

Week of Action Against Poverty (WAAP) 2018 Report

This year's keynote event was the public viewing of the *Us & Them* video by documentary maker, Krista Loughton. In a collaboration between KACL and MKH, the event was held at the Manidoo Baawaatig campus. Both the afternoon and evening events were well attended (over 175 attendees on February 15). Project partners included City of Kenora, Kenora District Services Board, Seven Generations Education Institute, Northwest Health Unit and Q104. Because of their generous support, the project came in at \$33.00 under budget. Participants reported that the video evoked a deeper connectedness with the issue of homelessness.

Publicity for the WAAP were undertaken by People First (Red Ribbon campaign-distribution of 1,000 lapel ribbons), Kenora's financial institutions (postering lobbies) and our municipality (official declaration of WAAP).

The Walk In Our Shoes Poverty Challenge featured 8 participants who all worked in the health field. Their blogs were thought provoking, sometimes rueful and always respectful of those who struggle through poverty daily. Perspectives shifted and each will bring new awareness of the oppressing minutiae of chronic poverty into their own lives. Sharing their developed perspectives with others spreads a deeper understanding of poverty through our community. Because of the focus on health, the challenge was launched from Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig. There was 1226 site entries with a total of 3470 individual page views. Overall most of the blog traffic came through facebook (68%), MKH web site (17%) and 895thelake.com (6%).

As is tradition, the week opened with the Prayers from the Pulpit. Two congregations reported deepening their commitments as a result and others confirmed their continuing contribution to local poverty alleviation efforts.

Several schools planned activities to heighten awareness and advocacy amongst students. King George's grade 1 class spent the week learning about community helpers and completed their study unit with making "stone soup" for donation to the Fellowship Centre. At Valleyview School, a grade 5 class expanded their studies into Exploring Community Need and brought their perspectives into a final forum with a speaker from MKH. The class then displayed the boxes of food that were being donated to the Kenora Fellowship Centre by all of the Valleyview students. Pope John Paul II planned several low key events for their students at various levels including a prayer wall, charity food preparation and participation in Wear Red Day.

Kijik School planned to emphasize the Seven Grandfather teachings to encourage charitable living. École Ste Marguerite Bourgeoys's junior kindergarten decorated special cups to be donated to the Fellowship Centre. In addition the school collected winter wear accessories which were hung around the community on the Coldest Day of the Year march for use by anyone who needed scarves, mittens and hats.

The Hot Meal Challenge was issued and the MKH board catered their annual dinner at Helping Hands on February 13. Ninety five plates were filled and served. We had excellent volunteerism and the pulled pork dinner was enjoyed by all reports. This meal was preceded on February 10 by the Kenora NDP's free pancake breakfast held at Jubilee Church.

The Fellowship Centre presented "What is Poverty?" to bring the teachings of the Elders to the general public. Each speaker brought forward different strands of understanding to weave into a more inclusive perspective. Moving away from a financial definition, the Elders spoke of a poverty of spirit and culture that ultimately leads to unhealthy lifestyles. In addressing addiction struggles, mutual support, respect and hope were cited as crucial for healing.

Homeless in Kenora: Health Matters was launched on February 14 at the Kenora public library. The reading was done by Judy Underwood and greetings were brought from our MP's office. The light refreshments offered a sweet conclusion to the event.

Wear Red Day took place in a several venues including the LAO/NCLC offices, the NWHU, Lakeside Bible Study and local schools. Group pictures were posted on our facebook feed.

The Kenora Fellowship Centre was the recipient of community goodwill. A local chocolatier made individual inspirational treat bags for patrons on Valentine's Day. The OPP's Project Sunset created special blankets for those who are homeless. An Elder shared the meaning of a blanket gift by explaining that from birth to death, we are wrapped in blankets for comfort thus it is gift of love. Lily Bell made a lovely personal contribution of cupcakes to patrons. The centre also received donations of bags and containers from the Ladies in Black. Staff reported that other much appreciated donations were made anonymously.

The Northwestern Health Unit held a variety of small events ranging from luncheon fundraisers to dress down donations to can goods drives. Copperfin Credit Union also made a donation to a local charity to mark WAAP 2018.

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) focused on poverty reduction with a microbusiness seminar for women on February 12, a Queen for a Day draw and a Mom to Mom sale on February 14. The Kenora Dental Professional staff also did a fund raising luncheon to benefit a local charity.

The week finished with a Jam Night Fundraiser organized by Laura Cotton and Darcy Ura at Bob's Burgers (February 22). The music was great (Darcy Ura, Josh Wolfe, Laura Cotton, Charles Gibson, Beau Lukes, Jackson Kippenstein and Alex Call). The silver collection garnered \$300 to benefit the Fellowship Centre. This year's WAAP song release by Alex Call was *Sanctuary*.

Not all activities were reported for the community count. Some prefer privacy and we respect that preference.

Media coverage was very good. CBC radio called in for a report on local activities which was aired and placed on their online news site. The Daily Miner News featured 9 articles (all with photos-including one full cover shot) that were republished in the Enterprise for further circulation. Q107/Kenora online covered 4 events and 89.5theLake focused on 3 events.

Commentary:

-Many commit to ongoing projects which then do not get counted in following years. It might be useful to find a way to honour the ongoing work during WAAP.

-The schools continue to participate at the behest of individuals rather than the organization itself. Community participation develops good citizenship and schools are a prime ground for development. PJP II's participation came this year through the parent council. Perhaps we should endeavour to contact each council prior to WAAP to encourage participation.

-Although the community count allows us to measure impact, the inconsistency of reporting undermines the measurement. There is a dynamic tension between proving activity and humbly serving.

