



Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win: North-South Partnership for Children



Fourth World Living Conditions in the Ring of Fire: Call to Action

Neskantaga First Nation is an isolated fly-in Oji-Cree First Nation community located in northern Ontario along Attawapiskat Lake in the Ring of Fire. The community itself covers approximately 831 hectares of vast northern Ontario landscape and has an estimated population of 420 residents, 60 percent of whom are youth. In this small community, there were seven youth suicides (7) and twenty seven suicide attempts (27) over a twelve-month period, which forced Chief Peter Moonias to declare a state of emergency in the spring of 2013. Since that time, the community has been calling on all levels of government, health providers, the justice community, social service agencies, and families to collectively support Neskantaga during their time of crisis. While a number of initiatives were started to assist the community in dealing with their grief, suicides of young people continue. Regrettably, since the summer of 2013, three (3) more youth have taken their lives, with the most recent suicide of a 16-year-old girl on April 2, 2014.

These suicides are directly linked to the deplorable living conditions in the community. For example, the residents of Neskantaga have had no clean drinking water since 1995, lack access to fresh and affordable food, and inhabit homes that are dangerously overcrowded and infested with black mould. It is shameful that in a country known for its wealth and humanity, there are people who cannot meet even their most basic needs for survival. How many more children must die before we take action? It is time to come together to collectively make change happen.

"I have to do something because my people live in poverty, my people are killing themselves, my people don't have clean drinking water...I want to make a change for the betterment of the community and the people and the generations to come." – Chief Peter Moonias

Date: Tuesday, April 29th, 2014 @ 1:30 pm

Location: Park Hyatt Toronto | 4 Avenue Road | Queen's Park South Ballroom | Toronto, ON, M5R 2E8

In attendance:

Chief Peter Moonias (Neskantaga First Nation), Hon. Bob Rae PC, OC, OOnt, QC, Dr. Judy Finlay (Ryerson University), Irwin Elman (Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth), Dr. Faisal Moola (David Suzuki Foundation)

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