

The
**ABORIGINAL
YOUTH
FINANCIAL
MANAGEMENT
CONFERENCE
AWARDS
2009**

GESTION
MANAGEMENT

AAFA

Association des agents financiers autochtones du Canada



AFOA

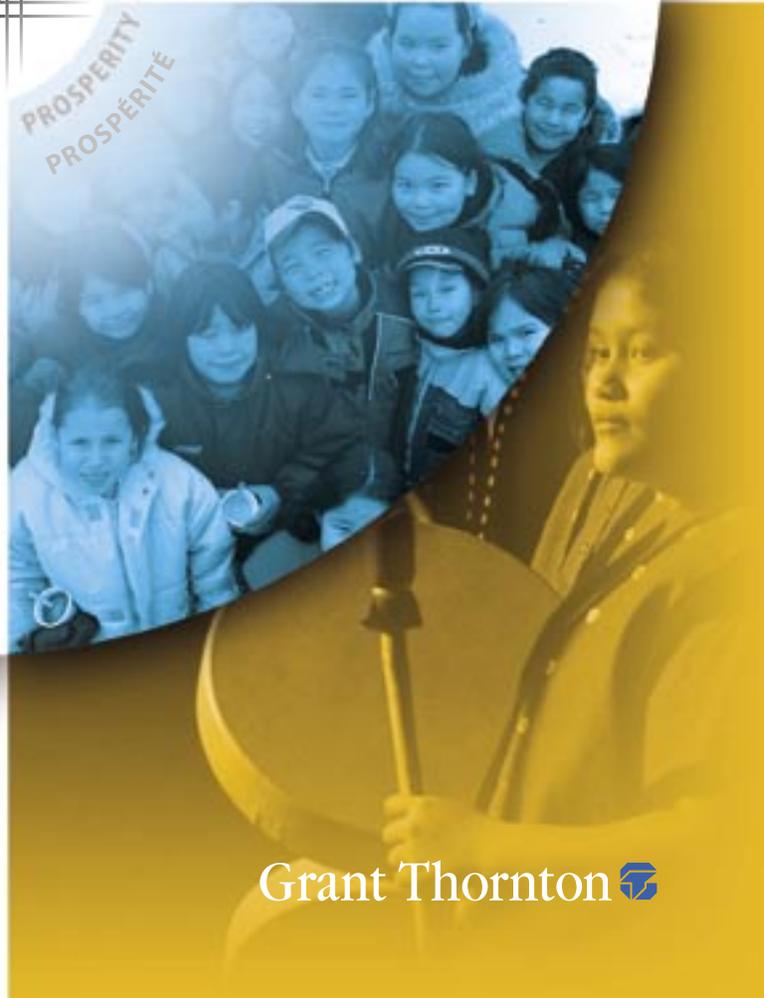
Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada



**PRIX DE LA
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CHEZ LES
JEUNES
AUTOCHTONES
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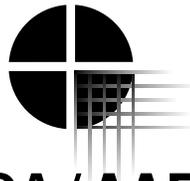
EDUCATION
EDUCATION

PROSPERITY
PROSPÉRITÉ



Grant Thornton 

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AFOA / AAFA

Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada
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Introduction

REMISE DES PRIX DE LA GESTION FINANCIÈRE CHEZ LES JEUNES AUTOCHTONES

2009

**Organisée par l'Association des agents financiers
autochtones du Canada**

et parrainée par Grant Thornton LLP

Les professionnels autochtones de la gestion financière sont en forte demande à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur des collectivités et des organisations autochtones. Cependant, très peu de nos jeunes gens poursuivent des études postsecondaires en gestion financière, et de nombreuses collectivités ont beaucoup de mal à attirer et à retenir des employés formés en la matière.

C'est pourquoi, en 2007, l'Association des agents financiers autochtones du Canada (AAFAC) a créé les Prix de la gestion financière chez les jeunes Autochtones, en comptant sur le généreux appui financier de Grant Thornton LLP. Nous en sommes à la troisième édition de la remise des Prix.

Les Prix sont remis à des jeunes Autochtones des 11e et 12e années de tout le pays. Les candidats sont appelés à rédiger un court texte en réponse à la question suivante : Si j'étais aux commandes de ma collectivité, quel serait mon plan d'action pour répondre à ses besoins? On a demandé aux enseignants concernés de soumettre des lettres témoignant du rendement et de l'engagement de leur élève. Un comité de sélection a examiné les textes et les candidatures, et retenu trois gagnants.

Ces gagnants sont :

John Sabattis – 18 ans, Chief Allison M. Bernard Memorial High School, Eskasoni, Nouvelle-Écosse

Clifton Cremo – 16 ans, Chief Allison M. Bernard Memorial High School, Eskasoni, Nouvelle-Écosse

Kristan Panamick – 17 ans, Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute, M'Chigeeng, Ontario

Les gagnants ont été transportés par avion jusqu'à Calgary, afin de participer aux activités prévues à l'horaire du congrès national de l'AAFAC et à une séance spécialement réservée aux jeunes. Ces derniers sont informés des possibilités de carrière dans le domaine de la gestion financière, du cheminement scolaire à suivre pour obtenir la formation nécessaire et de l'aide mise à leur disposition.

L'AAFAC et Grant Thornton sont très heureux de rendre hommage à ces jeunes personnes dynamiques en reproduisant leurs textes gagnants dans le présent document.

THE THIRD ANNUAL ABORIGINAL YOUTH FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE AWARDS

2009

Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA)

Sponsored by Grant Thornton LLP

There is a great demand both within and outside of Aboriginal communities and organizations for Aboriginal financial management professionals. However, very few of our young people are pursuing an education in financial management after high school, and many communities have considerable difficulty attracting and keeping financial management staff.

That is why AFOA launched the Aboriginal Youth Financial Management Conference Awards in 2007 with the generous sponsorship support of Grant Thornton LLP. This is the Awards' third year.

The Awards are open to Aboriginal youth in grades 11 and 12 across the country. Applicants were asked to write a short essay on the topic: "If I were in charge of my community, what would be my plan of action to address my community needs". Teachers were asked to submit letters attesting to the student's performance and commitment. A selection committee reviewed the essays and submissions and selected three winners.

These are:

John Sabattis – 18 years old, Chief Allison M. Bernard Memorial High School, Eskasoni, Nova Scotia

Clifton Cremo – 16 years old, Chief Allison M. Bernard Memorial High School, Eskasoni, Nova Scotia

Kristan Panamick – 17 years old, Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute, M'Chigeeng, Ontario

Winners have been flown to Calgary to participate in AFOA's National Conference program activities and a special youth session; they are being introduced to opportunities in financial management as a career; and, they are being provided information on how to go about pursuing education in financial management and what kind of help is available.

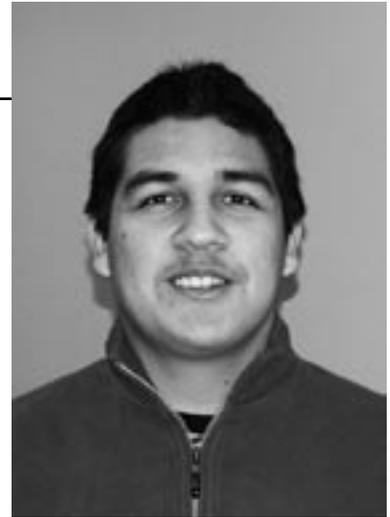
AFOA and Grant Thornton are very pleased to be able to honour and acknowledge these fine young people by reproducing their award winning essays in this booklet.

Youth Award Winner

JOHN SABATTIS

Grade 12, (Age 18), Eskasoni, NS

If I was in charge of my reserve, What would I do to change things?



"Life on reserve today shouldn't be classified as problems, but opportunities that can be identified, prioritized and overcome with good leadership and the right chosen Path."

Good day, my name is John Sabattis, a proud Mik' Maq student attending grade 12 student at the Chief Allison M Bernard Regional High School on the First Nations reserve of Eskasoni, Nova Scotia. Our reserve is located on the beautiful island of Cape Breton situated on the natural inland lakes of the Big Bra`dor. My community is the largest Mik' Maq reserve in Nova Scotia with approximately 4200 band members. Our community boast its own independent educational school system with 1200 full time students, its own health care facility and pharmacy, along with a modern day supermarket. Our community like many others is not without its own opportunities though. This essay will concentrate on the areas of social, political and economic opportunities that I feel needs to be addressed by our leaders and if I were in charge, would set a path to address for our future.

As a matter of understanding our reserve, first let me take an opportunity to give you the reader a general since of life today in Eskasoni and what are some of the "opportunities" that need to reflect change. Economically speaking a major concern within my reserve is job availability and low levels of income for a high percentage of families resulting in dependence from third party (INAC) which leave natives on the reserve not able to have a job and would require getting a job elsewhere. My community today faces many social opportunities in the areas of teen pregnancy, substance abuse and housing needs. Whether it be alcohol or drugs abuses, std's and or somewhere to call home, opportunities are evident all around and the time for true leadership is here. Teen pregnancy rates are occurring more today than they have for many years. Teens today have become less knowledgeable on safe sex and the use of proper protecting in preventing pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

In terms of our community environment and education, there needs to be priority in the areas of personal responsibility and a focus on re usable energy. The garbage that appears on our sides of the roads and on our streets makes the community look less welcoming, people litter and have no idea to what they are doing to our environment. Lastly, from a political reflection, I would try to establish new governance in the area of new bi laws for future band members that plan to run for council so we attract band members who are truly interested in helping their community and giving back.

Today, Eskasoni is facing a national opportunity for all first nations' reserves in the area of low incomes and job availability. These are probably some of the major opportunities with people on my reserve and many have

resorted to obtaining money from social assistance just to survive! For some, it is very difficult to live on 80\$ week. Today, our reserve is co managed through INAC which I believe should be removed from our reserve before we become to dependant on it and lose our independence totally. This move would allow more independence and opportunities for more jobs for natives, and would be beneficial for our children and grandchildren's future. We need to be financially responsible for improving and creating opportunities for ourselves.

As an example, I believe that using our land rights to harvest and collect wood, and then using the profits to help establish other business's like restaurants, environmental committee's and retail outlets we could make our reserve more entrepreneurial. This type of economic stimulus could help pave the way for natives to start their own businesses, and create income for their own family. I believe aboriginal's rights should be promoted in an entrepreneurial way and to use it to our full advantage. The days of being on welfare for the majority of our life is very difficult and living from cheque to cheque trying to scrape whatever money we can needs to the focus.

Today in Eskasoni our social difficulties is leading to substance abuses whether it be alcohol or drugs. Daily abuses are becoming a major concern for all and should reflect a priority in the administration of our leadership through Chief and council and the entire community as a whole. Within the community itself drugs are being sold in homes, schools and on the street. So many close friends and relatives dying at young age are difficult on all of us. Whether it is from drinking and driving and/or being under the influence while driving, or overdosing on drugs causing accidental death our community leaders need to be concerned and focused on a course of action. As the leader in my community I would establish a centre where workshops can be held for drug and alcohol awareness in our community working close with the RCMP and the Health care professionals. In terms of education and the substance problems, I would provide our peoples with proper training and the tools needed to hit the issue "head on"! As an example, people need to know what to do in case of someone was to overdose and what precautions to take to ensure the persons survival. We can also introduce first aid in our schools as a necessary training course for teenagers, mainly focused on how to resuscitate someone if they were to go into cardiac arrest. These types of training modules will and could save lives.

As leader, I would also help create a social activity center to provide a place for our teenagers to go to take their minds off their personal troubles. This center would include sports activities, social interaction, computer internet access and an elder friendship program so kids and adults alike could come and just talk. I truly believe all community peoples can play a role in turning this opportunity around. We have a wonderful resource called "elders," that needs to be tapped into. They can help show us the ways to overcome these so called social problems and get our peoples back on the right track.

Teen pregnancy is another social opportunity that needs help and support. This very common characteristic amongst our young peoples along with sexually transmitted diseases are a grim reality of social pressures in today reservation state. This is a result of lack of knowledge about protection and the lack of health care programs that is provided on our reserve. Teens are shy when it comes to getting condoms from the health center or purchasing condoms at a store, and is scared of what people would think of them if an elder was to see them purchase these necessities. When our young people's find themselves with dependent children, they sometimes do not fulfill their dreams and or finish school and end up on welfare. By educating them and creating an open society, our young people may have a chance in finishing what they started and keep them on their personal journeys.

Youth Award Winner

Many teens are also not aware of what type of diseases are out there and how easily they can spread. Again, education and workshops need to be established within the community, especially in the schools. As leader I would provide the funds to create and establish educational seminars that acknowledge what kind of diseases are out there and offer free protection, and teens would be able to get what they need anonymously. If you compare teen pregnancies with 1958 and 2008, the increase of child births between the ages of 13-17 would be almost quadrupled based on statistics. STDs are very dangerous and almost undetectable at early stages. People in our community need to know how to spot these opportunities and attend these workshops in helping to protect and prevent them from causing harm to their own body. I believe our Health Care center needs to get more involved in this opportunity and would I meet with them to help establish a community office whereby band members could come and seek out privately this information.

Environmental conditions is starting to become more detrimental towards our community, everywhere you drive or walk you see garbage and junk alongside of the roads and in ditches and on peoples yards. Many discarded objects appear from people coming in from town or just cleaning their cars, this also affects our drinking water and natural habitats that are located within our living area such as ponds, streams and some of our fresh water sources. First thing I would do as leader would be to create a program or bi-law that would require residents to maintain their personal property for cleanliness. I would also promote and establish a semi-annual derby dedicated to cleaning up and collecting garbage around the community. This would help maintain a cleaning standard that would in my opinion reflect on the community's concern for the environment and give a good since of pride amongst band members. Another of my environmental priorities would be to relocate our current reserve dumpsite to a safer location to avoid run-off from the rain and through the vicinity, and damage the trees that provide us with clean air. In terms of generating and using clean power, as leader I would focus on creating wind turbines technology to collect and store electricity and use within the community. This new and established technology may be expensive but in the long run it would save a lot of money for our community and at the same time promote an environmentally friendly reserve.

Politics and democracy on my reserve needs to reflect change for the betterment of our community. As leader, I would be suggesting to my council that future councillors and chiefs would subject to standards and conditions just to be able to be nominated and run for band council. There also needs to be a review of band council salaries and benefits because I strongly feel that these positions are just attracting candidates for personal monetary gain. Today the salary of our chief and councillors is too high and many councillors have two jobs that are being paid by the same band council. The new standards need to reflect a more fair system of compensation. I feel that a position of leadership with our band council needs to reflect one of pride and ownership. Some of these new recommended standards of conditions would reflect an age restriction, criminal record checks, along with a Code of Conduct bi law to include but not limited to theft, substance abuse and acts of dishonesty. Any councillor or Chief caught receiving money from third parties or embezzling would result for example in temporary suspension and or termination and they would be replaced by a runner up councillor or chief.

The first stage of implementation of new standards would be drug testing of all potential councillors and chief candidates. If candidates were to fail the test they would not be eligible to run for office or they would have a choice to under go a 3 month probation period, whereby they would be prohibited from using any type of substance. Once their probation period was complete a retest would be untaken to review the results. If the

person was to fail the test again the person would then be removed from the band council. This would type of policy would go along way to the promotion of a "Drug Free" reserve and what better way to show true leadership and concern for this social opportunity to all band members? In terms of councillors salary and job situation, if a candidate already has a band council job, then they would be expected to take a leave of absence until the end of their term. They would not be able to double dip from the same employer while serving on council. This type of policy change would now only draw on those people truly interested in helping their community through serving on council. True leadership starts with "leading by example"; this approach I believe is not only the right thing to do, but a moral obligation towards our people's future generations.

In conclusion our community needs to focus on the opportunities in introduction better laws (governance), educational system that provides more knowledge about the community leadership and a focus on our culture and language teachings through our elders. As leader of my community I feel that education through the reflection of our Mik`Maq cultural and traditions need to be the focus of action. We as proud Mik`Maq peoples need to get back to our traditional beliefs if we are to survive and overcome these opportunities! Today, we face the possibility of losing our language and without it is another reason to accept present day realities. As leader of my reserve, I would concentrate on the protection of our language at the school level. Immersion programs in language has to be a priority for without it gives way to influence and inclusion.

I know that as a leader and as an individual it will be challenging to tackle all of these social, economical and political concerns, but it is the right approach. Today, so many in my community relate our concerns as "problems" that can't be overcome, that's why my approach is one that gives us a chance to change. I am a very proud band member of Eskasoni and I represent the future of our community, taking a different approach (overcoming opportunities) maybe the "key" to success. Problems sometimes create a sense of failure, while opportunities give us hope!!

Thanks – Wela`lin

Youth Award Winner

CLIFTON CREMO

Grade 11, (Age 16), Eskasoni, NS



My name is Clifton Cremo and I'm from the first nation of Eskasoni. Located in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Eskasoni started out small, and grew because of centralization. The population is still growing rapidly! Such a large and growing community needs better things happening within it. We, as youth have to take initiative to make this happen. In order for anything to change in any community, plans have to be made, then the plans must be implemented. My small paper is just a tiny part of the first step.

The main points that I would focus on were I in charge of our community would be our economy, our education, and the social interaction of our people. The economy in our community has been in bad shape for quite a while now.

Our schools are not big enough to house all the needs of our youth. The social activities within the community are almost non-existent. Alcohol and drug problems affect many of these points and vice-versa. I would seek to change different aspects of these focuses if I were in charge of our community.

In order to fix our community's current economical climate, more business must be brought into Eskasoni. The community of Eskasoni is very secluded, the closest big town is Sydney, which is a 45 minute drive away. Within our community, the only businesses we really have are tobacco shops, convenience stores with V.L.T.'s, a grocery store, and take-out restaurants. This allows us to stay within the community to purchase groceries, greasy food, and to support tobacco and gambling addictions. Many essential things are not readily available to us in the community, so we must travel all the way into Sydney to make purchases. Instead of money circulating within the community and more money being brought in from the outside, more money is leaving the community and not much is being brought in.

Our community needs more business development, we need things that would not only keep money in our community, but to bring new money in as well. The first thing I would do if I were in charge would be to build a fitness facility that includes a swimming pool, a martial arts room, a cardio room, a weight room. This facility would bring in more consumers from outside the community because there are not many martial arts gyms or swimming pools in Cape Breton. It would also keep a lot of money inside our community because many of the people interested in fitness have to go all the way in to Sydney to be involved in fitness programs they enjoy. Not only would it help our economy, but it would help our people by possibly decreasing the diabetes problem in our community. The next thing I would do to help business in Eskasoni is build a department store. If a department store were built, the people could get almost all of their shopping done within the community, and people from surrounding communities would come to do their shopping in Eskasoni as well. These actions would mean only seldom would we need to go to Sydney.

Going to Sydney on a daily basis (for some people) takes its toll on the environment. If we didn't need to go to Sydney as much anymore, we should give back to the environment! I would start a daily bus to Sydney. Hopefully, this would stop many different cars from going in and wasting fuel. If this plan showed success, I would then start an hourly bus going throughout the community. Our community is small, but one bus is more efficient than many cars going to different places in the community. These buses would greatly cut back our fuel consumption, and in turn would save the community as a whole in money to purchase fuel. I would then create a community-based recycling program. Recycling is very helpful to the environment, but the current recycling program isn't as efficient as it should be, which has resulted in many recyclable materials being thrown into the garbage. This recycling program would be run by volunteers in order to further help our economy.

I would then change our welfare system. The way the welfare system currently works is that the recipient's utilities are all paid for, and the recipient gets a small amount to do with what they will (mostly groceries, clothing, and other extra expenses). I would alter the welfare system so that the recipient gets a lot more money, but none of the utility bills are paid for. This change would promote budgeting skills in our people and would probably save money in the long run. More budgeting skills would help to decrease money spent on drugs and alcohol and other useless expenses.

The next thing I would change would be the way our band council works. The first thing I would do to change the Chief and Council is the standard for nomination. At this point, anyone can be nominated to run for Council, regardless of education or income. My minimum standard to run for Council would be a grade 12 diploma with at least one political science course credit. My minimum standard for Chief would be a Bachelor's diploma with a political science course. The reasoning behind these requirements would be so that the nominees would know what they are doing when they deal with policies and legalities that may change the whole community. They would know the effects and possible outcomes of altering different things within our community. The next thing about the band council that I would change is the salary of the Chief and Council. Our Chief and Council make on average between \$50,000 and \$85,000 a year... just for being Chief and Council! This salary incentive leads to having some of the worst leading in politics we could possibly have. We have random people running for council, not caring at all about the community, just wanting the money. Were I to change the salary, I would change it from a yearly salary to an hourly payscale. Most of what the council does is done in meetings, and they last only a few hours maximum, this is not deserving of a yearly salary. These requirements and new payscales would eliminate most of the people who should not be running our community from being nominated. The only nominees would be well educated people who actually wish to make change in our community.

Our community has 3 schools, the Elementary and Middle School, the high school, and the alternative high school, TEC. The elementary & middle school has roughly 900 students, and the high school has about 200 students, the TEC has maybe 60 students. Our schools have a high dropout rate, due mostly to drug and alcohol problems. If I were to be in charge of the schooling, I would create alternative options for these students who are struggling to grasp simple concepts because of different things in life. The students tend to dropout because they do not understand a certain aspect of the curriculum, then eventually fall so far behind that they can not handle it. The options I would bring into the school would be better counselling, more tutoring options, and different optional classes. I would bring in specific counsellors for different problems, like drugs or

Youth Award Winner

alcohol, or learning disabilities. The tutoring options that I would bring in would be afterschool-tutoring, class-time tutoring, and home-tutoring. Different environments for tutoring may encourage easier understanding and better learning.

The next part of our schools that I would change would be our language program. We have a mandatory Mi'kmaq language class until grade 10, and immersion programs in the lower grades. I would make all Mi'kmaq classes optional, through to grade 12. This would allow people who wish to have Mi'kmaq classes take them and those who don't want to won't have to. These optional programs would help to keep our language base alive.

Our high school is very small, we do not have enough classrooms or teachers to meet our students needs. For example, we have no Pre-Calculus class or Physics 12 class. If I were to change this, I'd build a new part of our school that includes a youth centre. In the addition to the school we could include more classes, like the pre-calculus and physics 12 classes. In the new youth centre part of the school we would have guest speakers, tutoring, educational sessions, story circles, and many different things to prepare the students for life outside high school. With guest speakers the students could get ideas about career paths, with educational sessions and tutoring the students could learn about many different subjects. It could be a place for our youth to get together and learn and have fun.

Our community has three strategies for its youth: drugs, alcohol, and school. The youth have very limited options when it comes to extracurricular activities. The elders' options are just as limited. If some of the things that I would have planned out would come to fruition, opportunities would be abundant for both the youth and the elders. If the fitness facility were to open, the youth would be able to practice a discipline in martial arts, or have the ability to go swimming in their leisure time. The same goes for the elders. If the addition to the school were to open, the elders would be able to share their knowledge with the youth, and the youth could share their knowledge as well. Youth-Elder information sessions could happen, and not only could youth learn things from the elders, but the elder could learn things from the youth (e.g., how to use the internet). These type of sessions would promote cooperation between the youth and elders, and eventually strong bonds would develop.

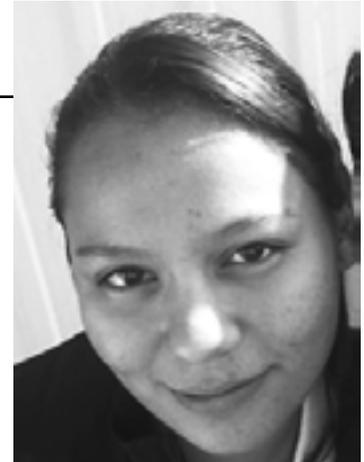
I would also start community service for the elders, for example to have someone shovel an elder's step or driveway for snow. The next thing I would do would be to hold more events promoting good health and not abusing drugs/alcohol. I would have more social dances and parties based on drug and crime prevention. With more activities for youth, less of the recreation time they have will be spent on drugs, leading to a decrease in dropout rate, leading to an increase in more well-educated people helping to guide our community.

My beliefs are very clear, I think education is the key to success in our community, or in any community. With more well educated people we will have a better future. I think I would be a good candidate to run our community, because I believe I have the right mind to do it. There are many people who may have different beliefs and may be able to run our community better than I could if they were presented the opportunity, because our community has so many brilliant minds just waiting to be inspired. If our community is to succeed, we have to unite and support a common cause, and that is the benefit of our community as a whole. Not just our leaders. Not just our elders. Not just our youth. The whole community can benefit from each other, we can help ourselves, we just have to believe we can succeed in positive change.

Youth Award Winner

KRISTAN PANAMICK

Grade 11, (Age 17), M'Chigeeng, ON



My name is Kristan Panamick and I am 17 years old. I am from M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. I currently attend Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute as a Grade 11 student. I love my community very much; when I was younger I lived in the city and missed my family and community. When I was 13 I moved back and have been living here ever since. I always thought M'Chigeeng was perfect the way it was, but now as I am getting older I am noticing a lot of things that need improvement. I now understand why almost half of registered band members live off reserve.

If I was given the opportunity to be in charge of my community there would be many things I would do. I know what my community's needs are. I am also a part of a group that needs serious attention in our community; our youth. Our youth is the key to a brighter future. Some think that our youth's needs are met but in the cold hard reality there are a lot of problems. Lack of education is the main problem with our youth. I am grateful that I have a better understanding of what is going on. Everyone knows that there is a serious drug and alcohol problem. But it seems that everyone wants to ignore it and pretend it will go away on its own. Education is provided about drugs and alcohol but I believe that this is not enough. I have seen what our youth are doing to themselves. The drugs keep getting harder and harder. It is not fair to our youth who want help and can not get it because they do not know where to go. I believe that housing is an issue as well. Some families that need a house the most are not being given fair treatment or if they are given a house it is not sufficient in space to accommodate the size of their family. But an even bigger problem is employment it seems that only people with certain last names get a decent job. I have noticed as well that some high school students with learning disabilities are not given proper support needed.

I think that education and educational support needs to be provided to the people in my community. Educational support to students with a learning disability is not provided. In mainstream high school the students that require extra help are not receiving it. These students feel uncomfortable in being put into special needs classes but do not receive feel comfortable in Applied level. They sometimes feel that they are too smart to be in these special needs classes but not smart enough to be in applied classes. They are in the middle. I would provide a support group for these students to help them gain the skills needed to be successful in Applied courses and give them confidence. I know that they also need this confidence because they are sometimes discouraged by treatment of teachers and counselors. I would also have teachers trained to help these students with the extra support they deserve. I would also encourage the students who experience racism to think of other options such as Kenjgewin Teg. In mainstream high school I experienced racism and that is exactly the reason why I chose my current school.

Youth Award Winner

Other educational needs that have to be addressed are on drugs and alcohol. I believe that awareness of prescription pills is extremely important. Unfortunately in my community prescription pills is a major growing problem. It is not just the teens causing this problem; there are a lot of adults adding to this problem. I say with adults because adding to the problem because the people that provide our teens with these pills are adults. This pill problem has gotten worse and worse and is causing crime rates to become higher. I have also seen harder drugs coming around such as cocaine and crack. I know teens who have tried shooting up. It is just getting to be that serious. Some people just do not understand that by selling and providing our teens with drugs is only killing our beautiful communities' future. I want to be able to raise my own children in my hometown without worrying about these kinds' problems. I want to have peace of mind knowing that my younger siblings will not be exposed to this drug use.

My plan of action to cure the youth of the disease of addiction would be to make sure education is provided at a young age. This will allow children to have a better understanding when they become the age where they get exposed to drugs and alcohol. It would stop the problem before it starts. Some people are against the idea of telling kids about drugs and alcohol until they reach a certain age but the truth is most of the time it is too late. I would also make sure that the help that is needed for them will be provided. I know that the services are there to help them quit doing drugs, but there are not support groups. I know that teens would like the support from their peers and other teens their age. Some teens feel that if they quit they may lose their friends. If support groups were formed they would be able to find others that have the same goal as them. An example would be to have Narcotics Anonymous in our area. I also believe that the source of these drugs should be eliminated. With the help of community members and police we can expose the "dealers" and stop the problem at the root. If no drugs are available then people will have no choice but to quit.

I noticed that some teens quit but can not maintain their change because they become bored. A lot of teens start using drugs and alcohol because they are just bored. I would solve this problem by providing activities that can take up their time instead of them turning to drugs use and partying to solve their boredom. We do have a youth center, but is only used occasionally to occupy the younger children. I would provide activities that teens actually want. An example would be starting a boxing club. This would be an excellent idea because the youth have already organized some small fights and posted them on the internet. It is only done as fun and not taken seriously. With proper training and equipment this could be a positive influence on our youths' lives. I believe that it would lower crime rates and alcohol and drug use.

Employment is another need of our community that needs to be attended to. I would establish businesses that allow economic development. Most people feel that only certain people with a certain last names can get a job. I would provide jobs by creating businesses and services that are needed. An example would be a bank or grocery store. The only banks and grocery stores are as far as 15 minutes to 30 minutes away. By opening a bank or grocery store this would keep the money that our reserve puts out within our community. As well this would provide full time and part time employment for both students and adults. By providing jobs to youth it teaches them responsibility and independence. It would help the high school students a great deal in adjusting to post secondary life. It would also make youth feel more confident in themselves to achieve what they want in life. It would help families that need financial stability to gain what they are looking for.

To address the housing issue, I believe that houses should be given according to needs of the family. I know this is not happening because there are people that live alone in a three bedroom house with a full basement. Or there are houses that are given to a family of five with only three bedrooms. There are even houses that are given to people and they do not even stay in their own house. This is not fair for families that are struggling to find sufficient space for their growing families

I hope that our community can work together and make these changes. If these changes are not made then our beautiful communities' future will not be so bright. I can see already with our youth if we all work together then we can make M'Chigeeng a better place for all. But the key is we need to work together, these changes are too big of a responsibility for one person to take on. Again, I must state that the major problem is a lack of education. Not very many people have a greater understanding of what exactly is going on in our community. If our people could see what is happening, then maybe more people will be willing to make a change for a better future for many generations to come.





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