding, mistrust, bullying and oppression from a right wing Conservative government. We managed to survive this period and that has a lot to do with the fact that many of us are already on the trail to self sufficiency and we have many capable, well educated and well grounded people in place. I believe that one of the most important issues we have to move ahead with now and into the future is in the development of better, more accessible, community based education policies that draw from our culture and traditions.

It sickens my heart when I listen to the reports on the high levels of suicide in our First Nations. Too many of our young people are still hopeless and struggling with drugs, alcohol, low self esteem and a wide range of issues.

With education rooted in our cultural and traditional teachings I know that we can provide a healing and pave a way forward with hope for our young people. We can't wait on this as we have to act now. Although I am Chief today and responsible for my community there was a time when I was lost and struggling with addictions and hopelessness. Education saved me as I discovered my cultural and traditional teachings and information on addictions through the help and support of some very special people I met on my way. I am grateful to the creator, to my wife and my family, to my Elders and everyone who lifted me up. It is my belief that education and the return to our traditional and cultural ways will show our young people the way, provide them skills and give them a future full of hope.

We have all the necessary ingredients to move ahead in this area right now with leaders like Justin Trudeau our new Prime Minister, Grand Chief Perry Bellegarde, our Leader of the Assembly Of First Nations; Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day, Chiefs Of Ontario and Alvin Fiddler, Grand Chief of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation. The opportunity is before all of us in leadership roles right now to move ahead in education and our traditional and cultural teachings as our children and grandchildren are counting on us.

Beaverfest Set For May 7

The 16th Annual Beaverfest will be held in Mattagami First Nation on May 7, 2016.

The event will feature demonstrations, traditional foods and presentations on trapping culture and traditions. This gathering is also an opportunity for traditional people in the community to share their knowledge and connection to the beaver, which has played an important part in the history of Mattagami FN and the Ojibway culture of northern Ontario.

Beaverfest was originally created by Elders Leonard Naveau, Evelyn Boissoneau, Willard Harnack and Linda Penasse and run in association with the Gogama Fur Council. Organization of the event has now spanned three generations as it is currently run by Larry Naveu (son of Leonard) and Jessica Echum (daughter of Larry).

Front Cover Photo

The 2015 Mattagami Annual Traditional Pow Wow brought together Aboriginal performers, dancers and singers from across the province and other parts of Canada. Pictured in front are some of the participants.

COVER PHOTO and all 2015 Pow Wow photos submitted by Councillor Jennifer Constant.



2015 Pow Wow Better Than Ever

Mattagami First Nation held its Fifth Annual Traditional Pow Wow on August 22 & 23, 2015 in the community.

"I see a revival of our traditional culture in our community. The youth are embracing this annual gathering and we are happy they have this opportunity. Our hope is that these youth today will always have this in their lives," said Councillor Jennifer Constant

The 2015 Pow Wow event was coordinated by Dana Cosgove, a member of Mattagami FN and a long time traditional dancer and teacher.

Event participants included: Master of ceremonies, Greg 'Mista Wasis' Dreaver, Mistawasis FN, Saskatchewan; Lead Fire Keeper, Morrison Solomon, Cape Croker FN; Arena Director, Josh Couchie, Nipissing; Head Grandmother Elder, Clara Prince, Mattagami FN; Host Drum, Ottawa River Singers, Ottawa; Co-Host Drum, Storm Cloud Singers, Kitigan Zibi FN; Lead Male Dancer, Laval Williams, Wasauksing FN; Lead Female Dancer, Dawn Recollet, Mattagami FN; Youth Lead Male Dancer, Geronimo Tootoosis, Chief Poundmaker FN and Youth

Lead Female Dancer, Janelle Golinowski, Mattagami FN.

Constant explained that the annual traditional Pow Wow was started through an effort by community members to rekindle lost cultural practices that their people once held. The Pow Wow was developed through the help of local Elders such as Leonard Naveau and Linda Penasse and Traditional Teachers such as John Snake from Rama First Nation. The event has been coordinated by several people over the years including: Janette McKay, Dawn McKenzie and Dana Cosgove.

"It feels good to give our community members and especially our youth a sense of pride in who we are as a people. During our first Pow Wow, we had one youth who danced at our event and every year since we see that more and more of them are coming out. Our Pow Wow is still growing and the fact that we are seeing our youth celebrating their culture gives all of us hope for our future generations," said Councillor Constant.

The 2016 Pow Wow will be held in Mattagami First Nation in August.



ZIIBEE CONSTANT AT THE 2015 POW WOW



COMMUNITY YOUTH DANCER MAX
WORME WITH BABY DION BOISSONEAU

For more information go to:

www.mattagami.com

or to the dedicated facebook page at:
**Mattagami First Nation Annual
Traditional Pow wow - Public Page**



Jennifer Constant Takes On New Role



Jennifer Constant
Lands and Economic Development Coordinator

Jennifer Constant has taken on the role of Lands and Economic Development Coordinator for Mattagami First Nation. Constant is also an elected member of the community's First Nation Council.

Her main duties are to coordinate the lands department of the First Nation and work in conjunction with community economic development initiatives. She will also keep the community informed on guidelines, legislation and regulations concerning land management and foster strategic relationships with other First Nations, First Nation groups and related government agencies and organizations.

As part of her training, she is currently taking a two year lands management program from the University of Saskatchewan.

One of her goals is to examine land

management opportunities for Mattagami First Nation lands. Historically, Mattagami First Nation lands were located on the opposite shore of Lake Mattagami from the community's current location. In the early 1950s, the community moved to its present area to access the local highway system.

"Over the years, our leadership has held discussions on how to use our old reserve lands. We want to identify ways that we could use these reserve lands that could benefit our members," said Constant.

She is also supportive of encouraging education, training and employment opportunities for her community and hopes to expand a local career fair into a regular annual event.

"I want to help develop a career fair that would assist everyone of all ages in our community. Our younger children can benefit from seeing career fair presentations as it would get them accustomed to learning about higher education, careers and the adult workforce. Teenagers and those starting out their careers can receive guidance and options for their futures in terms of further education or job training. Also, adults could use the event to seek out options for their future or opportunities to add to their training or education and skills set," said Constant.

She has been employed by Mattagami

First Nation in numerous capacities over the years and has advocated for local and regional Aboriginal issues including supporting Aboriginal youth, employment and training, business development, First Nation political representation and community development.

"I believe in promoting our First Nation and advancing the development of our community through positive initiatives. I have always been passionate about supporting the growth and development of our community and Aboriginal people in general. This has always been my personal mandate," said Constant.

She explained that even though Aboriginal people can not fully return to a traditional past, Native people can still retain their cultural roots in a modern world.

"Before our people dealt with the social upheavals including colonization and the residential school program, there was a system in place based on ancient traditions and culture. We had roles and responsibilities in our society and we were prosperous in our own way. We had respect. We may not fully return back to our subsistence based traditions but we are regaining that healthy independent way of life we once knew. We are becoming a stronger, healthier Anishinabe community in following a path that is rooted in our traditions and culture," explained Constant.

Mattagami First Nation Fishing



DEBORAH PINE, SECOND PRIZE WINNER OF THE 2016 WINTER PIKE DERBY.

MFN (Mattagami First Nation) Fishing now features three fishing tournaments a year in Mattagami First Nation, making the community a leading destination for sport fishing competitions in northeastern Ontario. The Mattagami First Nation Walleye Tournament, held in June and the Mattagami First Nation Fall Classic Walleye Tournament run in September, are part of the tournament series featured as part of the Northern Ontario Walleye Trail (NOWT). This past February, MFN Fishing hosted the Winter Pike Derby for the first time.

The 2016 Winter Pike Derby was organized as a fundraiser event for the Little Native Hockey League (LNHL) PeeWee and Tike Level Teams of Mattagami First Na-

tion. As a non-profit organization, MFN Fishing directs proceeds of all their events towards improvements to Mattagami FN including recreational programs, various types of equipment and child/youth initiatives.

The top four prize winners for the Winter Pike Derby were: \$10,000 first place to Paul Larue; \$4,000 second place to Deborah Pine, \$2,500 third place to Mark Jensen and \$1,400 fourth place to Peter Gagnon.

During the 2015 Fall Classic the top prize team winners were first place – Jeff Vipond and John Labine; second place – Miguel and Denis Traillleur and third place – Jody Villeneuve and Chad Vis.

At the 2015 June Walleye event top team winners were Tory Garneau and Craig Sal-



Featured Youth - Brent Boissoneau



**Brent
Boissoneau**
Mattagami
First Nation

Brent Boissoneau is the featured youth in this issue of the Mattagami Drum. At 17 years of age, he is currently attending Grade 12 at Timmins High and Vocational School.

He is a dedicated student who is looking forward to further studies after secondary school.

"I think that education is an important part of our lives if we want to succeed. I want to do the best I can and I know that an education will give me a good future," said Boissoneau.

In his post secondary studies, he is considering attending Sault College in Sault Ste Marie to attend a Police Foundations program and develop a career in law enforcement.

Mattagami First Nation students attending Junior High or High School need to attend schools in the City of Timmins as the local school only covers early grades. This means that students travel an average of an hour and

a half to get to their school every morning and the same is true to come back at the end of the day. The Mattagami First Nation school bus leaves every school day at seven in the morning to deliver students to their school by eight thirty.

"I am not a morning person so sometimes I find it hard to get up so early for school but I don't mind the drive home at the end of the day. We do get excused for the day if there is bad weather and it is fun to have a day away from school but it becomes difficult when we miss assignments. It gets stressful when we have to catch up to the rest of the class on our own time," said Boissoneau.

He added that the daily bus trip has allowed him to bond closely with his friends in the community. Since Junior High he has travelled daily to Timmins with his friends including Justin Trepanier, Calvin Naveau and Travis McKay and they remain close during their senior years of high school.

Over the past decade, Mattagami First Nation and regional Aboriginal organizations like the Wabun Tribal Council have put an emphasis on providing events, gatherings and programs dedicated to educating, guiding and informing young people on a variety of life topics. From a young age, Boissoneau has attended these youth gatherings, Pow Wows and various other events.

"I know that these events show us how to live a positive life and help us to understand

right from wrong. I got to hear so many stories from adults and other young people and the result has been that this has given me some life experience. It taught me that I should focus on my education, get a career and to work hard to look forward to the future," said Boissoneau.

He added that these events have also been a chance for him to get to know other young people from other nearby First Nations in the Wabun Tribal Council area.

"I have learned a lot over the past few years about drug and alcohol abuse and how it can lead to a negative life. I've learned that dealing with drugs and alcohol is about finding the right people and being around them to help you have a positive life," said Boissoneau.

He enjoys taking part in traditional activities with his friends and family. Throughout the year, he takes time to learn how to hunt, trap and fish and to learn traditional skills from Elders and others in his home community.

His parents are Eileen and Chad Boissoneau and he has an older brother Dylan who has two children Vincent and Dion. Eileen Boissoneau has worked for Mattagami FN for over 20 years as Community Health Representative (CHR) and Chad Boissoneau is a past Chief and an entrepreneur who has spearheaded several projects and programs in the community.

Tournaments Raise Funds

monson, who have won this event for three years in a row.

Currently, MFN Fishing is led by committee members Jessica Echum, Dominique Morin and Crystel Valee. They are supported in their efforts by volunteers during each of the tournament events.

"This is a big deal for our community as it promotes our First Nation and shows our visitors how welcoming we can be. It is also important for our people as it gives our youngsters a sense of pride in seeing so

many visitors coming to our First Nation. We are thankful to everyone involved including our volunteers, the participating fisherman and woman and to our community members for making these events such a success," said Echum.

Mattagami First Nation members have been responsible for starting, building and hosting these fishing tournaments. Larry Naveau, Cindy McKay and Jessica Echum have been dedicated regular organizers over the years.



For more info and tournament results go to: **www.mfnfishing.com**
www.nowt.ca
photos submitted by MFN Fishing



PAUL LARUE (FAR LEFT) FIRST PRIZE WINNER OF THE 2016 WINTER PIKE DERBY, RECEIVES HIS PRIZE FROM MEMBERS OF THE MATTAGAMI EAGLES HOCKEY TEAM.



Keeping In Touch

by **Juanita Luke**
Executive Director



**Juanita
Luke**
Executive
Director

In this issue of the Mattagami Drum I want to focus on the importance of good communications. We pride ourselves on establishing and developing communications tools that stand as strong public relations strategies. Of course I am talking about our flagship Mattagami Drum magazine which is produced in a professional, glossy publication twice a year and also our monthly staying in touch newsletter the Drumbeat.

Our flagship magazine The Drum is meant to feature professional news coverage from our First Nation with the idea of presenting our community successes and issues to our members foremost, First Nation political and development organizations, government on the federal, provincial and regional levels, the private sector and the public at large. It also features our leaders, Elders and youth in a showcase that is far reaching. In addition The Drum is supported by a professional website that puts us out there on a potential international window to the world. The Drum also provides us with an historical documentation of Mattagami First Nation featuring our issues, our successes, our leaders, our Elders, our youth and events. Through this medium and it's supporting website we in fact are producing documentation that we will be happy to have as we move ahead into the future. Just think about it, in years to come we and future generations, will be able to look back into the archives of The Drum and read the words of our leaders and Elders, discover life as we all lived it through the years in terms of what was important to us, what issues we had to deal with, the successes we produced and of course a glimpse at what our community and it's people looked like through time.

The Drumbeat is a regular, monthly newsletter that keeps up with very current announcements, events and information. Through The Drumbeat our members have the opportunity to keep up to date and informed about what is happening in the community on a day to day basis. This newsletter gives its readers a good idea of just how busy Mattagami First Nation is. It allows people to plan to participate for any events that are upcoming. The Drumbeat also makes sure that important notices regarding council, health and education are issued to First Nation members.

Both the Mattagami Drum and the monthly Drumbeat are featured on the

Mattagami First Nation website. You can see the Mattagami Drum by clicking on a link and the monthly Drumbeat is also featured on the website. As well our website tells the story of Mattagami First Nation, covers the details of all of our departments along with staff and means of contact. Mattagami.com is a great window to the world that brings all of our communication strategies together to make sure we are doing the best job possible to stay in touch with our members and it reaches far and wide to put our best foot forward. Even though we experienced a very oppressive federal government for the past many years, partly because of our communications tools, we managed to keep our voice strong. There were great efforts made to diminish the voice of our people all across Canada but we survived and now we are looking at a brand new day with the election of Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government.

As you can see in this issue of the Mattagami Drum, our Chief Walter Naveau and our Education Director Cathy Naveau are big believers in producing the very best in education for our members. We all realize that education is vital to making Mattagami First Nation a strong, self sufficient and health community. I know that based on my own path in terms of seeking and studying education programs that are meaningful to me. The result has been an increase in

knowledge and understanding which I have been able to bring back to my First Nation.

Much of my education recently has had to do with learning about the ways and means of producing better administration and leadership models that in fact harken back to our First Nation cultural and traditional teachings. As the future unfolds I believe we will have a more representative and participatory local government in Mattagami First Nation that draws much more on the input, participation and energy of our members. Our experience in developing the Harmony Project has provided us with an idea of how government and the process of running our community can move ahead with all of us caring and working together.

My ongoing education is fuelled by the input of our Chief and Council, our Elders, the support of a great administration staff and our community members who are my family, friends and neighbours. At the university level I give much thanks to two of my professors that have really helped me and they are Thomas Hart who teaches philosophy at Ryerson in Toronto and also from Ryerson, Professor Joan Riggs who teaches social work and policy.

I encourage all of us to seek further education and knowledge of our traditions and culture. When we strive to take care of ourselves and improve our knowledge base and skills then everyone around us benefits.



CHRISTMAS WAS GREEN THIS YEAR IN MATTAGAMI FIRST NATION. HERE WE SEE SOME OF THE CHILDREN WHO PARTICIPATED IN HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES.



CHILDREN ENJOYED A SLEIGH RIDE ON WHEELS DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS IN MATTAGAMI FIRST NATION.

Elder Hannah Luke Remembered

Mattagami First Nation mourned the passing of Elder Hannah Luke on November 1, 2015 at 88 years of age. She was a strong family figure who was directly connected to her people's traditional past and their history.

Her daughter, past Chief and Elder Joyce Luke, described her mother as a quiet, caring individual who enjoyed having fun with her family and friends. Originally, Elder Hannah's parents Mary (née Panse) and William McKay had travelled south from the James Bay coast where part of their family had come from. Their family made the journey by canoe and portage over a month long journey from the north to get to the old reserve lands on Mattagami Lake. When they arrived, they spoke mainly a northern Mushkego dialect of Cree and later learned to speak the Ojibway language.

"It must have been a difficult journey for them back then. Many families made that journey and it was said that it took an average of about 20 days to get to James Bay," said Elder Joyce Luke.

The family lived in the old reserve lands, which are located on the opposite shore of Lake Mattagami from where the present community is situated. When the community was moved to its new location in the early 1950s, William McKay started a small general store which he ran for several years. At this time, his wife Mary contracted tuberculosis, which required hospitalization in Sudbury, where she stayed for 28 years.

Since her mother was away from their home, Elder Hannah took on the role of raising her younger siblings. When her brother Raymond's wife Jane passed on at an early age, Elder Hannah raised their daughters Daisy and Velma as her own for a time. In a period when child services were non existent, Elder Hannah filled that role and became known as a compassionate member of the community who was willing to look after families who needed a helping hand.

"We knew mom was instrumental in taking care of many people in our community. However, we were surprised by the number of people that approached us at her memorial to share their stories of gratitude for what she



ELDER HANNAH LUKE (CENTRE FRONT ROW) IS PICTURED WITH HER EXTENDED FAMILY.

had done for them," said Elder Joyce Luke.

An Ojibway tradition is to give people nicknames in the community. Hannah was known to her family and friends as 'Buckwan', an Ojibway word that translates as a tarp shelter or lean to shelter, which was a name given to her because of her gift for taking care of others and giving shelter to those in need.

Elder Hannah Luke was not the type to have political ambitions as she believed in helping her community in her own quiet way at a grassroots level. She did support her husband Alec Luke who held the role of Chief of Mattagami First Nation.

"She taught us about respect for ourselves, our community and our Elders. She was never harsh but she knew how to guide us to become caring, strong and independent individuals," commented Elder Joyce Luke.

Alec Luke also worked for the Ministry of Natural Resources, which meant that Elder Hannah and the family had to relocate to remote camps in the surrounding area at different times of the year.

"Mom was young at heart and many of my favourite memories of her have to do with our times at those wilderness camps. We as children did not think we had much to keep us occupied in the wilderness but mom showed us how we could have fun and keep busy with her games and teachings. Even as she aged mom never lost a zest for life and she always brought humour, care, love and

support to us," explained Elder Joyce Luke.

Elder Joyce Luke's daughter, Jennifer Constant, who has served Mattagami First Nation for years on Council also has plenty of wonderful memories of her grandmother. At one point as Elder Hannah aged she was welcomed into the home of Elder Joyce Luke which provided a time of bonding between Jennifer and her grandmother.

"She was a joker and she had an almost childish sense of humour that she never lost. My brother Arthur and I spent many summers with her. She taught Arthur some of the Ojibway language and there were moments in our family when grandma passed on some embarrassing phrases and of course that always got us laughing. I followed in the footsteps of my grandfather Alec and my mom Joyce in becoming involved on council. My grandmother jokingly referred to me as Okimaw-Kwe, Chief woman, while giving me a proper royal queen wave. Images like that I will carry with me for my entire life and there is no doubt I will be better for it," said Constant.

In the reading of the eulogy for her grandmother, Constant described how Hannah's home was a place where visitors were often welcomed with a hot pot of tea and fresh baked bannock as her home was a place people could go for some of Elder Hannah Luke's medicine of laughter.

"She was a strong woman and she taught us that even during hard times it was important that we never give up. She was a great woman and her influence lives on in so many of us and we will all miss her," said Elder Joyce Luke.

Elder Hannah Luke was predeceased by her husband Alec Luke; daughter Connie Papaguish; son Wesley Luke; granddaughter Brianna, her parents Mary (née Panse) and William McKay; her siblings Ernie, John, Raymond and by her nieces Daisy Naveau and Velma McKay. Survived by her children Melissa Ethier (John), Joyce Constant (Arthur Sr.), Terry (Deborah) and Gerald (Amanda); her grandchildren Ron, Peggy, Jackie, Chris, Jennifer, Arthur Jr., Joshua, Justin, Grayson and Scott. She is also survived by her siblings Simeon, Gilbert, Jane, Frank, Clayton and Mitchel.



ELDER HANNAH LUKE (IN FRONT ON RIGHT) IS PICTURED HERE WITH HER SIBLINGS. BACK ROW L-R ARE: GILBERT MCKAY, MICHAEL MCKAY, CLAYTON MCKAY, FRANK MCKAY AND SIMEON MCKAY. IN FRONT BESIDE ELDER HANNAH LUKE IS JANE LUKE.

Education A Priority For Mattagami FN



**Cathy
Naveau
Education
Director
Mattagami
First Nation**

For many years I have been proud, enthusiastic and hopeful when it comes to the education services we offer to our students in Mattagami First Nation. Now more than ever I have hope with the election of Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government. For many years now we as First Nation people have had to struggle with an unfriendly and oppressive federal Conservative government. This involved restrictions on a funding financial level and we in education have had to live in fear in terms of anticipating what the government was planning for us in the future.

That all changed with the election of the new Liberal government and we now have in place the Honourable Dr. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs who has so far demonstrated a more positive and respectful approach in working with First Nations. That is great news for all of us in First Nation Education. Prime Minister Trudeau committed to lift the 2 percent cap on funding increases for First Nations programming and services. Just recently Minister Bennett confirmed that will be happening in the new budget. That cap has held First Nations back for years as it affected our development and our ability to plan.

Thankfully, we have a strong First Nation leadership in place now that is very supportive of education as a priority. I know first hand that our Grand Chief, Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly Of First Nations (AFN) is committed to education. We were all so honoured and proud to have him come to speak to our graduates at the Mary Jane Memorial School right here in Mattagami First Nation last June. Just this month in February his dedication to education was proven once again with the first ever AFN National First Nation Directors of

Education Forum.

I attended this event which featured about 500 First Nation Education Directors from across Canada, who met in Ottawa. It was so wonderful to be surrounded by my peers and to be able to connect and learn from other Directors of Education who share many of the same issues, challenges and successes. I felt it very comfortable to be in a place where we as Aboriginal people could relate to our needs, hopes and dreams in moving ahead with education policies that celebrate our language, tradition and culture. There were many topics of discussion and they included language immersion, First Nation education authorities, standards and assessment practices, improving literacy and numeracy, a new federal act for funding First Nation education and a new fiscal framework for First Nation education.

***I am happy to
report that the
future of
education in
Mattagami FN
is very bright***

The forum answered some key objectives and one of them being the development of a First Nations Directors Of Education Association. We also covered objectives that included the sharing of successful practices in First Nations education across Canada, providing a timely opportunity to collect insight and feedback from First Nation Directors of Education on preferred approaches to close the education gap, including the need to secure immediate funding for First Nation Schools. It was heartening to see leaders, Elders, Directors of Education and Minister Bennett engaged in making education a priority in this historic event.

I really felt in my zone while engaged with others in education. It made me realize that the dreams I have been striving for over the years to make our education on our own terms and with

major input in curriculum were coming true. I thought about my years coming up from being on the school board and then taking on the role of coordinator and finally into the position of director. It was a challenge to keep on with a development to ensure our school would survive and thrive and in particular over the past years of an oppressive Conservative government. It has been an uphill battle trying to secure funding for language and traditional and cultural programming and curriculum and at times that became very frustrating. You can imagine how invigorated I am these days with the change in government, funding restrictions removed and our school securely in place with a sound and dedicated teaching staff. All of our work over the years has paid off because not only are we as good as other schools in area cities and towns, we are actually above par as proven in last year's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) evaluation. EQAO is responsible for Ontario's provincial assessment program for schools. I am happy to report that the future of education in Mattagami First Nation is very bright.



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