

The Westend Weekly

Bringing Communities Together



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FASD Awareness Day features speaker from Nova Scotia



Francis Perry during his talk at Metis Hall

By Marlene Deschamps

September 9th is FASD Awareness Day. Each year the organizers try and get the message out about this totally preventable disorder and they hold an event. This year, Erin McMahon, Aboriginal FASD and child nutrition worker at Gizhewaadiwin Health Access Centre went on line to look for a motivational speaker for the event. When she read Francis Perry's bio she knew she wanted to get him to come and speak here. It was a great choice as people got to meet and hear about how this young man turned a disability into an ability that really helps people.

The day started with a walk from the access centre and ended with guest speaker, Francis Perry at the Sunset Country Metis Hall. Josephine Potson was the Elder for the day's events and before Perry spoke, the Thunder Heart drummers from Couchiching drummed for the around 40 people who were present. Erin McMahon spoke along with Shannon Wier from the Health Access Centre as did Sheila McMahon from the United Friendship Centre. There was a getting to know you exercise prior to the talk and there were tables against the wall with pamphlets and information about FASD. There was information about the disorder, and programs available to help both those diagnosed and their families.

When Perry got up to speak, those present heard about how prior to getting his diagnosis, Perry had lived a chaotic life with school suspensions, many contacts with the law, being the subject of much bullying, living on the streets and a feeling of being hopeless and being worthless and that his being born was a big mistake. He took you through those times and people were given a copy of his bio which included three pages of his early years, his time in a private school, his high school years, his trouble with the law, the community that helped him get a diagnosis, and the result of that diagnosis. His story has been published in magazines and he was also featured in a documentary entitled "Reality of a Dream" aired on APTN. He said this was the first time he had been in this area. He spoke of the love and support he received from his adoptive family over the years. He was adopted at the age of three into a white family. He explained that it was hard being the only native kid in the community and having FASD only made the problems he encountered worse. He spoke of the times he was filled with anger, frustration, disgust with himself and he didn't know his life was of any value until his diagnosis. He said he then learned he was not a mistake but he did have a disability and he could learn some coping mechanisms. He spoke of persons

suffering from FASD cannot differentiate between the concrete and the abstract and that how all abstract thought couldn't be understood. This prevented him from learning how to tell time until he was in his late teens. Because the front of the clock is referred to as the face (an abstract concept) and the time pointers are referred to as the hands (again abstract) he could not understand. Shortly before ending his talk, Perry held up a beer bottle and then a clear jar with broken pieces of a beer bottle. He explained that for every piece of broken glass there was a person affected by FASD. One was for mother, one for father, one for siblings, one for teachers, one for doctors, one for police officers and the list of names went on and on. He pointed out that this is not a woman's issue; it is everyone's issue as shown in how the whole community is affected by a child with FASD. Although Perry has no formal education past Grade 6, he is self taught and has done a lot of studying. He has been to workshops all over Canada and he said he felt honoured to be asked to speak at a school in New Brunswick a few years ago and the rest is history. He spoke of how diagnosis is so important and people should focus on what they can do and not on what you can't do. He said his family is very proud of what he has done. A question and answer period followed.

Final building design for Rainy River House approved



Eltjo Wiersema, past president of the Rainy River Pumpkin Festival.

The Main Committee Meeting on Friday September 9, 2011 approved the final design presented by the Building Committee. The Building Committee put forth their recommendation following extensive meetings during the past week with designing architect Claude Lord and engineering consultant Dean Bethune of Saulteaux

Consulting & Engineering.

A major change was the design of the foundation from a concrete pad to footing/stub wall with a crawl space. This change facilitated several options including the ease and flexibility of installing plumbing and heating systems, as well as taking pressure off the site preparation work needed prior

to construction.

Additional adjustments to the proposed tender will facilitate the use of 'donations in kind' in the construction process. Tender documents will be completed in a matter of days, with tender calls advertised immediately thereafter. This will allow construction to begin and critical foundation concrete work to be completed prior to freeze up. The Building Committee is to be commended for their dedicated hard work and ability to build a consensus. Congratulations.

Fund raising committee chair, Norma Elliott summarized efforts to date and ongoing plans throughout the community including events at the RRWT later this month. An updated list of donors to date, including 'In Memoriam' contributions will be published in coming reports. Many individuals and groups have devised innovative ways to contribute to Rainy River House and we will highlight some of their efforts in coming issues. An example of community generosity is the Rainy River Giant Pumpkin Festival that disbanded a couple of years back after serving the community for over a decade. They donated all their remaining funds (\$1,692.60) to the Rainy River Locum House Project.

"It was the right thing to do. After all we had received part of our initial funding from the Rainy River Horticultural Society when it ceased activity, and we thought it was an excellent way to continue support of our community by passing it on to Rainy River House," stated Eltjo Wiersema past president of the Pumpkin Festival.

Riverside Foundation FUNdraiser "Mardi Gras" coming together



The Special Events Committee took a little break from making up beautiful prizes for the penny table and auction.

By Marlene Deschamps

The Riverside Foundation fund raiser this year is looking like it will be another great evening of fun. The Memorial Sports Centre auditorium will be sparkling with colours of gold, green and purple on Saturday, October 1st to celebrate the annual fund raising event.

Allison Hyatt, chair of the special events committee said they are planning an elegant event with cocktails, appetizers, live jazz, prizes, entertainment, games, photos, auctions, dancing, a trip to New Orleans and of course fun. The menu is spectacular and fancy and Ryan Parisien, head of Naicatchewenin Development

Corporation Food Service Department has generously donated his time to prepare a menu of New Orleans fare with a local twist. The menu will include Cajun Blackened pike, jambalaya and creole tomato vinaigrette. Anyone who has had the pleasure of eating food prepared by Ryan will attest to how delicious it all is.

Everyone is invited to attend. The dress is semi-formal and you can buy a mask or bring your own.

Gold, silver and bronze sponsored table are also available for \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500 respectively. Nikki Baird, Foundation Director, said they have had a great response for corpo-

rate tables and great support from local businesses.

The tickets are \$50 and with only 200 available you might want to get yours early. You can get your ticket by calling 274-4803 or 276-0029. They are also available at all of the Riverside facilities and at all Gillon's offices.

The Foundation is still looking for donations for the silent and live auction and are asking if any artists could create something in a "Mardi Gras" theme. There are a few lamps, tables and chairs available if artists would like to refurbish in the theme style. You can call Nikki at 274-4803 if you are interested.

Hazardous Waste Day



This truck will be leaving Fort Frances filled with close to 44,000 US pounds of waste.

By Marlene Deschamps

Hazardous Waste Day was held on Saturday, August 10th. Last year Miller Environmental filled up the truck shown in the picture. It holds up to 44,000 US pounds on 26 pallets. The pallets can also be stacked. It was expected that this year it would again be filled with toxic,

inflammable and poisonous containers that can't be safely rendered harmless at any facility here. It could also cause real problems if it was put into our landfill. This program is of real benefit for any municipality that wishes to safely dispose of these types of material. There were many people dropping off paint

cans, batteries, lighters and fluorescent light bulbs, just to mention a few. The lines of cars that passed through were dealt with in a very speedy manner and there were no long waits for anyone. Another successful venture to help protect our environment.



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