

As we move through the longest days of 2020, many of us have different things weighing on our hearts and minds than we may have in previous years. The arrival of COVID-19 has changed the contexts in which we work and live in very profound ways. Amidst travel restrictions and social distancing rules, Partnership members have been seeking out ways of supporting and engaging Indigenous youth and community partners. This newsletter highlights some ways the team has adapted to this new context, and how we are continuing to work together to help build a hopeful vision for the future.

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## Sharing Approaches Meeting – Ottawa, January 2020



Members of the Indigenous Youth Futures Partnership began the year with the IYFP Sharing Approaches meeting held in Ottawa at the end of January of 2020. This meeting brought together team members working with Kasabonika Lake, Bearskin Lake, and Fort Severn, as well as regional partners working with youth. We were most grateful to the five First Nations Youth Apprentices who have been engaged in the project, and for making the long trip south to join the meeting from their communities of Kasabonika Lake and Fort Severn. For some this was their first visit to Ottawa, and they showed great courage not only in making the journey, but in their willingness to share their perspectives with a room full of senior researchers. As one researcher said, *“We are still learning what works in community. To date, it is still the academics who are learning more from the youth, but we are getting to a point now where we can be more helpful.”*

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## Ottawa

As noted in the last Newsletter, the IYFP mid-term report was submitted to SSHRC last October 2019, detailing activities of the Partnership to date and making the case for a continuation of funding through to the end of the seven-year IYFP grant. **We are happy to report that the review committee recommended, and SSHRC approved continuation of funding for 2nd half!** If anyone is interested in knowing more about the comments of the reviewers, please get in touch with [Kim.Matheson@carleton.ca](mailto:Kim.Matheson@carleton.ca). We are looking forward to the what can be accomplished in this second half of the project.

The current **Administrator and Community Liaison** for IYFP, Christine May, will be taking a one-year maternity-leave absence, scheduled to return July 2021. The IYFP team is hugely appreciative of Christine for all her contributions to the project and wishes her the best with this new adventure! Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, Maria Pranschke will be taking over her duties to provide some continuity going into the fall. Maria can be reached by email at [MariaPranschke@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:MariaPranschke@cmail.carleton.ca).

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### Sioux Lookout

The hiring of Monica Pishew as the new Youth Resiliency Research Coordinator has added a positive energy to the work of the IYFP. A member of Sachigo Lake First Nation, Monica is currently working out of Sioux Lookout. She completed the Northern Studies Master of Arts Program at Carleton University in August 2019 and began working with IYFP in January of 2020.

Although Monica's main role was initially to act as a liaison between communities, research teams, and other project partners, with the arrival of COVID-19 she has been seconded by SLFNHA to serve on the COVID-19 Regional Response Team as their Community Response Liaison. In this role, Monica has been working to support Windigo First Nations Council's six communities with their community pandemic planning. Her involvement has allowed the IYFP team to stay up to date with the COVID-19 situation in the region as we continue working with our community partners to advance their priorities for youth.

### **Supporting Connection during COVID-19 Isolation: A resource package to support fun and learning for Indigenous youth!**

As schools across Ontario closed in mid-March, hundred of Indigenous youth, who had moved in order to attend high school, were told to return home. As such, the IYFP team sought new and relevant ways of supporting youth and people who work with youth in communities, to engage and educate their young people while promoting social distancing. To this end, [a package of existing on-line resources](#) was thoughtfully pulled together with the aim of providing fun and useful ideas to youth, and those who work with them, for coping with the challenges of life during the pandemic. This resource package was shared with community partners in early April, posted on the IYFP website, and shared on the Anishnaabe Youth Network Facebook page.



## Thunder Bay

Partners at the Multicultural Association of Northwestern Ontario (MANWO) Regional Youth Leadership Council are continuing as much as possible to work with youth living in Thunder Bay, while maintaining connections with those who have returned to their home communities due to COVID-19.

Recently MANWO received a [large donation of wild rice](#) to share with Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to using the rice to feed families, communities that are interested in cultivation will receive extra bags to be used for seed, as well as technical support from experts to engage children and youth in this community gardening project. Through this initiative, we hope that some young people in northern communities will be hired to plant and care for the wild rice under the supervision and guidance of experienced adults and elders in their communities.

## Also in the news...

This article published in **The Conversation, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020**, was written by Ann Seymour. Ann is an Ojibway, Anishinaabe, and a member of the Unceded Territory of Wikwemikong, she is also a PhD student in Social Work at Carleton and has recently become engaged in the work with the IYFP. [Canada's unequal health care system may make First Nations more vulnerable to Covid-19](#)



## Kasabonika Lake First Nation

We were very excited to host four of the Kasabonika Lake First Nation Youth Apprentices at the IYFP Sharing Approaches meeting in Ottawa. Since this time, work with the Youth Apprentices continues despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the support of the Chief and Council, the Apprentices are working on constructing a youth centre. IYFP team members are working collaboratively with youth to develop programming for the centre, as well as a budget that provides ongoing funding for those activities.

Additionally, the youth are contributing to discussions about engagement in the opportunity to grow and harvest wild rice, creating a community library, and developing a community awareness program for Pride month. The Youth Apprentices have been instrumental in creating a Youth Council in the community, which currently stands at 10 members and is in the process of planning their agenda for the year!



## Fort Severn First Nation

IYFP engagement with Fort Severn continued to build momentum through the early part of 2020.

In late January, accompanied by one of our regional partners, one of the Youth Apprentices who completed the six-week digital media training last summer (2019) was able to join the IYFP team in Ottawa for the Sharing Approaches meeting. In addition, Kim Matheson and community-based partners were discussing land-and-science-based opportunities for the community.

Unfortunately, the month of March brought its share of challenges. On March 2nd, 2020 the community was forced to declare a state of emergency due to an equipment malfunction at their local water treatment plant. Then, as with other communities, they were forced to divert energy toward developing and implementing COVID-19 protocols to maintain safety while still meeting basic needs. The IYFP work with Fort Severn has been delayed, but partners remain in touch and we are hopeful about regaining momentum in the future.

## Bearskin Lake First Nation

At the time of our last Newsletter, the community of Bearskin Lake First Nation was just recovering from a forced evacuation due to flooding caused by an unseasonally large ice-jam on the Severn River.



In early March, the new IYFP Youth Resiliency Research Coordinator (Monica Pishew) was able to travel to Bearskin Lake in order to meet with community partners, visit the new sports and recreation facilities, and discuss next steps for IYFP collaboration.

Although Band elections were originally postponed due to COVID-19, they were recently held and the community has welcomed a mix of old and new faces on Council!