

# The Chronicle-Journal

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## Graduates have learned the value of relationships

**T**O THE graduates of 2021: Well, as Alexander said in that children's book that many of you likely grew up reading, what a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad year it's been.

This is normally the season when some accomplished old person is invited to schools to make a speech telling graduates that life will be difficult, that they must learn to be resilient, that they'll need to cope with and learn from challenges.

But the graduates of 2021 really need no lectures on the real world. This year, the real world shoved its way into yours earlier than was expected or fair.

Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, you've got honorary degrees and diplomas in coping — coping with stresses no previous generation ever had to.

So, we won't patronize you with reminiscences about the instructive value of tough times.

Going to school online — or online, off-line, online, etc. — you've been walloped with challenges. So congratulations!

Congratulations not just for what you've achieved, but for dealing with what you've been through — the loss of so much normally attached to education, the absence of any certainty that allows you to plan or even just to look forward to things like proms, sports seasons, clubs, plays, or goofing around with friends in school corridors or at lockers.

If this year taught you anything, it's probably that life is difficult and the world is not necessarily fair.

Trapped in your bedroom (if you're lucky enough to have one of your own), in front of a computer for eight hours a day (if you're lucky enough to have reliable internet connection), shrunk your world.

And being robbed of the consolation of friends, of being able to lean across the aisle and say, "Dude, I'm stressed," has cost more than anyone can calculate.

Learning to persist through difficult times is no small thing. Resilience is a good and necessary trait. With luck, it will lead you to productive and satisfying futures.

But this academic year also offered you something special, something you might call a gift wrapped inside a raw deal.

You've learned the hard way about something not normally on a school curriculum. And that is the vital importance to our species of relationships.

What did people miss most dearly through the pandemic?

We missed the ability to gather, in the cafeteria or the gym. We lost the chances to be together, to hang out, to be able to read the subtle clues about a mate's mood or worries.

We lost the opportunity to support one another in times of sorrow and celebration, the chance to celebrate a birthday or big game, the delight of chance encounters.

In short, we lost the comfort and consolation of each other. This year walloped you over the head with the importance of relationships. In fact, it is almost impossible to overstate their value.

Experts say it was relationships — our ability to communicate and collaborate — that proved to be the single most important factor responsible for the survival of homo sapiens.

When you think about it, almost all stories, all literature, all movies are essentially about relationships in one form or another.

Almost all studies on happiness have found that the key to living a gratifying life is not material attainment but having healthy relationships.

The Grant Study at Harvard University has been running for 80 years, perhaps the longest study of human development. What it found, in ongoing interviews with men and women about their lives at various stages, is that above a certain level intelligence doesn't matter; money and power, fame and beauty don't either.

Relationships, it says, are better predictors of long and happy lives than social class, IQ or even genes.

Not only that, the quality of our relationships turn out to be as important to our health as diet and exercise.

People who are more isolated from others than they want to be report being less happy, their health declines earlier, their brain function deteriorates sooner and they live shorter lives.

Psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky says her studies show that the happiest participants devote a great amount of time to family and friends and are often the first to offer helping hands to co-workers or strangers.

It turns out that connection with others is essential for joy. We find reward and happiness in being of service and — however corny it might sound — in acts of kindness.

So, as you contemplate a future that may seem uncertain and sometimes scary, remember that this year of so much loss has provided a valuable lesson.

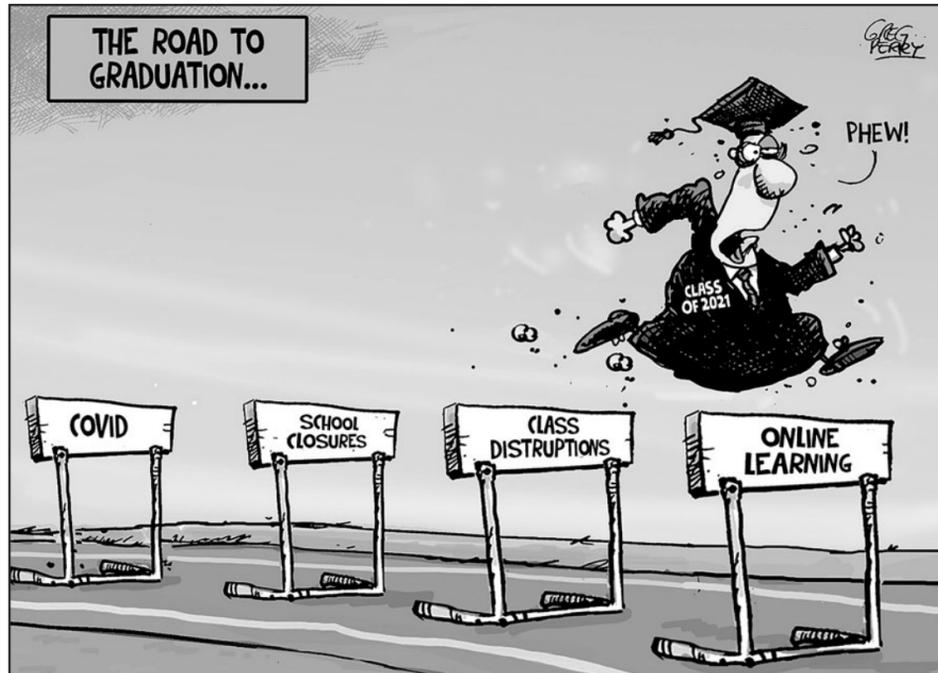
Relationships can be complicated and messy. Family and friends can be hard work. The responsibilities can be lifelong. But they are at the heart of being human.

If a year of pandemic brought any good to the graduates of 2021, perhaps it was in showing you in less than a calendar year what researchers have spent decades figuring out.

That relationships are crucial to our happiness.

And not something we're apt to take for granted again any time soon.

— An editorial from the Toronto Star (thestar.com)



## Keep exploring Indigenous history throughout the year

BY GERALDINE KAKEEWAY

**B**OOZHOO, Aniin. Hello. Migisikwe n'digo, Name n'dodem. Naotkamegwanning n'doonjii. My name given to me as a child by Sarah Mandamin-aban (aban denotes she has passed onto the spirit world) translates to "Bald Eagle Woman." My clan is Sturgeon and I am a band member of Naotkamegwanning First Nation, located about an hour south of Kenora.

My choice to start with a traditional greeting is a deliberate act of self recognition and self affirmation of who I am — an Anishinaabekwe. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your life at this particular moment in time.

June is officially the National Indigenous History Month. The Government of Canada website states: "learn more about National Indigenous History Month" and "This year, National Indigenous History Month is dedicated to the missing children, the families left behind and the survivors of residential schools. Start your learning journey here to help you mark this important month and National Indigenous Peoples Day by exploring more about the rich and diverse cultures, voices, experiences and histories of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples." One can proceed to click through a number of creative, user friendly virtual resources to read, listen, watch, and try.

If you peruse the government website, attend events in person, or participate in learning about Indigenous history, I highly encourage you to do so all year round, not just in June. We have eleven other months for people from every na-



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.**

tionality to pick up a book, listen to a podcast, rock it out with some fantastic talented musicians. Indigenous people are contemporaries, we are here and now, not just a peoples frozen in time, relegated to historical artifacts and museum displays. We are neighbours, co-workers, friends, and family.

I am going to circle back to the dedication on the Government of Canada website: "dedicated to the missing children, the families left behind and the survivors of residential schools." I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge what has been in the forefront this past month or so. For some it is "new" news, and for many of us, this is nothing new.

I am compelled to acknowledge because I am a daughter of a woman who attended St. Mary's Indian Residential School in Kenora.

Nimama-aban was Madeleine Bird; she and her sisters, Josephine-aban and Rosaline-aban went to St. Mary's. Rosaline Bird was only 10 years old when she

died there in 1941. Mom was about 11 and Josephine was about 12 years old. I have a black and white photo taken by somebody on the day of Rosaline's funeral. The grief on their young faces, along with the sadness of my grandmother, is painfully visible and captured for historical posterity.

Josephine died of tuberculosis at 19 at the "Squaw Bay Hospital" at the Mission Reserve (aka Thunder Bay) in 1947, as written in her official death certificate.

I am here because my mother survived residential school, my grandmother survived having her children taken from her; she had no choice but to submit to the authority of the government officials. I speak my language because these two matriarchs insisted that my siblings and I learn Anishinaabemowin as our first language. I continue to learn because ancestors and today's knowledge keepers are rejuvenating and reviving our culture and our languages.

Canadians have an opportunity to expand their knowledge because there are resources, events taking place virtually or in person that celebrates this fact. Don't squander it, Canadians have 365 days a year to learn, not just this one month out of 12.

*Geraldine Kakeeway is an Anishinaabekwe, band member of Naotkamegwanning First Nation, living in Kenora. She is currently employed as the Indigenous regional liaison for Confederation College, located out of the Lake of the Woods campus. Geraldine is the proud mother of two adult children, Sean and Erin. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Uncivilized history can't be ignored

**I**GNORANCE is no longer an option in Canada. The residential schools were wrong. They were based on the premise of: "We are going to take your children away from you and make them like us, because we are civilized and you are not."

You need to ask, who is civilized?

The Catholic Church committed crimes and abuses that had nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus. Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me, for such is the Kingdom of heaven." He also said: "My kingdom is not of this world." He did not intend for a power elite founded on a code of silence.

The corporation of the Roman Catholic Church needs to be held to account for its crimes.

**Tom Peterson**  
THUNDER BAY

### Take urgent action to improve local food security

**E**VEN as you read this, the deplorable food security situation in Canada is becoming worse.

The massive fluctuations in our weather patterns because of climate change is having terrible consequences for our whole agricultural system. Continent-wide droughts, sudden soil scouring floods, country-wide heat waves — all of these are taking their toll.

Then there is the competing use of the land. Canada has one of the lowest percentage of total arable land of all the countries in the world. Yet we continue to use it up to build expensive urban developments.

Trudeau talks about increasing immigration. Where will these people be housed. Stats show that most prefer new urban homes built on ex-farmland.

We continue to use traditional farming techniques which uses ten times the water as what vertical farming does.

Then there is the processing of what food we do produce. We actually have other countries process a

staggering amount of the food stuffs that our farmers produce — more than 50 per cent. That is insane. If we have learned anything from this Covid pandemic it is this. It is suicidal to rely upon others for necessities.

Finally, we continue to rely upon California, Mexico, Central America and South America for much of our fruit and veggies. We absolutely must transition to cross-country, year-round, locally grown, indoor, low-water-use, vertical farming.

Some years back, this city did a survey to determine our local food security situation. It was found that in a winter crisis situation this city would survive until only March. Then it would die.

I call on our city council to do everything that it can do to change this assessment. Hold 50/50 draws to bring in money. Beg, borrow or steal every penny that this City can to build the infrastructures that this city will need in order to survive. But you must start immediately.

It will require time to build the systems that we will need, and time is swiftly running out.

**Barry Wallden**  
THUNDER BAY

### Get on the list for second dose

**I**AM SADDENED to hear that a local citizen's efforts to receive an early second vaccine dose are being thwarted (*Premier Ford Up To His Old Tricks* — letter, June 17).

Might I suggest that you contact the local facilitators, such as the drug store in McIntyre Centre, as many of us already have. They will put you on a waiting list and notify you by phone immediately when extra doses are available, providing you meet the criteria of age and time since receiving your first dose.

I hope this simple solution will put an end to your dismay and, 'notwithstanding' any further impediments, enable you to carry on a happy, healthy life.

**Edward Landry**  
THUNDER BAY

## Diversity of views

*We take pride in our letters section as a forum for sharing diverse views. We know there are a wide range of opinions on a variety of topics and believe strongly that our community is best served when all opinions are exposed, considered and discussed. Letters kept to 300 words have priority and may be edited for space, style, accuracy and clarity. Letters must be the original work of the author and be exclusive to The Chronicle-Journal. Please cite page and date for articles mentioned. Letters may appear on our website. There is no restriction on the frequency of letters.*

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