



# Bearskin Lake First Nation Searching Together Report

Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win: Searching Together Report  
March 8-11, 2009



*Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win*

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North-South Partnership for Children in Remote First Nations Communities



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Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win

North South Partnership for Children in Remote First Nations Communities



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*The thoughts contained within this report are those of the assessment team and the community experts and may not similarly be shared by the funder, the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO.*

# Preface

Leadership and friendliness are the two characteristics most often used for describing Bearskin Lake First Nation. This community is the traditional home of the last hereditary Chief, Samson Beardy, who led his people to sign the adhesion to Treaty Nine in 1929. The descendants of Chief Samson Beardy continue to follow the vision, that being the preservation of a Nation inundated by a new people with their new laws.

Originally we, the people of Bearskin Lake First Nation, lived in Bearskin Lake but moved to Michikan Lake in the 1930's. The Hudson's Bay Company used to house Canada Post, the mail continued to be addressed Bearskin Lake even at the new community site and so the name remained. In the 1970's, some people decided to start another community in another traditional camp which is now known as Muskrat Dam First Nation.

Over the centuries we had been self sustaining, with our own laws and governance system. This quickly changed upon contact with the Europeans whose beliefs made them think we were unorganized and savage. In spite of the changes to our lifestyle, we continue to remain true as First Nations people. We are proud of our language. We are proud of our community, our children, youth, parents, and grandparents. We are proud of our elected leaders. The preservation of our society is most important to us.

We are a family oriented community with strong values that sustain commitment. We are friendly, welcoming community. Today we renew the relationship our grandfather's signed. Today we wish to welcome a new relationship by inviting all Canadians to be our partner in the spirit of "sharing."



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Nothing in this Searching Together Report shall be construed as to abrogate or derogate from any Aboriginal or treaty rights of the Bearskin Lake First Nation or its members.

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# Honouring

Financial contributions to the Searching Together process were made by various funders. Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win gratefully acknowledges the following organizations:

- The provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO)
- Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth
- Tikinagan Child and Family Services
- William W. Creighton Youth Services

Special Acknowledgement to the Searching Together team and community experts who made the assessment possible:

- Chief Rodney McKay
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The Searching Together team gratefully acknowledges the support, wisdom and expertise of Bearskin Lake First Nation. It was a great honour to be welcomed into your community. The participation and information sharing in the manner of friendship and acceptance, was felt by all the team members, for this we are grateful.

We honour and acknowledge the participation of many community members, the Chief and Council, children, youth, parents and Elders and many other community experts.



# 1.0 Introduction and Assessments

## 1.1 Introduction to the Assessment

Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win: North-South Partnership for Children in Remote First Nations Communities (NSP) is a growing partnership of people and organizations from the south and First Nations communities from Northwestern Ontario. Initiated in 2006, it is an organization that enables people from all backgrounds to come together with the purpose of creating a better life for children in northern First Nations. NSP includes concerned individuals, non-government organizations, academics and foundations, that wish to support the dreams and goals of First Nations.

The Searching Together process of NSP had its beginnings when two First Nations, Mishkeegogamang and Webequie, invited 'Save the Children Canada' to conduct assessments of their communities. Through initial orientation and dialogue, similarities were recognized between the living conditions in northern communities and conditions found in emergency/humanitarian crises (e.g. housing shortages, shortage of clean water). The assessment process was then developed to provide an avenue for exploring community issues and obtaining information and recommendations from the people who live there.

Using an adapted assessment model employed in international disaster situations (floods, famines, war-torn countries), NSP worked with the two First Nations and completed the community assessments in January 2007. Response from individuals and organizations across the country was very positive. This led in December 2007, to another request for a community assessment from Pikangikum First Nation. In February 2008, the Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win team conducted the assessment process in Pikangikum.

During the Pikangikum visit, the term "assessment" was recognized as too one-sided for a process that was meant to be a two-way learning interaction. From this experience, a tool, Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win, or "Everyone searching for the answers together," was developed. This 'Searching Together' framework was adopted by NSP for use in other First Nations. (For brevity we will use the term "assessment" in this report interchangeably with Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win.) As a part of the overall process, an advocacy strategy was also created to bring awareness of the needs in the north to the partners in Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win.

At the Tikinagan Chiefs Assembly in August, 2008, five

more First Nations asked to participate in Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win. The First Nations were: Sandy Lake, Kasabonika Lake, Bearskin Lake, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and North Spirit Lake. Sandy Lake has since opted to participate in another Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win program. In February and March 2009, the Searching Together teams visited the other four First Nations. Upon approval of the reports and consent from each community, Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win will use the completed reports for awareness raising and relationship building with the First Nations that participated and to advocate for programmes that will address critical needs.

## 1.2 Assessment Objectives

After discussion with community representatives, the areas of focus were identified as:

1. To complete an assessment, collecting preliminary information on areas which include:
  - Livelihood
  - Infrastructure (food, water, sanitation, shelter, housing)
  - Education and Recreation
  - Community Participation
  - Children and Parents (protection, welfare, safety)
  - Mental and Physical Health
2. To develop an awareness raising /advocacy strategy
3. To understand community strengths and challenges
4. To develop a feasible strategy for follow up and next steps, taking into account:
  - Funding
  - Community leading the call for advocacy
  - Short term and long term objectives.

## 2.0 Methodology: The Process of Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win in Bearskin Lake First Nation

On January 13, 2009, an advance team of two First Nations individuals from Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win (NSP) met in Bearskin Lake with the Deputy Chief, several Band Councillors, Elders and the Band Manager. This was a preliminary meeting to introduce and describe the Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win process at the local level. The community representatives asked questions about the process and shared some of their community priorities with the NSP representatives.

An external team arrived in Bearskin Lake on March 8, 2009 and met with the Deputy Chief the first day. A meeting with the Chief and Council took place March 9th which provided names of community experts to provide support and information to the external team members. The external team organized itself into pairs and assigned focus areas as identified by the First Nation. Individual interviews were conducted between March 9-11 with community members involved in administration, housing, infrastructure and public works; economic development; security and policing; education – teachers, assistants, Education Council representatives and students; recreation; retail business; health and social services; youth and Elders.

## 3.0 Community Background

Bearskin Lake First Nation is a remote community 425 kilometres north of Sioux Lookout, Ontario. The community was originally on Bearskin Lake, but in the 1930's relocated to Michikan (fish trap) Lake. Both sites were considered traditional gathering areas for Bearskin Lake members including the people from the surrounding communities. Four sub-sections, the main village, Riverdale, South Side and Nine Houses, make up the First Nation. The main village is situated on the west shore of the lake tied to the other three

by an all weather gravel road. Bearskin is accessible by plane throughout the year and by winter road from Windigo Lake north through Muskrat Dam for 2-3 months seasonally. Its neighbouring communities are Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Big Trout Lake), Muskrat Dam and Sachigo Lake. It is 12,626 hectares in size.

Bearskin was originally part of the Big Trout Lake Band along with numerous other surrounding First Nations but received its own band status in the late 1970's. Tom Kamenawatamin was the first Chief of the community.

Bearskin is a member of the Windigo First Nations Council, a regional tribal council. Its members speak Anishiniimowin, or Oji-Cree, and English. As of February 2009, its on-reserve population was 433 people, although its registered status population is 857. The estimated growth rate for the community is about 4 per cent. The main reasons why people relocate from the community are for employment, health, education and lack of housing. There is a feeling that the lack of funding for housing is due to a deliberate plan by the government for people to move from their home communities to urban centres as part of the assimilation agenda.

Bearskin is very family oriented. It has three churches, two garages, a local radio station, two main stores (Northern and the Co-op Store) plus a few small convenience stores operated by local residents. Bearskin has a Health Canada operated Nursing Station with two full time nurses. Nishnawbe-Aski Police provides the security service. Ministry of Transportation Ontario services and maintains the airport.

The oral history as told by the community members has many tales of traveling to Norway House and Shamattawa, Manitoba, up to Fort Severn, and down to Sioux Lookout areas. The Elders have stories of the first encounters with the Europeans in what is now known as Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI). Shady Beardy, Elder Councillor of Bearskin Lake tells the story of how the new comers arrived in KI with gifts that continue to negatively influence some of the First Nations today. However, it was a time of merriment and the start of relationship building which we still struggle with today.

Historically, Bearskin Lake people have worked in mines in Manitoba and in the Sachigo Lake area. There was a viable fishing industry in the 1960s. The leader of the community at the time was Mike Nothing for about 20 years until the community obtained reserve status. Mike Nothing owned a store and provided the means for the local fishermen to send out their fish to market. He also had a fur buying business which went bankrupt as a result of the Greenpeace movement. The death of the fur market created hardships for the people.

The community has had a stable history of leaders over the years as it continues today.

## 4.0 Findings in Each Area

### 4.1 Common Themes

The following were the most repeated themes that emerged in the process of Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win in Bearskin Lake:

- Quality housing shortage
- Lack of employment
- High cost of living
- Water Treatment Plant problems
- Concern over drugs and substance abuse
- Need for prevention courses, e.g. parenting workshops, suicide prevention
- Need more children and youth programs – cultural programs, activities, sports, spiritual support, etc.
- Language/communication issues between youth and Elders
- Need a trained youth worker
- More support for Elders
- Community workers need orientation, job descriptions, more training and support
- Community leaders see the need for more training for themselves
- Would like a youth centre outside the community where youth can learn their traditional ways

### 4.2 Livelihood

#### 4.2.1 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

##### Employment

An ongoing issue in Bearskin Lake is the lack of employment. The majority of jobs are seasonal and the cost of living in the community is high. There are at least 50 families on welfare. It is a challenge to make ends meet on social assistance. Welfare payments for a single person are \$300/month and a family receives \$6-700 per month.

##### Retail Outlets

Bearskin Lake has two main stores, the Northern and the Co-op Store, both of which fly in goods for most of the year. Freight costs vary, but the Co-Op manager says it costs approximately 70 cents a pound to transport goods to the

community. Products usually come from Winnipeg via Wasaya Airways. The Co-op employs four people. The store rents space to Canada Post and a bank. The Co-op is slowly paying a long-term debt, which will be paid off in the summer of 2009. The store could improve business with renovations, a walk-in freezer, and a water purifying system. Community residents who purchase purified water currently do so from the Northern Store. The Bearskin Northern Store has a system, which purifies the lake water from the water plant and resells it to community members. Purified water prices are: 10 litres for \$5.99; 18.9 for \$13.99.

##### Economic Opportunities

Bearskin receives a monthly share of the Casino Rama income, an amount which is not considered sufficient to carry out significant economic development in the community. Bearskin has interests in Wasaya Airways and the Wellington Inn in Sioux Lookout, both profit-making ventures. The community completed a 'Lands and Resources Plan' through the Sustainable Communities Initiative a few years ago which they are proud of. The community is anticipating the new provincial mining act for revenue sharing possibilities. The Band is also working on a proposal for an all-weather road.

There are some tourism activities but it is struggling as well. Mckoop Lake camp was created a few years back but it is inactive at this time. A lot of the employment is seasonal like housing in the summer months. In the winter time there is some winter road employment.

#### 4.2.2 Recommendations

1. Explore ways to create more jobs and economic opportunities through equity funding.
2. Start negotiations with mining companies for revenue sharing and employment opportunities.
3. Provide training/upgrading for young adults in areas of construction, skilled trades, mining.

### 4.3 Infrastructure

#### 4.3.1 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

##### Housing

Bearskin Lake has a housing committee which works with the First Nation to build an average of two four-bedroom houses per year. They feel this is inadequate to meet the need for new housing and in addition, there is a great need for renovations and maintenance on existing homes. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) numbers reflect adequate housing for the community, however it does not take into consideration the condition of the units which require extensive renovations or even demolition. The cost of building a house in Bearskin



Lake is double the cost of a house in an urban centre like Sioux Lookout.

Community members expressed concern about poor housing conditions with overcrowding, mould, and flooding basements. There is no funding available to deal with the mould issues in existing houses. There is a variety of housing needed to meet different family sizes. Smaller families may be placed at the bottom of the housing list because they don't qualify for four-bedroom homes.

New families would like to return to the community but cannot because of the housing shortage. Many houses in the community do not meet standards, and it was noted that local workers are not trained to build the new housing designs. This results in inefficient spending or sometimes the new houses remain unfinished. A preference was given by some people for the simpler, older designed homes that could be built more quickly and with less specialized training. It was suggested that the school or another organization could offer local carpentry and trades courses to teach construction techniques for the new housing designs. The Chief and Council is initiating a Community Planning Study this year and it was suggested that this could include a review of the most appropriate housing options for the community.

Furnace maintenance in homes in Bearskin is poor. This is dangerous because the furnace system can back up and cause carbon monoxide poisoning or fires. There is also a concern about mould in many houses. There should be people within the community who are trained to conduct maintenance inspections and repairs. The school has been closed many times and students have missed classes because of this issue.

### **Water and Sanitation**

Only about 15 per cent of homes in Bearskin are hooked up to the main underground water line. This includes the business centre and the mainland houses. The remaining 85 per cent of homes receive water delivered regularly by truck at no charge and stored in individual holding tanks. There is a great need to connect the rest of the homes to the main water and sewage lines, which would be safer and less expensive than the trucking option. There is also concern that water tanks create mould and that sewage trucks are not sanitary. Sometimes sewage backs into houses because the trucks freeze.

An extension was made to water treatment plant within the last few years and it was suggested that another lift station across the lake would improve the current system. The treatment plant has two trucks each for water and sewage, but vehicle maintenance costs are high and they encounter frequent breakdowns, especially in the winter. One truck holds 1600 litres, moves water from the lake to the holding tanks every hour. There are three reservoirs in the water plant where water is chemically treated. A consultant from Northern Water

Works travels monthly to the community to test the water. In late February 2009, they reached the safe drinking standard for the main line water source; however, the majority of homes aren't connected to this source and it is difficult to test water in individual holding tanks. Many people purchase purified drinking water from the store.

The trucks pick up sewage from individual holding tanks in community homes when members call. Sewage is filtered and emptied into a lagoon, which reportedly is too small for the community needs. The lagoon is on the verge of overflowing at times, and it is thought to be located too close to the community.

Two qualified employees work at the Water Treatment Plant. Although both have 2-5 years experience, more training is required to keep up with changing regulations, and the community would like more operators to be trained.

### **Infrastructure**

Bearskin Lake has about \$90 million in infrastructure needs. Many community roads are down to the base layer with no gravel covering and require upgrading. They get very dusty in the summertime and people get sick from the dust. Some kind of dust suppression system would help the community. A lot of sites in the community require soil remediation because of fuel spills. The sites have been identified and are waiting for INAC funding for cleanup. The landfill site also needs upgrading. There is a family-run floatplane operation, but a dock is required. Local people use the plane to travel to their camps for traditional activities. It was also noted that the cemetery also needs to be cleaned up.

The community runs a winter road project every year that employs one part-time and two full-time operators. They experience problems regularly because they do not have the proper equipment. It is important to keep the road clear for transport trucks. More heavy equipment including a tandem truck with a bigger plough is needed, as well as heavy equipment training and First Aid training. The community doesn't have proper road signs to post on the winter road – this year, they used cardboard signs.

People have started to grow gardens in the last couple of years. Young people are expressing an interest in learning to garden from the Elders. A roto-tiller would be useful in facilitating this development.

### **Commercial Facilities**

Bearskin has a five-bedroom motel with a restaurant that employs three cooks, a housekeeper, and a manager. The business struggles financially to be self-supporting. The staff and bills are paid from the money the business earns, but frequently the motel is on the verge of being disconnected from its hydro, cable, etc. The motel could greatly benefit from management and business training. A plan exists to renovate

this summer and the manager states that an investment needs to be made in more beds.

### **4.3.2 Recommendations**

1. Seek funding to construct more new homes to address the housing shortage and overcrowding issues. Review the need for more variety in housing to meet different family sizes and requirements, and also review the way housing is allocated.
2. Develop a plan to address the houses that need renovations to be brought up to standard and need remediation to deal with mould problems.
3. Review safety issues in homes as soon as possible including conducting furnace/wood stove inspections.
4. Explore avenues of providing training for: carpenters and trades people; qualified housing inspectors; drinking water and wastewater operators; and heavy equipment operators.
5. Provide First Aid courses.
6. There are many infrastructure needs that could be reviewed and prioritized in a strategic plan. Needs include: upgrading local roads and landfill site; expanding the main line underground water and sanitation system; proper road signage for the winter road; maintenance of community facilities like the arena and community hall; cemetery improvements; and street lights in certain parts of the community for safety reasons.
7. Many major community equipment needs could be reviewed and prioritized including winter road maintenance equipment; a dust suppression system to decrease the dust on summer roads that make people sick.
8. The community motel needs a business plan, training and investment in its basic resources.
9. Extensive landscaping will help with the flooding problem in homes.
10. Remediation of oil spills left by the old INAC and other government operated buildings.

## **4.4 Education and Recreation**

### **4.4.1 Needs and Issues Identified in Assessment**

#### **Elementary School**

Michikan Lake School in Bearskin Lake has a strong team of nine teachers, four of them community members, plus a

principal and vice-principal. They feel their teaching skills are up to date and because of that, fewer students are experiencing educational difficulties. However, there are still many learning issues. Students have fairly good attendance. The elementary school goes up to Grade 8, and students can take high school courses through Keewaytinook Internet High School (KiHS), which goes to Grade 10 or through Wahsa Distance Education, operated by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC). Another option is for students to leave the community to do their high school courses.

An Education Council with a Director oversees the school. Recently they tried to establish a full-time Grade 9 class but found it unfeasible given the small student numbers and poor funding formula. Employees feel underpaid with little or no preparation time, which might be one reason outside teachers have a pattern of staying in the community for only a year or two. The Education Council feels the best long-term investment is in its local teachers. The Council could benefit from proposal writing training to bring in more educational and recreational opportunities for young people.

The school has a gym and library. A breakfast program is provided because there may not be much food at home, and some students spread their breakfast over the school day because they do not bring a lunch. The school offers some programs directed at specific needs, e.g. Math Makes Sense for Grades 1-3, which will be expanding to Grades 4-8 this year, and Soar to Success. The Education Council also offers summer school and camps for children. However, limited funding has prevented the offering of other needed educational and remedial programs, e.g. reading comprehension, writing skills development, quality computer instruction, and more math improvement programs. Teachers suggest it is almost impossible to get students up to provincial standards. They have major programmatic and resource needs, and many students are not functioning at Grade level. A repeated theme was that students need more hands-on supplies for activities for most course subjects, e.g. physical education (sports equipment), math, science and computers, as well as craft supplies.

There are some cultural and traditional outings organized for students, e.g. ice fishing, trapping, although not all classes take part and equipment is often in short supply. Students enjoy these activities. Guest speakers in the school are also a big hit. The NAPS officer attends the school once a week to teach guitar lessons to Grade 8 students.

Some concerns were noted regarding the overall school maintenance, e.g. broken classroom windows, mould in the school.

#### **High School, Post-Secondary and Adult Training**

About 29 students are registered with KiHS, the Internet High

School although only about 10 students attend regularly. The school has experienced many technical challenges resulting in it being off-line frequently. There are currently about 40 students taking Grades 9-12 high school credits with Wahsa Distance Education through the local learning centre. Wahsa teachers provide classes from Sioux Lookout via Wawatay Radio. Assignments are flown to Sioux Lookout by a local coordinator for marking. Each term is nine weeks in length and students usually enrol in 1-2 courses per term. The centre provides a computer lab/classroom with a coordinator during the day and evenings. The coordinator would like to see post-secondary courses offered but space and funding are limited. Other types of courses would also be useful in Bearskin including gun safety, Driver's Education, training for the trades, music programs, exercise and health programs dealing with obesity and diabetes, and generally more courses in health promotion and education.

It is felt that it would be good for the community to encourage people to become more educated in general; however, INAC is seen to be relinquishing its responsibility to fund post-secondary education, which is strongly considered to be a treaty obligation. Community members cannot afford post-secondary schooling.

#### **Issues Affecting Learning**

- There is a need to teach young people their traditional language and ways of life. Children secure in their own language and culture have a greater chance of succeeding in the mainstream education system. Fewer students are speaking their language leading to a communication challenge between youth and Elders.
- Drugs, gangs and youth violence in the community seriously impact the ability of students to concentrate in school. Fear for personal safety is an issue, even among young children. The local Education Council approached Nodin Counselling to provide mental health support to students, but was informed that Nodin only has resources for high risk youth (mostly suicidal).
- Few parents attend parent-teacher conferences. There is a lack of parental involvement in the educational pursuits of their children. Part of this is due to the intergenerational effects of the residential schools. Many adults have mixed emotions about the relative value of education, given the emotional and physical/sexual abuse they suffered in residential schools.
- No assessments have been done on many children with special needs – they seriously need Psychologist/ Psychometrist assessments and speech assessment and therapy
- There are many behaviour problems in the classroom. There is a strong need for more social development

resources e.g. self-esteem exercises, anger management techniques, resources to prevent and counteract bullying, etc. Student bullying did improve recently after the NAPS officer made a presentation in school. Some parents refuse to believe or do anything to address their children's behaviour problems.

- The social counsellor cannot provide counselling to students without parental permission and some parents resist this or don't acknowledge the need.

#### **4.4.2 Recommendations**

1. More educational programs are required for Grade school students, e.g. reading comprehension, writing skills development, computer instructions, and life skills for older students, more math improvement programs. Explore ways to enrich the current programs the school offers.
2. Look for ways to secure more resources for classrooms.
3. Advocate for more resources for special needs and special education, and for more professional assessments for children and youth.
4. Consider ways to get parents more involved in their children's school work and activities, to help them with homework, support them in their projects, etc. In general, it would benefit students if parents were more active in the school in all ways.
5. Explore possibilities of creating summer employment to encourage and reward young people who stay in school, thereby giving young people job experience and encouraging them to continue their education.
6. Provide more traditional and cultural outings and more opportunities for students to learn and practise Oji-Cree.
7. Expand the guest or celebrity speaker program in the school.
8. Explore ways to provide more space for post-secondary and adult learning, including distance education programs. Interest has been expressed in the following: gun safety programs, parenting classes, Driver's Education, leadership training, proposal-writing training, money management for young couples.
9. Provide suicide awareness outreach to students in schools and to parents, caregivers and educators.
10. Provide prevention and awareness programs to targeted community sectors, e.g. drugs, alcohol, diabetes, FAS/D, etc.

11. Continue to lobby for post-secondary education funding for First Nations.
12. Continue education for current work force, upgrade knowledge to new standards or changes within work requirements.

#### **4.4.3 Recreation Needs and Issues Identified in Assessment**

##### **Activities and Facilities**

Bearskin's youth centre has been operating for approximately five years and is open weekdays from 9 am to 9:30 pm. It is a large space that can accommodate many youth. It has two pool and ping-pong tables, a foosball table, a gym, a computer room with three Internet-equipped computers, games and media equipment for movies. The centre, which has 24-hour security, is used a lot for birthday parties, dances and movie nights. It offers workshops for children, youth and families, e.g. baking classes for girls.

Bearskin also has a community development coordinator who, among other roles, works to create opportunities for children and youth. Competitive sports like hockey, soccer, and broomball are avid interests of the community's young people but often they do not have the proper equipment. Some priorities for the community include securing skates for all community children, accessing hockey sticks and other sports equipment, and particularly finding a coach to teach children to skate. Children are anxious to learn most sports. There is no skate sharpener at the arena; someone comes from KI once a year to sharpen skates, but that is not often enough.

There is a youth camp for 8-12 year olds in the summer where young people are taken out to the log cabins on Severn Lake. Although the cabins need maintenance, the young people find this to be an extremely rewarding and happy experience. This cultural program could be enriched with canoes, paddles and lifejackets and could be expanded for older youth and for families. It was frequently suggested that the community could benefit from having a skilled resource worker come to Bearskin to set up recreational programs for children and youth.

Tikinagan Prevention Program is also active in Bearskin Lake. The program started floor hockey nights with the youth every Thursday and Sunday from April to December. In two years, they haven't missed a night an attendance is high. Baseball and soccer activities are planned as summer activities. Youth really enjoy the playgrounds – it would be beneficial to have some organized sports there.

Despite its seven-kilometre distance from town, the arena is one of the busiest places in Bearskin Lake. Everyone in the community uses the arena, but it is mostly the children that use it between 4 and 10 pm every evening. Most youth do

not have a ride and many have to walk there. There is much that could be done to improve the facility: broken windows could be fixed; a refrigeration unit that would allow hockey to continue for more months of the year needs to be installed. There are two canteens, which could be used to generate income for the facility. One of the major problems, however, is that there is no functioning Zamboni (mobile ice cleaning machine) in the community. The donated Zamboni caught fire and likely cannot be repaired. As well, it is fuelled by propane and there is no propane for sale in Bearskin. The ice rink is presently cleared manually with a hose and shovel.

A recurring theme that emerged is the lack of involvement by many parents in activities for children and youth. People who work with young people expressed that so much more could be done if there were more parents volunteering. Coaches, chaperones, organizers for sports events and other fun activities, and people to fundraise for all of these, are needed and could all enhance life in Bearskin for children and youth.

#### **4.4.4 Recommendations**

1. Develop a vibrant sports and activity program for young people, both in school and in the community.
2. Youth have a specific interest in sports and programs that connect them with their counterparts in other communities. Develop more opportunities for these kinds of activities for youth, e.g. hockey and broomball tournaments.
3. Look for funding to employ a skilled resource worker to develop a program for children and youth.
4. Provide maintenance and repair on the Severn River log buildings so children can continue to enjoy summer camps there.
5. Develop and expand land-based education programs connecting young people and Elders.
6. Look for ways to get parents involved in coaching and other roles to promote more activities for children and youth.
7. Organize a clean up of the old skate rink building behind the youth centre. The children and youth frequent this area and broken glass is a safety issue.
8. Consider developing a walking trail and/or a racing track for community members to get exercise.

## 4.5 Community Participation

### 4.5.1 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

#### Community Gatherings

Bearskin celebrates a few annual community events including a Christmas feast, a 'Jeremiah Day' spring celebration thanking the Creator for the new season, and the Hunter's Festival in the fall. The Hunter's Festival is one of the most popular events. It has taken place for 20 years. Many community members attend these gatherings and often people from surrounding communities participate as well. The events are usually held at the feast grounds and in the school gym. Donations of food are received from the Co-Op Store and from people in the community. People set nets and donate fish and other traditional food and volunteers cook, set-up and clean up after the events. A stage is organized for singing and music and all enjoy a good time together. An Elders' feast is also sponsored annually during the Christmas Season by the Nursing Station.

Some people said they would like more facilities for community gatherings. The community centre is not being used now because of the mould and need for repairs.

#### Traditional Culture Retention

There is not a lot of expression of traditional culture like pow-wows and drumming in Bearskin. Some people noted they would like to see young people learn more about the traditional ways. They expressed regret that youth are "always on the computer" and wrapped up in technology. They stated that young people need to connect with Elders to learn life skills such as trapping and living on the land. It was also expressed that Elders need to encourage young people to learn and practise their traditions.

It was speculated by some people, the increase in gang activity is directly related to not having enough cultural activities for the youth which would help with identity and the sense of belonging.

#### Young Peoples' Perspectives

Young people aged 13-26 were also asked about what issues concern them in Bearskin Lake. Their responses were:

- Drugs and alcohol (homebrew)
- Violence
- Don't feel safe to walk around at night because of gangs
- Selling cigarettes to minors

Young people were also asked for their input to improve life in Bearskin for youth. Their suggestions were as follows:

- More activities, e.g. movie nights, dances, more sports, music lessons (and instruments), a recording studio, a

youth shelter, skating and skateboarding lessons, more broomball and hockey tournaments, celebrity visits, more gang awareness for youth to know how to be safe, a youth radio program, a boxing ring, fight classes, camping and canoeing, more computers in the youth centre, a student council.

- More shopping and services, e.g. a pawn shop, an electronics store, a beauty salon, coffee shop, an Internet café, a skate park, taxis (so it is safer to get around), a bowling alley, a shoe store, a boutique, a dance club, an arcade for youth to hang out, culture programs.
- Municipal-type services like streetlights, sidewalks, community benches, a treatment centre, bigger houses.

Children aged 6-12 were also asked for their input about making life in Bearskin Lake better for kids. They suggested more opportunities for playing in the gym and the computer room. Many expressed an interest in ice fishing and outdoor activities. Most children expressed their love of hockey. Many children conveyed that they go to bed at very late hours indicating they might require more parental supervision and adherence to more appropriate bedtimes on school nights.

#### Churches

Bearskin Lake has three churches, which work well together. They report that they find it hard to connect with the young people, who will often attend events like the Jamborees, but do not attend church. There are no ongoing youth activities through the churches except occasionally they run summer Bible camps for children. One local minister expressed that the problem with young people committing suicide is that they feel alone. They are affected by what their parents went through in residential school but they do not want to talk about it, unless they are intoxicated.

### 4.5.2 Recommendations

1. Continue to promote traditional culture through community gatherings and feasts.
2. Develop more opportunities for community members to share knowledge, including land-based lifestyles in the local language.
3. Develop more opportunities for youth and Elders to interact and share aspirations.
4. Promote dialogue between adults/community leaders and young people to identify programs and activities to address youth issues, e.g. gang awareness for youth to know how to be safe.
5. Develop more ways to support Elders in the community – increased ways for them to attend social events, visit with friends, and eat traditional foods, live safely and comfortably.

## 4.6 Children and Parents – Protection, Welfare and Safety

### 4.6.1 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

#### Alcohol and Drugs

One of the biggest community issues in Bearskin Lake is the problem of illicit drug use. Related to this issue is a rise in drug trafficking and youth violence. Reportedly some community members register online through a company in Mexico to purchase addictive drugs like Oxycontin and Percocet at low rates. They have them sent by mail and traffic them to community members at an increased rate with devastating effects.

There are also reported to be gang affiliations in the community now with both males and females enlisted. There has been an increase in assaults and break and enters committed by young people and it is suspected these are part of an initiation rite of a young person entering a gang. It was suggested that confidence building and self-esteem activities among the youth, especially the younger teens might help resist the temptations to use drugs or join gangs and might help them be more open with trusted adults about their pressures and concerns.

Parents have met to discuss these problems in the community. They expressed the need for external help to deal with these issues. A local religious leader however encouraged the community to start from within to address its problems. It was suggested that many northern communities look for help outside when it is the community members themselves who know the problems and can best come up with solutions.

#### Safety and Security

Bearskin has a Tikinagan Branch Office in the community which provides children and family services. There are five child welfare workers and a prevention program which is focused on providing local activities for children and families. There are slightly more than 10 children in care. Tikinagan tries to minimize the number of children in care and support children and families who are having troubles. Workers partner with community police officers and the local nursing station to identify and support troubled families.

Bearskin has only two Nishnawbe-Aski Police officers (NAPS) in the community and they are not available 24/7. If the police are off duty, an OPP dispatch is called to relay a message to the police. When emergency services are required, it can take up to four hours for outside help to arrive. It was expressed that First Nations communities are treated quite differently from non-Native communities, for example Pickle Lake has one sergeant and five police officers. This provides much more security to local residents and police officers as well.

A NAPS officer provides anti-bullying workshops for children in Grades 2-8, which has had some beneficial results. However, when asked, few children knew where to go in the community if they were “bothered by something” and needed protection or someone to talk to.

Bearskin, at times, has a serious problem with dogs. There was an attack on a three-year old child in the winter of 2009, and as a result a couple of dogs that were running at large and a danger to the public were destroyed. There is nowhere for animals to be neutered or spayed. A local woman has taken it upon herself to advertise online to give away puppies so some get shipped out of the community. A community memo was posted to tell people to tie up their dogs; however, it was suggested that a Band by-law be adopted stating the consequences of not tying up pets. The problem is that some dogs end up roaming the community in packs.

Bearskin has a First Response team but it does not have a vehicle. The Band Council thinks an ambulance would be good for the community because it is so spread out. One Councillor noted that membership in the First Response team is dwindling and suggested that training might help to revitalize this important community initiative.

#### Court

Court is held in Bearskin Lake every 2-3 months. It currently takes place in the youth centre because the conditions in the community centre are not optimal at present. Local youth temporarily lose their space during court proceedings. Court in a northern community can be a somewhat jarring experience: there are no advocates, social workers, or counsellors for young people who are charged with a crime. Lawyers are the only support available unless youth have a relative to accompany them. There are no private meeting rooms for lawyers and their clients. There is no probation officer who lives in Bearskin though one usually travels with the court party. Most cases are remanded because the young people are not able to meet with their representatives in advance. There appears to be a great divide between First Nations self-governance and the mainstream justice system, which has the appearance of being imposed from the outside.

Much of the language used in court is not youth friendly – instead it is a series of complex questions requiring complex answers. Some of the lawyers read entertainment magazines while court was in session. The lawyers, judge, and transcriber, usually all non-Native, bring their own food and eat during court. There are no breaks and limited food and drinks for those on trial. There are probably legitimate reasons for all of these occurrences, but it doesn't diminish the culture clash that occurs every court date. There is little sense of local justice or compassion for victims that a restorative justice system might impart to community members. There aren't many First Nations in the NAN district that regularly use

restorative justice, mostly because of funding issues. However, there are many NAN communities that have successfully used this approach for some cases and there is strong interest in exploring and using this system to heal communities.

## 4.6.2 Recommendations

1. Develop a strong program for younger teens and adolescents to build self-esteem and confidence to help them resist peer pressures to join gangs and become involved with alcohol and drugs. Explore offering youth leadership training.
2. Consider setting up a system of safe houses, perhaps identified by a sign in the front window, for children to seek refuge who feel threatened. Let children and youth know there are safe places they can go when they need to. Provide training and support to the people who volunteer their homes as safe houses.
3. Advocate for 24/7 police service in the community.
4. Review/update Band by-laws regarding dog control for the safety of children in the community. All dog owners should be aware of the rules regarding pets and expect routine implementation of the by-laws.
5. Provide First Response training and recruitment. Organize thank-you and recognition events for volunteers for this and other community programs to encourage more volunteering.
6. Work with other First Nations to explore funding for alternative justice systems, including the restorative justice approach.
7. Support young parents and families with more parenting instruction and workshops. Consider developing a mentor program for young families, connecting them with functional older parents in the community for support.
8. More parental supervision in the recreational programs that are available for children.

## 4.7 Mental and Physical Health

### 4.7.1 Needs and Issues Identified in the Assessment

Bearskin Lake has a two-nurse nursing station. The Nurse in Charge is a nurse practitioner who will retire in a year. Another nurse is taking training to move into her position. A physician flies in from Sioux Lookout for a few days each month. The Band Council wishes there were more doctor days in the community. Local nurses speak highly of the health system. They note that the Telemedicine program is supportive and useful. Nurses provide home visits when possible and

there is a palliative care program when required. There is a diabetes program with a keen but inexperienced worker who runs workshops, nutrition courses, etc. Training is needed for this and most other health programs. More collaboration on sharing community diabetes statistics would make this program run more smoothly.

The main health issues in the community are diabetes and alcohol/drug abuse. The latter leads to a huge number of mental health and addictions problems in all age groups and requires a great deal of education and awareness raising activities. There are a high number of teenage pregnancies. Pre-natal care and support for young mothers and families is needed.

There is concern in the community about the numerous oil spills that remain unaddressed. Some people have wondered if the cancer deaths are related to these spills. Band Council members note that Indian Affairs has changed funding policies for cleaning up oil spills, making it more difficult for the community to afford it.

There is a desire to bring traditional medicine back into the community.

### Community Services

Bearskin Lake has numerous committed individuals who work in the health and social services fields. These can be stressful, sometimes overwhelming positions and workers can sometimes end up feeling isolated and unsupported. Building on the strengths of these workers is important for overall community wellness. These workers need to be supported and encouraged. They need clear job descriptions and orientation to their roles, regular up to date training, clear lines of responsibility and open communication. They need recognition for the work they do to improve the community.

Currently, there are a number of agencies in the community that are working separately but with many similar goals. It would be ideal if these services could be located together to encourage more collaboration and communication. Ideally, the health staff, and programs like Healthy Babies, Maternal Child, CPNP, and Brighter Futures could locate offices in a shared building. In this way, services children and their parents could be more focused.

There is considerable pride in the local daycare centre, which is licensed for 26 children and employs a staff of 12. The service runs independently with little oversight from the Band and provides subsidized day care for families to enable parents to work outside of the home. Twenty preschool children attend full days but some additional children are limited to part time because of a space shortage. It is always a challenge to find staff qualified as Early Childhood Educators because Native daycare salaries are low. However, the program tries to make staff training a priority. First Aid and CPR, at a minimum,

are provided annually. The daycare program collaborates minimally with the Healthy Babies Program but in general there is not a lot of partnership. Service collaboration between workers in both programs and with other child-focused agencies in Bearskin would have benefits for staff and clients. In particular, it would benefit the children if the daycare staff would work with young parents in training, role modeling, and mentoring capacity.

The daycare staff would like to expand to provide an infant program for children 6 months to 2 years of age, but currently there is no space. In 2010 the local school will run a full time JK and SK student program, so that might free up space for an infant program at that time. Funding will need to be sought from the Kenora Ministry of Community and Social Services. The daycare supervisor notes that the Ministry does not fund training for staff to care for FAS/FASD children but this is needed in the north.

### **Elder Services**

The community has a Home Support program for Elders with 14 currently receiving services. There are four employees working in this program with an extra male hired during the winter months to do heavy outdoor work (wood, shovelling snow, etc). There is a seniors complex in the community which is in great need of maintenance. The heating goes off regularly and there are problems with the water system. There have been fuel leaks underneath the facility, which cause concern.

Elders have noted they would like to be involved in more community activities but it is a problem for some to get around, especially in the winter. One suggestion was that it would be good if Elders had their own community radio show on the local station. Elders also noted their preference for natural water from the lake instead of tap or commercial water. They would be very pleased if there was a way for them to access this. Some of the people interviewed suggested that Elders could use more support in Bearskin. One Elder couple conveyed that one of Bearskin's strengths is that the young people still hunt and share their traditional food with the Elders.

### **4.7.2 Recommendations**

1. Work regionally with other NAN First Nations to explore ways to decrease the cost of healthy foods.
2. Encourage exercise for all ages of community members and offer exercise opportunities e.g. walking paths, walking clubs, etc.
3. Find ways to move beyond politics where health concerns are present. Fuel oil spills in the community need to be cleaned up.
4. Develop a comprehensive alcohol and drug

education program.

5. Develop other social and health support programs: parenting courses, healthy living, etc.
6. Support local health and social service workers who sometimes feel they work in isolation. They frequently have stressful roles to play in the community. Develop a local recognition and award program. This does not need to be costly, but it could provide a much needed morale boost to community workers who deserve acknowledgement. It might also encourage others to volunteer to do things that benefit the community.
7. Develop more collaboration between local health and social services to support workers and work together on issues of importance and to provide clients with focused services.
8. Advocate for more support for FAS/FASD children and for workers and parents who care for them. Community gatherings were highlighted as an activity that can keep the community closeness. The gatherings will give Elders and, young people a chance to communicate.

## **5. Discussions and Conclusions**

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The Searching Together process at Bearskin Lake First Nation was done as an effort by the people to understand their community and to document the needs and strengths.

Overall, the foremost quality that came out of this endeavour was that community members really care about the future of their children. Bearskin Lake First Nation is home to the people that reside here and nothing can change that fact. They love their community and their traditional territories. The people still go out to their traplines, or traditional territories, as they have done in the past.

The paramount concern voiced by everyone that spoke to the Searching Together team, is to have more parental supervision and participation in the children and youth activities. They feel this will keep the connection and community spirit alive.

As for community structures, Bearskin Lake has an arena, youth centre, school, clinic and all are in adequate condition and well maintained. There is some need in all buildings for additional office space, and a brand new health centre to house physical and mental health offices. For housing, this



community requires extensive renovations and more new housing but currently to purchase the upgrades is not within the budget of the First Nation.

The greatest strength of the community is consistent leadership. From the onset, the Searching Together team recognized how consistent leadership will positively affect the overall state of the community. It has produced a people who want to take care of their families, homes and their community.

The community members have pointed out areas that are of serious concern and other areas where they feel they need help. It is the duty of Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win to highlight all of the concerns.

## 5.2 Summary of Suggested Ideas and Recommendations

There are some recommendations which may help bring an improvement to the quality of life for the residents of Bearskin Lake First Nation.

1. There needs to be a community-wide implementation of a plan on how to curb the increasing addiction to prescription drugs. The future of the children and the stability of the community will be compromised if this problem is not addressed. The drug problem is so serious that outside resources will be needed as part of the plan. Treatment and after care have to be delivered in the community, by constructing a centre that can help address these challenges. The community will need to devise a plan where it will be non-threatening to the people that need help. It is a community problem and the solution will come from the community.
2. The community recognizes the need for ongoing training in meeting standards for all areas of operation. Education is the key to succeeding in the modern day world.
3. Sharing of information is crucial between all the First Nations in this area. This will increase the knowledge base and increase the ability to take advantage of all programs available in the south, or created by organizations.
4. Community gatherings were highlighted as an activity that can keep the community closeness. The gatherings will give Elders and young people a chance to communicate.
5. The funding formulas for infrastructure need to be north-friendly. Currently some funding formulas do not take into account the remoteness and what is accessible in the northern communities.

## 5.3 Summary of Recommendations

No individual community, organization or government working alone will be able to deliver on all the

recommendations contained within this report. It is essential that all stakeholders, including governments, the voluntary sector, the private sector, First Nations communities, the media, families, Elders, children and youth all work towards ensuring that the rights and well-being of Aboriginal people in Canada are recognized.

Each stakeholder has unique and sometimes overlapping responsibilities:

1. **Civil society and the voluntary sector:** Although support has been increasing in recent years there is still a great deal of unrealized potential and support that can and should be mobilized within the voluntary sector. We call upon all voluntary organizations, including international development agencies, to explore how their services and resources can better support the work of First Nations communities, taking into account the needs for advocacy, capacity building and training, securing resources and identifying new partnerships and expertise.
2. **Governments:** Federal and Provincial governments must all become more accountable to these communities to realize their hopes and dreams for their children and to rectify past and present injustices. Governments must play a key role to ensure barriers are removed and communities have the needed resources to continue reclaiming their lives.
3. **First Nation Communities:** Understanding the untapped resources that exist within the communities, as well as nationally and internationally and the ability to utilize these resources to their fullest potential will be of great use. Working together and learning from other First Nations communities will also assist in learning from past successes and failures and help the growth and healing of your communities.
4. **Private Sector:** Business, banking and mining companies have a unique responsibility and contribution to make to First Nation communities. With guidance from First Nations leadership, the private sector can assist with real growth, training and development, particularly with regards to livelihoods, housing and economic development. Corporate social responsibility ethics and principals must be realized and practised in partnership with First Nations communities.
5. **Parents and Families:** A child's best start in life lies in the hands of their parents and families. Being

responsible for their children's well-being, parents must be supported in every way to ensure success. Recognition and support must also be given to the unique support and wisdom available from extended family members and Elders. A true sense of community and shared responsibility for the care and nurturing of children needs to be encouraged.

6. **Children and Youth:** The perspective of children and youth are unique and the well-being of a community can only be fully understood if their views and ideas are heard and part of any planning process. Children and youth must be supported and provided with the tools and resources required to change and influence their lives and the communities in which they live.
7. **Religious/Spiritual Leaders and Elders:** Children, youth and adults require these teachings and their wisdom to rebuild, to live healthy lives and to overcome past and present trauma.
8. **Academics:** To assist with research and to learn from and document past experiences. Each community will be unique but understanding successful practices and applying them to existing and future initiatives can only serve to support successful development.



## Annex 1:

### Bearskin Lake First Nation and Kasabonika Lake First Nation

Mamow Na-nan-da-we-ki-ken-chi-kay-win: Searching Together Process

#### Team Composition

**Overall Coordination:** Linda Nothing-Chaplin

#### External Resource Team:

Allan Johnson (recreation, youth, education, security)

Richard Meen (mental/physical health)

Lillian Suganaqueb (mental/physical health)

Ines Lincho (food, shelter, infrastructure)

Amanda Rose (recreation, youth, education)

Joe Beardy (Elders, culture, security)

John Cutfeet (livelihoods, culture)

#### Community Consultants:

Cathy Pemmican

Joseph Beardy

John Cutfeet

#### Community Experts

Brief bios of the team members are available in Annex 2.

#### Searching Together Objectives

1. To complete an assessment, collecting preliminary information on areas which include:
  - Livelihoods
  - Food / water /sanitation
  - Security and safety
  - Community participation
  - Children and parents
  - Mental and physical health
  - Education/recreation
2. To develop an awareness raising/advocacy strategy
3. To understand community strengths and challenges
4. To develop a strategy for follow up/next steps, taking into account feasibility in regards to funding, expertise and resources within the community, within the Partnership, the voluntary sector and short and long term objectives.

## Bearskin Lake Organizational Chart

	External Team	Areas of focus	Community Experts	Community Liaisons
<b>Coordinator</b> Linda Nothing-Chaplin	John Cutfeet	Livelihoods	Bearskin Lake Expert	Deputy Chief Wes Nothing Joseph Beardy John Cutfeet
	Ines Lincho	Infrastructure	Bearskin Lake Expert	
	Linda Nothing-Chaplin			
<b>Facilitator</b> Joseph Beardy John Cutfeet	Amanda Rose	Education & Recreation	Bearskin Lake Expert	
	Allan Johnson			
	Linda Nothing-Chaplin	Community Participation	Bearskin Lake Expert	
	Ines Lincho John Cutfeet	Food, Water, Sanitation		
<b>Logistics</b> John Cutfeet & Linda Nothing-Chaplin	Amanda Rose	Children & Parents	Bearskin Lake Expert	
	Joseph Beardy Allan Johnson	Security		
	Lillian Suganaqueb Dr. Dick Meen	Mental & Physical Health	Bearskin Lake Expert	



## Annex 2: Team Bios

**Amanda Rose** is currently completing her Masters of Social Work degree at York University. Amanda recently graduated from the Child and Youth Care Bachelor program at Ryerson University. Amanda has several years experience as an advocate for the rights of youth in government care across Ontario. Amanda was one of two winners of the Centre of Excellence Canadian Youth Leadership awards of 2008. In January, to continue her passion in working with marginalized children and youth, Amanda became an MSW student at the North-South Partnership for Children. She has attended four community assessments and she continues to work with the NSP to develop strong relationships between remote northern First Nations communities and southern Ontario non-profit organizations. As a Métis female she is searching to find her roots and a sense of belonging in a colonized nation.

**Ines Lincho** is a recent graduate of the Child and Youth Care program at Ryerson University. Ines has been working with immigrant youth through a relational framework, implementing educational, recreational, and social programs/activities to support the integration process into Canada. Ines has been involved with Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win since March 2008 and has had the honour of visiting Pikangikum, Bearskin Lake and Kasabonika First Nations.

**Allan Johnson** is a Supervisor at William W. Creighton Youth Services in Thunder Bay Ontario. He has been employed there since 1991, first as a residential worker and in different capacities to his current position. Allan works with troubled youth who end up in secure custody. Allan seeks to help youth who for various reasons have come into trouble with the law. He graduated from Confederation College in 1993 as a Child and Youth Worker

Allan is an avid sports enthusiast who has accomplished many personal goals in this area. He is a member of the Canadian Amputee Hockey Team. The team has won three gold medals in Lake Placid, New York 2001, Helsinki, Finland 2003 and Jelgava, Latvia in 2006. He has also participated in the 2002 Paralympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah, showcase games versus the USA. He also coached his daughter's hockey team from 2001 to 2004.

Allan is married to Lilly has three lovely daughters, Rachel 6, Aden 9, and Lydia 12.

**Linda Nothing-Chaplin** is an Oji-Cree woman from Bearskin Lake First Nation. Linda grew up in the community

until she left for high school. Linda enjoyed the traditional aspects of life on the First Nation which included spending the whole summers in fish camps. The winter activities included rabbit snaring and traditional life skills. Linda speaks Anishiniimowin and writes in Syllabics.

As an adult, Linda was privileged to live in four provinces and experience life on First Nations in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Linda has had various work experiences including business owner, banking, child welfare and advocacy for First Nations issues. Linda is currently employed by the NSP. Linda has been on all "Searching Together" trips as a key team member providing leadership with the process.

**Richard Meen** is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Clinical Director at Kinark Child and Family Services. Dick Meen has over 30 years experience in Psychiatry. Born in the UK, he obtained his MD from the University of Western Ontario, a Diploma in Psychiatry from the University of Toronto and he is a Certificant of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (Psychiatry). Dick brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience having worked in both southern Ontario and in Northern Ontario with First Nation communities.

**Joseph Beardy** is from the Bearskin Lake First Nation and speaks Anishiniimowin fluently. Joseph has worked in the television production field and in media for approximately 25 years. In this capacity he has travelled extensively throughout Canada and the United States, interviewing and collecting stories about First Nations people and their history.

Mr. Beardy started his career at Wawatay Native Communications Society as a TV production engineer then graduating into journalism. He then moved to Toronto where he worked with the Ontario Government under the Ministry of Natural Resources making videos on cross cultural awareness issues. He moved to northern Manitoba in 1994 to work for Native Communications Society (NCI) as a television producer, producing bi-weekly shows for broadcast through CBC North. Mr. Beardy returned to Wawatay in Sioux Lookout for two years as head of productions for the TV department. It was here that he would start submitting his work to the annual television awards held in Banff, Alberta. In his first year he won the Human Rights award for his production on residential schools titled, "Spirit Broken; the Pelican Indian Residential School Days." He also received an honourable mention for another half-hour documentary on an Elder from Big Trout Lake titled "Kokum of the North." Both documentaries are in the Anishiniimowin language. In 1999, Joe was hired by the newly formed Aboriginal People's

Television Network (APTN) to work as their in-house producer. He remained at APTN in Winnipeg for 7 years. Today Mr. Beardy works as an independent producer through a production company that he started called Wolf Clan Productions.

**Lillian Suganaqueb** is both an entrepreneur as well as innovator in changing the delivery of mental health and first response in her First Nation of Webequie. She has devised a community health plan which helps address the most tragic incidents in her community.

Lillian, also a business owner, operates a fly-in tourist camp which caters to fishermen. She advertises her camp on a website which attracts fishing enthusiasts from all over the world. Lillian speaks her Anishiniimowin language as well as English. Lillian is dedicated to helping the northern communities.

**John Cutfeet** started his career in television at Wawatay Native Communications Society. He served his First Nation of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug as a Councillor for eight years. John currently does media related consulting work for various organizations. He works as the bilingual mining coordinator for the Wildlands League, a chapter of the Canadians Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). He is often sought to provide simultaneous translation at meetings. John Cutfeet enjoys traditional pursuits as practised by his ancestors and regularly enjoys fishing and hunting. He is often invited to meetings to speak on the importance of protecting the land and the environment. He speaks his Anishiniimowin language as well as English.



Bearskin Lake First Nation Assessment Report 2009

## Annex 3: Team Responsibilities

### Terms of Reference: Coordinator

#### Bearskin Lake and Kasabonika Lake First Nations

**Coordinator:** Linda Nothing-Chaplin

**Duration:** March 8-13, 2009

**Background:** Please see “Terms of Reference Bearskin Lake and Kasabonika Lake First Nations Assessment” for background information.

**Child Protection:** All team members must agree to and sign the Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win: North South Partnership for Children’s Code of Conduct (Annex 4).

#### Responsibility:

The coordinator, Linda Nothing-Chaplin, will participate fully in the assessment as part of the external assessment team and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically, she will:

- Provide training and necessary preparation to members of the external team
- Lead the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus
- Provide insight re desired community contacts and interviewees
- Facilitate and lead team meetings, including pre meeting and debriefs
- Ensure team is on point and that the messaging is coordinated and consistent
- Ensure community view is not tainted for the report
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report
- Ensure community understands their ownership of the completed report.

### Terms of Reference: External Resource Team

#### Bearskin Lake and Kasabonika Lake First Nations

#### External Resource Team:

Amanda Rose  
Ines Lincho  
Allan Johnson  
Dr. Dick Meen

Joseph Beardy  
John Cutfeet  
Linda Nothing-Chaplin  
Lillian Suganaqueb

**Duration:** March 8-13, 2009.

Child Protection: All team members must agree to and sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct (to be provided).

**Responsibility:**

All members of the External Resource Team will participate fully in the assessment and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically, they will:

- Assist in the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus
- Gather data under their identified area of focus in partnership with a community representative/expert
- Participate in team meetings and debriefings
- Keep accurate and thorough records of data and interviews
- Uphold, support and communicate agreed to messaging (while speaking to community members and others about the project)
- Contribute to key messages
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report
- Assist in exploring linkages and support from ‘partners’ and other sources.

**Terms of Reference: Community Liaisons**

**Bearskin Lake and Kasabonika Lake First Nations**

**Bearskin Lake:** Deputy Chief Wesley Nothing  
Councillor Bruce Kamenawatamin  
Steven Fiddler

**Kasabonika Lake:**

Councillor Theresa Brown                      Keith Mason  
Cathy Pemmican

**Duration:** March 8-13, 2009

**Child Protection:** All team members must agree to and sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct (to be provided).

**Responsibility:**

The Community Liaisons will participate fully in the assessment and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically, they will:

- Identify community experts for each of the areas of focus
- Make needed arrangements to interview various community members and visit different community sites and locations
- Provide logistical assistance, including necessary arrangements for meeting venue, food, transportation and translation

- Assist in the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus
- Participate in team meeting and debriefings – with particular focus on facilitating and informing the plenary agenda in each community
- Contribute to key messages
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report.

**Terms of Reference: Community Experts**

**Bearskin Lake and Kasabonika Lake First Nations**

**Community Experts:**

To be determined (by Community Liaisons)

**Duration:** March 8-13, 2009

**Child Protection:** All team members must agree to and sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct (to be provided).

**Responsibility:**

The Community Experts will participate fully in the assessment and contribute to the overall program development that will result from the assessment. Specifically, they will:

- Work with a member of the External Resources Team to gather and collect community information for each of the areas of focus
- Provide individual expertise and insight on an area of focus
- Work together with members of the External Resources Team to interview community members and visit community sites
- Provide planning and coordination support prior to community visit to set up interviews and community members to speak with
- Assist in the development of questions and data collection methods under each of the areas of focus
- Participate in all community based meetings - with particular focus on facilitating and informing the plenary agenda in each community
- Contribute to key messages
- Contribute to overall recommendations and structuring of final report.

## Annex 4: Volunteer Code of Conduct

Volunteers hold a position of power and control over children which is based on a high level of mutual and reciprocal trust.

### Every child has the right:

- To be respected and treated with dignity as a unique, special and valued individual
- To be safe and protected, to receive good and nutritious food, to have clothing that fits well and keeps them warm
- To be free from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and not to be subject to physical discipline
- To privacy and to have personal belongings, including the right to send and receive mail that is not read by others
- To be treated with respect and dignity

### Volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Treat Elders, Chief and Council, community members, children and other volunteers with respect and dignity
- Consistently display high personal standards and project a favourable image of themselves and volunteering
- Refrain from the use of profane, insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language in the conduct of his/her

duties

- Abstain from the use of tobacco products while in the presence of children
- Not be in possession of, or under the influence of, or provide others with, alcohol, illegal drugs other harmful substances
- Use non-violent means to resolve conflict – physical aggressive behaviour is not a responsible way to interact with others
- Not use insults, disrespect and other hurtful acts
- Ensure the safety of the people with whom they work
- Abide by the sexual abuse policy of the Partnership

Volunteers must understand that any violation of this relationship shall not be tolerated.

This Code of Conduct has been developed to assist volunteers in achieving a level of behaviour which will allow participants to become well-rounded, self confident and productive human beings.

Volunteers engaged by the Partnership are expected to observe all laws of Canada, Ontario and the First Nation as well as the policies of the Partnership. Failure to comply with this condition may result in a review or termination of the engagement.

I have read and understand the above statements and agree to conduct myself in a manner that demonstrates the standards established in the Volunteers Code of Conduct.



## Annex 5: Values

The values of Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win are as follows:

### **Sharing with Gratitude:** *Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win*

We are grateful for the resources and gifts that we have and for the opportunity to share these gifts with others. Ours is a spirit of giving, without expectation of reward, recognition or return.

### **Respect**

We hold deep respect for children, youth, families, communities, First Nation leaders, and Elders whom we are dedicated to serve. This respect is demonstrated through humility, a non-judgmental attitude, effective listening, clear communication and recognition of the unique strength in others.

### **Traditional Teachings**

We recognize and aspire to work and live from the values that are embodied in the traditional Aboriginal teachings of respect, humility, love, honesty, bravery, truth and wisdom.

### **Aboriginal Culture**

We recognize that culture is the basis for personal and family identity, pride and self-esteem and we recognize and seek to build upon the strengths of Aboriginal culture and the traditional teachings.

### **Language and Land**

We recognize that language and land are key to cultural identity and to the preservation of culture. We strive to communicate effectively using the First Nations languages and to provide verbal and written translation of information wherever possible. We will support cultural and land-based programs and activities.

### **Elders**

We hold the Elders in high regard, recognizing that they carry with them the history of the First Nation communities and the essence of Aboriginal Culture. We will go to them and listen to their wisdom, guidance, and traditional teachings.

### **The Four Elements of Being**

We understand the need to respond to the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of the children, youth and families who will benefit from the work of the Partnership. We respect the right of all people to meet these needs in ways that reflect their own beliefs and understandings and we will not promote particular belief systems through the work of the Partnership.

### **Rights**

We understand that the First Nations have the inherent right to govern themselves, to care for their children, and to make decisions in their own best interests. We understand that Treaties are sacred documents in which the people of different nations agreed to share in the benefits of the resources of the land, and we want to see the resources shared in ways that meet the needs of children, youth, families and Elders in the remote First Nation communities. Our work will be rights based and our efforts will strategically address the attitudes, root causes and systematic issues impacting First Nation communities.

### **Trust and Accountability**

We are committed to being trustworthy, transparent and accountable in fulfilling the responsibilities as described in our Mamow Sha-way-gi-kay-win Terms of Reference. We will be responsible stewards of the funds and resources entrusted to the partnership and provide financial statements and reports to all funders and donors.



## Annex 6: Bearskin Lake Community Needs

The following are some items mentioned to us as community needs.

- Tractor
- Loader
- Grader
- Tandem truck with plough
- new dock
- material to renovate grave sites
- Building materials for renovating homes
- Hover Craft for rescues
- ambulance
- skates
- skate sharpener
- sports jerseys
- Zamboni
- computers
- water filtering system
- playground for children
- canoes & paddles for children's cultural activities

- lifejackets for children and youth
- school supplies, scissors, posters, books, stacking shelves, chart paper and more
- hockey balls, hockey sticks
- badminton rackets and birdies
- computer software
- local TV station
- veterinarian services for the dog problem

### Basic wish list from children & youth

- to have a "Wiggles and Giggles"
- to have a dock for swimming
- Ipod touch
- Waterslide
- Skate park
- Music instruments
- Bowling alley
- Music lessons
- Arcade

High on the list are materials for renovating homes and training and volunteers.

