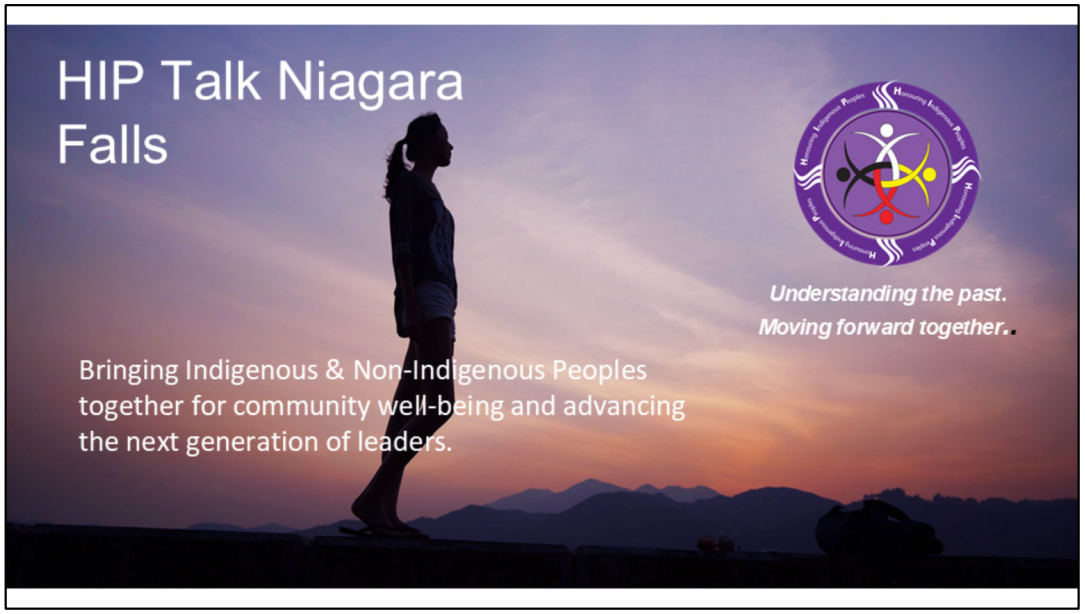
We are privileged to meet on lands that that First Nations, including the Mississaugas of Credit, Haudenosaunee, and Chonnonton, have called home for thousands of years and many continue to walk today. We strive to stand with all Indigenous people across Turtle Island, past, present, and future in promoting the wise stewardship of the land. We seek to move forward with a spirit of peace, friendship and respect towards reconciliation and collaboration.

- The is the RotaryHIP recommended land acknowledgement for our area.

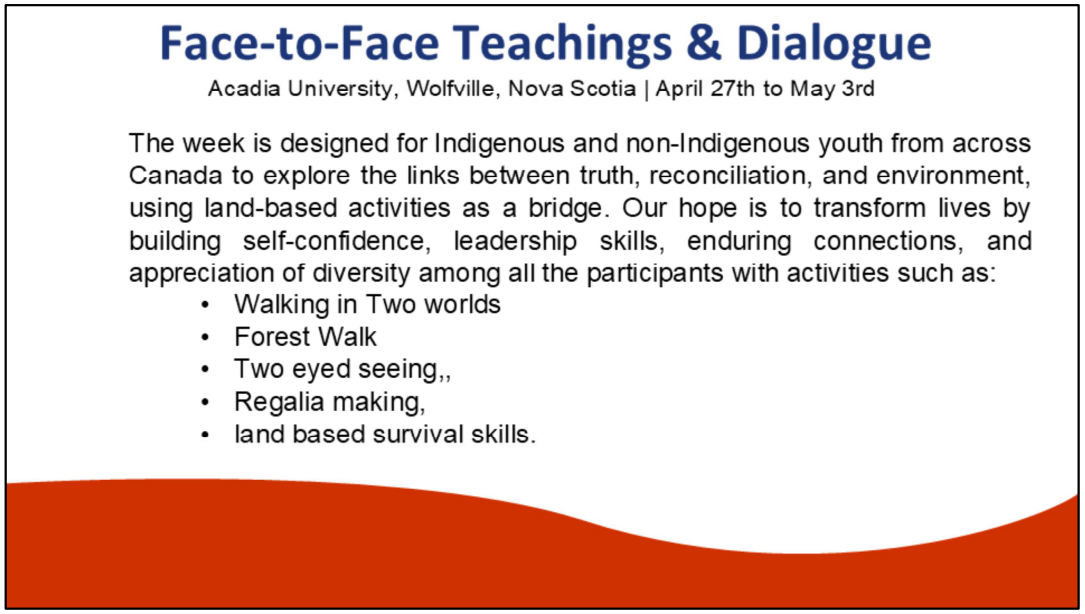


- Thank you for inviting us to talk about Honouring Indigenous Peoples (HIP) and our work in Pikangikum! Just to remind you HIP- Honouring Indigenous peoples was formed to : Promote and educate Rotarians and clubs on FN/Metis/Inuit issues, to Encourage district clubs to work with FN and Share info on FN activities. In all things HIP tries to have equal representation- for example the board is 50% Indigenous and 50%non- Indigenous, 50% male/female with representatives across Canada to lead the way in working together.

The big project that HIP overall has been working on for the last few years is the Youth to Youth Reconciliation event , This event brings 50 students- two from each district in Canada to work on truth and reconciliation through a mix of cultural teachings and activities, elder teachings and hand on activities.

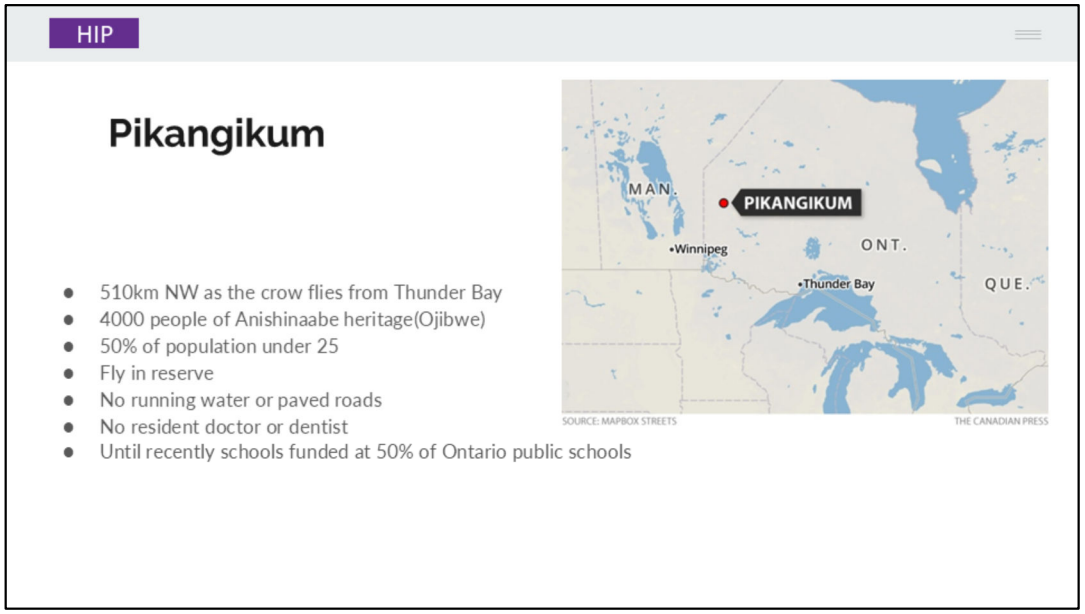
Experiences of the three youth from our District who attended Y to Y 2024 are now available on the District website under service projects/ RotaryHIP. Victoria spoke at the District conference for District 7080 and organised a school trip to the Woodland Cultural centre where she arranged for a survivor of the residential school to speak and they also visited the chapel of the Delaware- something we highly recommend if you have not had a chance to visit these sites. Eryn Ritter a student from Brantford has recently wanted to

promote the Y to Y for 2025 so she spent 3 hours at one of the gas stations on the reserve talking to people and encouraging participation in this years event.



4This years Youth to Youth event will take place on the campus of Acadia university in Wolfville NS and will give youth the opportunity to explore the links between truth, reconciliation and the environment with such topics as two eyed seeing, walking in two worlds and activities such as forest walks, regalia making and land based survival skills. We have selected two wonderful students- Annabelle Martin- Causyn from Six Nations Brantford and Juliette Sullivan from Niagara Falls- thanks to John Wallace who did the interviewing! We are excited to announce that Youth to Youth 2026 will take place in Six Nations- so this is a major event for our District!

- **5** Turning now to Pikangikum and I know you have some familiarity with our project but there are lots if things to update you on. Pikangikum is a remote, fly-in Anishinaabe(Ojibway) community which is 500km NW(as the crows fly) of Thunder Bay near the Manitoba border. This is what it looks like when flying in- an hour of beautiful black spruce boreal forest with multiple lakes and waterways- some of the most beautiful canoeing in the world.



It has 4000 people half of which are under the age of 25 which is why child care and schools are such an important consideration. Pikangikum also has one of the highest suicide rates in the world and this is an issue that impacts us personally as we have lost three of our canoe students who have taken their own lives.

- One of the big advantages of working with the same community for 10 years is that you can see the changes that have taken place over time and it hit us on our last visit how many significant positive changes have taken place. Marjorie will talk about some of these changes.

- This is a cheerful news story! You may remember, when we first went to Pikangikum, we thought, as engineers, that we could help with getting water to the homes in the community as they had no running water in their home. This is a boy drinking from one of the community taps while getting water for his family. When we sat with the band council- they said much to our surprise- we need to keep our children in school!

- **8** That led to our working with the school on programs we thought might help keep students engaged in school - like outdoor education, music and art programs.

- When we started the school was in portables- the previous school had burned down so the entire school operated in portables.

- Now the new school is a wonderful facility with lots of Anishinaabe art and modern facilities; now they are looking at building a new high school to accommodate the growing high school population.

- When we were first in Pikangikum, power was generated by diesel generators which were always failing. We helped by having meetings with the province and the Federal Government to lobby on behalf of the community. Serendipitously, our MP at the time was Diane Findley, Minister of Public works and we showed her that money was being spent flying in Diesel fuel when it was less than two year payback to run power lines to the community. She replied that she was waiting for the province and we showed her a letter we has received from Premier Wynn indicating the province was waiting for the Federal Government!

2019 Pikangikum connects to provincial power grid

Chief Owen speaks on the celebration of new power grid

- So a few years ago, in December 2018, the community got power from the Ontario electrical system as the governments finally got their acts together to bring power lines to the community. Reliable power is so important in so many ways from schools, businesses, health care and individual homes where power can be a life and death importance if you need oxygen or dialysis. It is almost impossible to over-emphasize what reliable power means to the community.

- The music program had only a few guitars when we first came to the school- we have supported it with many instruments starting with guitars and keyboards to cellos, violins, woodwinds and a full piano. Over the years, the musical talent has blossomed from having just a few acts at the Battle of the Bands concerts (we provided prizes) and invited community members to fill out the program to **14** now they have to have three consecutive nights to cover all of the student performers.

- now they have to have three consecutive nights to cover all of the student performers.

- We paddled through Pikangikum 20 years ago and wondered why there were no canoes visible in the community- that was before we knew much about residential schools and the damage done to indigenous cultures. That was one of the reasons we have been working with the school to provide outdoor education opportunities and have been teaching canoeing for 10 years now. We were thrilled to count over 30 canoes when we paddled by the community this year and that was only half of the community shoreline, and many canoes are stored away from the shoreline so I am sure there were many more.

- Another thing we noticed on the shoreline was the number of motorboats. When we were their helping with the fire evacuation in 2019 we could only find a few boats to help with the evacuation but now there are too many run-abouts to count as we paddled by the community.

- When we first started visiting Pikangikum in 2014 there may have been only 50 students attending high school in total and keeping their children in school was the bands top priority. When we arrived in Pikangikum this year we were invited to attend the sports recognition dinner. This was great as we have worked with them on sports over the years – driving the winter road with Peter Wheatley who was able to provide a basketball clinic and started a girl's basketball team and have also supported all of the hockey teams- boys and girls, juniors and seniors with equipment. We were impressed that there were over 90 high school student athletes on a variety of teams including volleyball, basketball, hockey and floor hockey.

CBC Thunder Bay:
Pikangikum First Nation celebrates its largest-ever graduating class — and it's a big deal

- EBS school had 42 graduates from the high school this year which was a record number and also there were many adult learners who have been increasing in recent years.

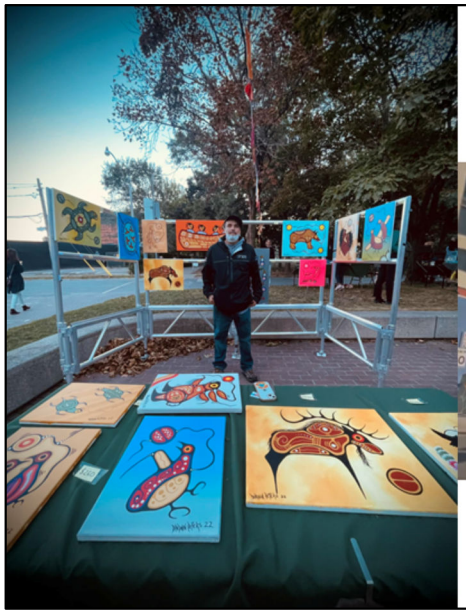
- **19** In the community, there have been many very positive changes. We often stay with teachers in their trailers but on one occasion, the teacherages were full and had to stay at the old hotel. The old hotel had small rooms with plywood over broken windows and washrooms down the hall.

- Now they have built a wonderful new safe house and hotel facility with beautiful rooms, a nice lobby common room that would not be out of place in a major city. The safe house part ensures that women and Children in crisis have a place to go in an emergency.

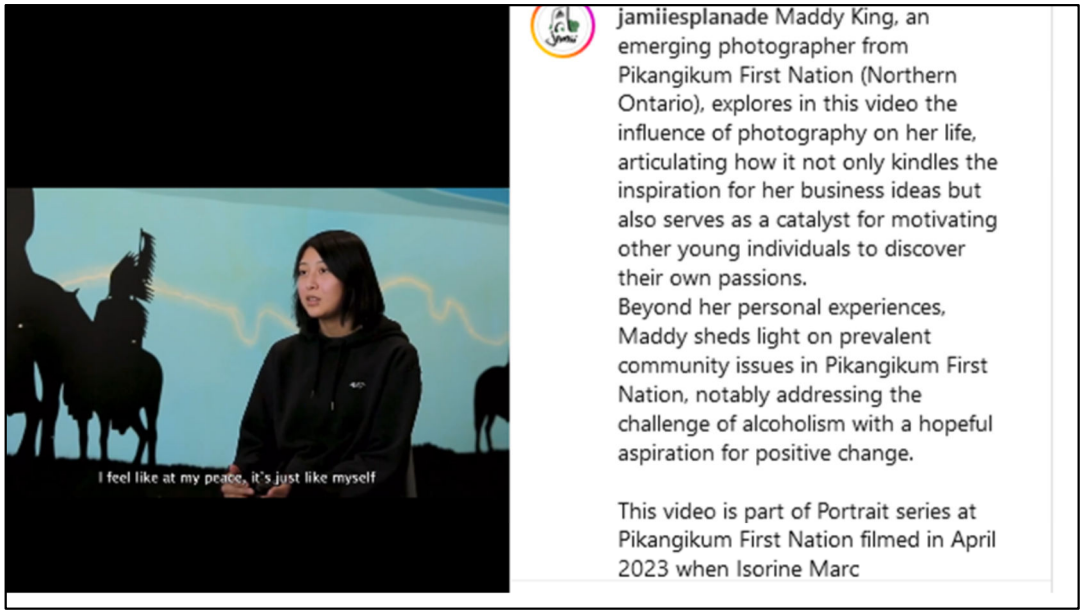
- Speaking of emergencies- we were thrilled to see not one but two ambulances as the community now has a paramedic service. We were also very impressed that Pikangikum was recognised as the first First Nation community to be certified as having the best practices for health care management (at the same time as our local hospital Norfolk General Hospital.

- In 2014 you never saw bicycles in the community because of the cost and difficulty in attempting to repair bikes with supplies hours or days away. We helped provide a bike trailer with bikes and a repair shop. Now they have regular bike clubs, bike events and summer biking and repair programs. We were amazed when New Hope bikes, a Hamilton charity had some of the trained bike repair students from Pikangikum come to inner city Hamilton to repair bikes for their program.

- The ice road challenge in which the OPP challenged bike riders to ride the 100km into Pikangikum on the ice road to raise funds for the program, this year they had 37 riders and 11 youth from Pikangikum who met them on Lake Pikangikum for the findal 15km and they raised over $60,000 for the bike program in Pik.

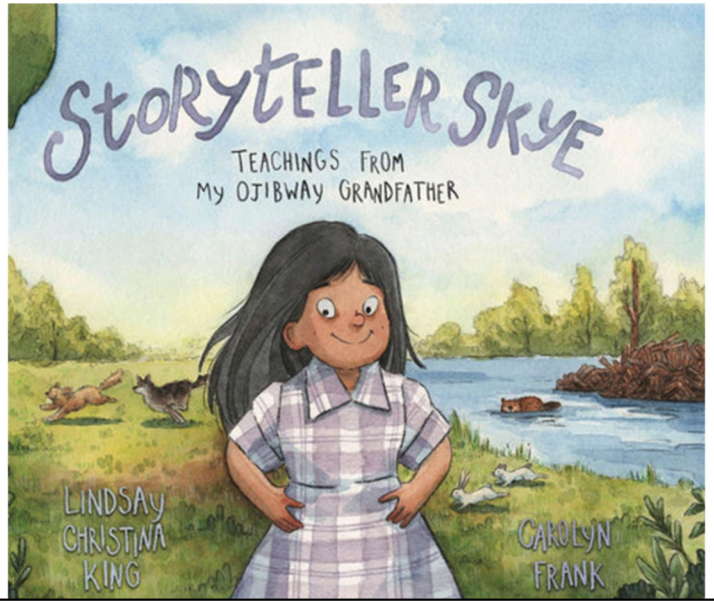


- For the past few years we have been helping young artists get established- Darwin Peters, when we met him was painting on birch bark because he didn’t have funding for materials. Darwin now has had a show in downtown Toronto, has done a mural at the St Lawrence community centre and is now selling many paintings on line and has a line of bags and towels featuring his work which are sold nationally..



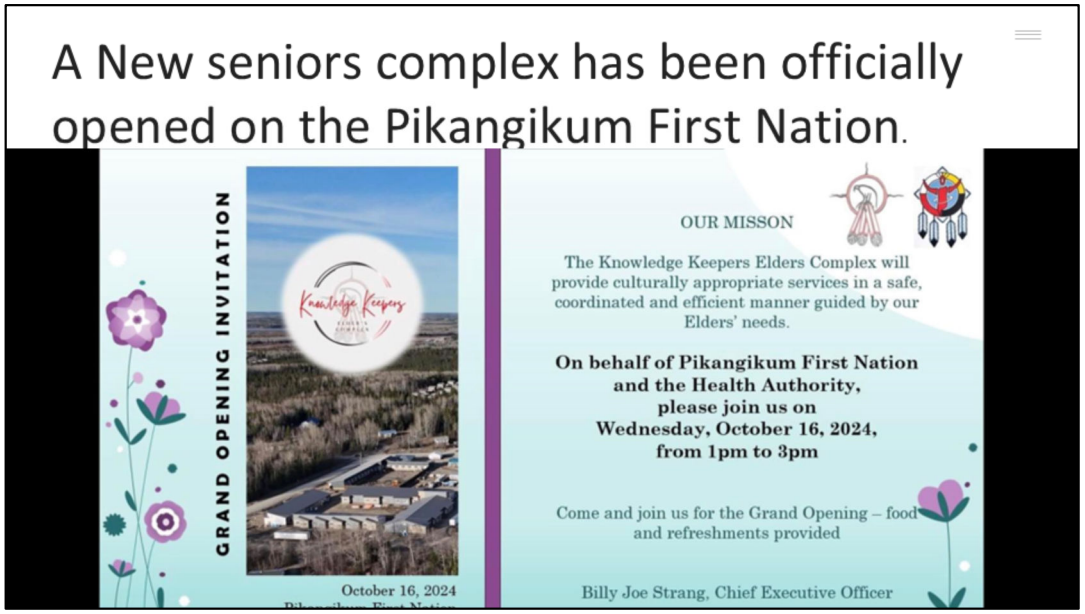
- Photographer Maddie King also is showing her amazing photos

- on the esplanade in Toronto and is continuing to develop her photography. This is one of her wonderful photos which were blown up to4 ft x 6 posters in the Esplanade show.



- Maddie's mom Lindsey King wrote a book of Anishinaabe children's stories that was so well received it has now been picked up by a publisher and is readily available at bookstores across Canada.

- **28** Artist Amber King also has had a show in the esplanade in Toronto and is hoping to pursue a career in mural painting.



The community has just opened a new knowledge Keeper complex and rapid housing facility to provide a space for elders which has 20 one-bedroom apartments as well as space that will provide access to a multitude of services to support Elders, women and children at risk.

- As to the future, more great new things are being planned. We saw a recent post from Chief Shirley Keeper that there soon will be a new grocery store, a new motel and a new restaurant and a new cultural centre is also in the works.

- Another exciting development is that there has been a new bridge approved to cross the Berens River to allow for a new Lithium mine which is jointly owned by a number of bands in the area. This will be the opportunity to have a year round road into the community providing access to jobs, groceries and the ability to supply the community with bulky materials such as building materials all year round. This is an artist rendition of the bridge which was announced in the last federal budget – we recognise the location because we portaged around the rapid (top right) on our trip this summer!