



North Bay | 16 °C | A few clouds



Careers Classifieds Obituaries Wheels Digital Edition Shopping

SUBSCRIBE SATURDAY, AUGUST 16, 2008

SUBMIT JOIN | SIGN-IN Community Sports

News Sports Business Arts/Life Multimedia Features Blogs Contact Us

# Editorial

Home News Editorial We need to start believing each other

## We need to start believing each other

Posted By MAURICE SWITZER

Posted 37 mins ago

I'm not sure if my grandfather Moses Marsden would qualify as one of the beneficiaries of the prime minister's June 11 apology.

Our family never knew much about the southern Ontario training school he attended in the 1870s, other than he ran away from it before he completed Grade 3. It was one of those things that Indian families didn't dwell on.

If Grandpa had told his family about the kind of experiences I've heard residential school survivors talk about, I don't know if they would have believed him. It's almost beyond comprehension that elected Parliamentarians and church leaders in a civilized society would institutionalize child abuse.

On June 11 an Alberta First Nation leader told a national television audience about teachers sticking pins in his father's tongue when he dared to speak his native language. A British Columbia man spoke in hushed tones to a radio interviewer about his wife and child fleeing the violence that was his residential school legacy.

You can hear a pin drop when Elder Merle Assance-Beadie shares with Anishinabek cross-cultural workshop participants some of the abusive treatment she endured at four residential schools. Her gentle words convey the sheer terror she must have felt as a young child being terrorized by teachers and clerics for no apparent reason.

But what must be one of the hardest pills to swallow for many of the 80,000 survivors is the knowledge that so few Canadians know anything about what Prime Minister Stephen Harper called one of the darkest chapters in this country's history. I recall Marlene Brant-Castellano-- the co-director of research for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples -- saying how troubled she was seeing university graduates not knowing anything more about native issues than the ones she saw when she began her career as an educator 30 years earlier.

During recent workshops with 250 North Bay-area teachers, several -- including one principal -- told me they had never known what a residential school was. This represents an educational oversight comparable to historians skipping over the Jewish Holocaust of the Second World War.

People have interesting responses to learning that Canada has such skeletons in her closet. Some North Bay teachers wrote in their evaluations that the First Nation perspectives on Canadian history amounted to whining." It is no doubt troubling to discover your ancestors were complicit in systemic racism and child abuse.

We try to assure participants that they are not responsible, nor should they feel guilty about historic injustices.

But, if it happens again," we caution, it will be your fault."

And surely that's the purpose of the national apology process - to admit that there has been a problem so we can avoid it recurring. Having a better understanding of the past should help all of us in Canada build a better future. As a Supreme Court judge wisely observed in ruling on a historic land claim -- we're all here to stay.

[Continued After Advertisement Below](#)

Advertisement placeholder with a red X icon.

Listening to someone else's perspective is an important element of trust, an ingredient that has been in very short supply in the relationship between First Peoples and others who came here to make a home for themselves. We need to start believing each other -- and believing in each other.

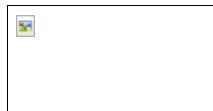
As for Grandpa Moses, nobody believed him when he insisted that he saved money on gas by switching off the ignition when driving down hills.

But when I paid \$85 to fill up my car last week, I wondered if we should have paid attention.

Maurice Switzer is a citizen of Alderville First Nation. He serves as director of communications for the Union of Ontario Indians and editor of the Anishinabek News.

Article ID# 1159709

Search filters: Past 7 days - FREE, UR North Bay, Archive Information, Search button.



canoe 411 Business Name City Find a: Business Person Search button.



Habitat for Humanity Recycling Program Habitat for Humanity North Bay and Blue Sky Region We are still collecting pop cans join me Saturday August 16 from 10 to 12 [...]

You're Invited! Northeast Mental Health Centre Celebrates 50 Years of Providing Service to the Northeast Ontario Region! The Northeast Mental Health Centre welcomes you to refresh and celebrate the history of the Northeast Mental Health Centre in its many forms such as [...]

A Weekend of Shamanic Healing in Algonquin Park MANDAZA, a Bantu Shaman is visiting Algonquin Park this August, 2008. This shamanic healing retreat, visioquest, and community appearances will be held at Northern Edge [...]

First Aid and CPR - Aug 23/24 The North Bay Branch of the Canadian Red Cross will be offering a First Aid and CPR course at our branch on August 23 and [...]

The Basics of Babysitting with the Canadian Red Cross The Canadian Red Cross Babysitter Training Course will be offered at the North Bay Public Library on Saturday, August 16th for those aged 11 and [...]

C. difficile/Hospital Secrecy. Super bugs are stalking the hallways of every Hospital. Even the best kept Hospitals are not immune to them. I'd heard about C.diff. some years

return policy of local furniture store--be careful I wish to warn people out there to be VERY CAREFUL where you are buying your FURNITURE. I bought a sectional at a local furniture

north bay hockey grads off to college If A.J. Shiverdecker gets to see a bruins game in boston before his Uncle Bruce, he wont be able to return to ohio, lol. love



Comments on this Article. You are currently not logged in

Discuss this Article

You are currently not signed in. [Sign-In](#) | [Join](#).

Empty text input field for comments.

Submit

**Topic guidelines:** We welcome your thoughts, stories and information related to this article. Please stay on topic and be respectful of others. Keep the conversation appropriate for interested readers.

**Editorial Articles:**

- [Olympic bricks & bouquets](#)
- [Arts funding cuts red meat for hungry pack](#)
- [Let's all be proud](#)
- [We shouldn't be surprised](#)
- [Bug eating wiggles its way into North American diets](#)
- [No wine before its time](#)
- [May yet be a celebration](#)
- [Beating of the election drums already underway](#)
- [Happy birthday](#)
- [Political game of 'truth or dare' getting old](#)

[More Editorial »](#)

**Climate Change/Watershed Event!**

You might think this article is on climate change, and global warming, but it's not. It's about an event so macabre, that you would think

**Cops are getting a bad rap**

Cops are getting a bad rap these days and it's unfair. Many who know me would shake their heads in wonderment hearing that

**Sign up for**  
the latest, breaking news, weather, sports and more  Subscribe  
sent right to your inbox!

**What are these icons?**  
 = Photo Gallery  
[Click here for the icon legend](#)

 **Calendar**

**Today**

Built Network Fundraiser

DANCE EXPRESSIONS DE DANSE - Fall Registration Dates

Facing the Demon: The Agony and the Ecstasy

Hockey-ringette equipment exchange and sale

Ontario Senior Games Winterfest 2009 Official Online Trivia Contest

Red Cross Babysitter's Course

**Aug. 17, 2008**

Laurentian Wesleyan Church Sunday Services

**Aug. 19, 2008**

RideShare's Not-So-Silent Online Auction (on Facebook)

**Aug. 21, 2008**

MOTRIN Canadian One Club Golf Tournament

**Aug. 22, 2008**

What Every Babysitter Should Know

**Aug. 23, 2008**

1st Annual Rock N' Balls Charity Beach Volleyball Tourney & Rock Show

  
**Shopping Directory**  
Shop your Local Advertisers