

Don't ignore threat of crime against our most vulnerable

OUR city is not safe. Go ahead, say it out loud. We've all been thinking it for years now, but we reassure ourselves by saying "I know what areas to avoid," or "my neighbourhood is OK," or "I'll be fine," and we go on with our day.

But as Jacob Black's letter to the editor illustrates all too clearly (Hoodlums Make Thunder Bay Unsafe For Senior Citizens — May 14), any one of us is vulnerable to attack in our streets, in broad daylight — just as his brother was. Jacob's brother has been our friend

and colleague. Like Jacob, we want to know why the problems not only continue to increase, but why so little is being done to control them.

We are the North West Dementia Working Group, a group of people with dementia and their family care partners. Our mission is to give voice to people living with dementia to ensure that they are treated with respect, dignity, and afforded their human rights. We have been active in providing input into policies that impact

people with dementia.

While this violent incident is not specific to people living with dementia, this example points to the vulnerability of older adults and their right to be safe anywhere in our community.

We write to you today to inquire about the reason that this incident has received no attention from a community newspaper that should be concerned with such issues surrounding safety and resources for people who are in vulnerable situations in our city. It is

only by shining a light on these issues publicly that we will be able to adequately address them and ensure safer living for the people in Thunder Bay.

This requires a collaborative community effort to address the issues that have escalated the violence and insecurity in Thunder Bay.

We will be approaching City administration, social services, healthcare, police and other agencies for answers to our questions as to how we can work together to

address these problems. But until we publicly acknowledge the lack of safety for vulnerable people within the city of Thunder Bay, we will get nowhere in addressing them.

It's time for The Chronicle-Journal and other news sources to be reporting on issues that matter in our community.

Bill Heibeen
KAKABEKA FALLS
On behalf of the North West
Dementia Working Group



THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL/BRENT LINTON

Bess Legarde, left, a jingle dress dancer, helps Cameron Esquega, a grass dancer, with his headdress during National Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations two years ago at Prince Arthur's Landing on Friday, June 21, 2019.

Indigenous people hold unique place in multicultural society

BY LISA SCHMIDT

MONDAY, June 21 will be Indigenous Peoples Day, that one day of the year that Canadians have set aside to recognize and remember Indigenous peoples in this country. Yet I'd be willing to bet that many of you didn't know this day exists. Even if you did know, you might be wondering: "Why a day just for Indigenous people? Why not a day for Ukrainians or Chinese or Pakistani or Syrians? What about them? Doesn't everyone have a culture worth celebrating?"

I know some of you have said this, or thought it. I know this because I am a white woman who was born and raised in Thunder Bay, and I've heard you say it. Once upon a time, I might have said it myself.

I get it. You were raised in a country that adopted multiculturalism — also known as diversity — as the core of our identity. In fact, June 27 is Canadian Multicultural Day.

We in Thunder Bay love to go to the Multicultural Festival (or we will when the pandemic is over) and try all the foods and see the cultural displays. I know I do. But multiculturalism isn't always the right idea. Indigenous people are not just another tile in the cultural mosaic, and we white folk — yes, I'm talking to you — should not treat them that way. It's a question of fairness.

Let me explain with a story.

Suppose that you live in a very beautiful house. You and your people have always lived there. One day, some bedraggled strangers show up at the door. "Please help us," they cry. "We're cold and we're starving."

Once you get over your surprise, of course you let them in because you are compassionate and there is plenty of room. You feed them, you give them a place to



ONE CITY,
MANY VOICES

The Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

sleep, you even show them how to live here.

Then more of them show up. And more, and still more. Soon the house is feeling crowded. Some of these new people are not so nice. Some of them barge in and start stripping the walls and grabbing the silver. When you protest, some of them attack you. Others, who are trying to be nice (even though they refuse to leave) suggest that you can share the house — and they show you to the basement.

Next thing you know, the People Upstairs are saying that this is their house and you were never really living here at all. Even worse, most of the time they act like there is no basement and no People Downstairs. They seem to forget how they relied on you, how much you gave them.

Time passes. The People Upstairs thrive and share their wealth with their neighbours. The neighbours compliment them on their beautiful house. And then, one day, some newer people arrive.

"Can we please come in?" they ask, and the People Upstairs respond just as you did a long time ago — with compassion and even interest at all the new faces and languages and clothes and foods. "Yes, and here's a room you can have. Dinner is at seven. Let's do

potluck."

The newer people settle in upstairs. They love the house (because it is a really great place) and they are eager to belong to it. But they wonder, who are those people in the basement?

The People Upstairs get a little embarrassed. "Oh," they say, "those are the Basement People." It occurs to them that they should invite the Basement People upstairs. They send an invite: "Join us at the table and bring bannock. Dinner is at seven."

You see where I'm going with this.

I'm not trying to argue that we should stop celebrating diversity, absolutely not. I love difference. I don't want Canada to be some pale, blended soup. But for Indigenous people, multiculturalism is like the dinner party upstairs. And when we argue that we should just celebrate diversity, that we don't need a June 21 (or any other "special" treatment for Indigenous people), we are forgetting whose house we are living in.

Lisa Schmidt, born and raised in Thunder Bay, but has travelled to various places for education, returning home permanently (she believes) in 2017. She holds a PhD in media studies from the University of Texas at Austin, a master of arts in religious studies from the University of Toronto, a juris doctor from the University of Toronto, and a bachelor of arts honours degree in religious studies from McGill University. She has worked in the field of Indigenous education for over 10 years that reflects her commitment to social justice and the value and importance of education. Lisa is currently employed at Confederation College as a program manager at the Negahnewin Research Centre. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.

Boulevard Lake 'jewel' needs work

THE citizens of Thunder Bay have a true jewel in our hands. The area of Boulevard Lake is the core of a truly beautiful location that can be enjoyed by all ages.

There are a variety of mature trees and spacious open green spaces on the east side, along Lyon Boulevard. On the west side, there are numerous side trails where one can walk while observing a variety of small animals and deer.

This jewel we have in our hands

needs some tender loving care.

The paved trail on the east side is in terrible disrepair and has many large wide cracks. Anyone riding this trail in a mobility scooter would find this a bone-jarring experience and risks damaging their equipment.

The condition of the pathways largely restricts the use of this beautiful area by anyone requiring a scooter, wheelchair or walker and would limit the opportuni-

ties for disabled individuals, seniors and even persons pushing strollers.

In addition, the roadway and the parking area at The Bluffs is in need of serious attention. It would be nice if the City could maintain these areas so that everyone can appreciate the beauty of nature within our city.

David Carlson
THUNDER BAY

Class of 2021 a class act

I HAVE never submitted a letter to the editor before. As I write this on Thursday, it's been over 12 hours since the events of Wednesday night and I'm not sure what I feel.

Surprised? No.

Happy? 100 per cent.

Relieved? Of course.

Proud? Absolutely.

I am a police officer (for longer than I care to say). On Wednesday night, we observed (no calls for service) that there may be a gathering of people at a location near town, primarily young adults. The word was it was a graduation party in a remote place, and it involved a bonfire.

Around five officers responded and found that, indeed, a group of people had congregated around a fire just outside city limits in Oliver Paipoonge.

I called over a young man who had nothing in his hands but a football. He readily approached me, saying: "Yes, sir?"

I told him we had become aware of this situation and that our main concern was we needed to make sure everyone was going to get home safe, and that no one who had drove out there was drinking. It was a graduation party. I may be paraphrasing here, but he said "I'll deal with it." I backed out of the location and, along with

other officers, stood by to make sure we had been clear with instructions.

Within half an hour to 45 minutes, every single person had left, having to pass us by and be checked. Every single driver had not been drinking. Every single driver, as well as each person in their car, was incredibly respectful and way more than half stopped to chat, telling us how proud they were to graduate. Some talked about what they were going on to after high school.

Parents also attended to pick up their newly graduated young people. It was nothing but good moments.

These future leaders have gone through two years almost of everything — from online learning and quarantining to not seeing friends in what is arguably one of the most formative times of their lives.

And every single one was a pleasure to talk to.

Parents, you should be proud. Young men and ladies, thank you for your maturity, your commitment, and especially to probably 80 per cent of you who thanked us for what we do.

All the best and God Bless you all.

James (Jae) Elvish
NEEBING

The story of Canada has lacked balance

WE SHOULD not erase our history (Erasing Macdonald Doesn't Serve Our History Or Future — letter, June 11). However, we ought not distort or hide it either. Although erasing history is "cancel culture," so to is hiding it, and distortion is a fraudulent representation.

Until more balanced displays can be created, I have no issue with removing biased colonial representations. Nevertheless, there ought to be government and institutional efforts to develop fair representations in a timely manner. Further, all public displays ought to be open to criticism and review over time.

Memorial works ought to raise awareness by revealing the good and bad, the intent and consequences, that go together to define our cultural journey as a struggle for both progress and inclusion — although, not necessarily at the same time.

Only by presenting all sides of the Canadian journey can a true culture be developed. Canada is a work not completed and our culture yesterday is not that of today, nor of tomorrow. That is good if it moves towards greater justice.

Dale Sparkes
THUNDER BAY

Fire pits bad for health

HUMANS, I believe, have a propensity to kill their own species. There is no other explanation to explain why they continue to support negative behaviour.

Take climate change, for example. Scientists tell us that unless we greatly reduce carbon dioxide emissions, our average air temperatures will increase to three degrees warmer. Our air will become hot and heavy and it will become difficult to breathe.

Global travellers spend money in areas where the streets are spotless, where the air is clean, where the food is healthy. They want to swim, bathe and drink

fresh clean water.

So, why did our City ban cigarette smoking in public and yet allow fire pit smoke. Ten pounds of burning wood will generate 4,300 carcinogenic polyaromatic hydrocarbons into the air — the same as 30 cigarettes.

Air pollution is the cause and aggravating factor of many respiratory diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, and lung cancer.

Change. If not for yourself, then for your children and neighbour's health.

Karen Rooney
THUNDER BAY

Write to us

Letters to the editor, exclusive to The Chronicle-Journal, are most welcome. Those kept to 300 words or less have priority.

E-mail (no attachments please): letters@chroniclejournal.com

We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject submissions. Writers must provide their full name, address and telephone number. Please cite page and date for articles mentioned. Letters may appear on our website.

Aggression, conflict serves neither Israelis or Palestinians

I HOPE the latest ware in Israel doesn't result in the targeting of innocent Jewish Canadians who, as a group, have made significant contribution to our country.

There is a disconnect between identity and behaviour. We can love Israel while at the same time disavowing the disproportionate violence of Israel's government.

Both Israel's government and Palestinian terrorists have blood on their hands. There is no white or black here. Both sides are grey. And it's the Jewish people and the Palestinian people who are suffering from this conflict, particularly the Palestinians.

The Palestinians are descended from ancient Philistines and Canaanites. Later,

Arab migrants were added to the mix. They have lived on their own farms and in their own houses for generations.

Since the Six Day War in 1967, Israel has persistently stolen Palestinian farms and destroyed their homes, giving property over to Jewish settlers. This has been going on for decades, violating international law.

North Americans however, due to religious bias, have supported Israel's human rights abuses against the Palestinians with the oft-repeated diversion: "Israel has the right to defend itself."

Yes, God gave the promised land to his chosen people. However, the Israeli government is trying to extend these borders in

their own strength, by ungodly means. Got it just. He will not bless their efforts.

Let's not forget how Israel provoked this latest conflict. On the last day of Ramadan, Israeli police attacked Muslim worshippers as they prayed in Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount.

How would we Canadians feel if an ethnic group sprayed us with rubber bullets and stun grenades while we prayed in one of our churches? How would we feel if an ethnic group evicted us from our own home so that they could move in?

Perhaps, before each session of the Knesset, the Israeli declaration of independence should be read out.

It says: "The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the ingathering of the exiles. It will foster the development in the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants. It will be based upon freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel. It will ensure complete equality of social and political rights of all its inhabitants, irrespective of religion, race or sex. It will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture. It will safeguard the holy places of all religions. It will be faithful to the principles of the charter of the United Nations."

Valerie Morsette
THUNDER BAY