



Aionkwatakari:teke

(A-YOU-GWA-DA-GA-RI-DE-GEH)

"For us to be healthy"

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Kahnawake's Only Health and Wellness Newsletter

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Aionkwatakari:teke

Aionkwatakari:teke is a newsletter published six times a year by Communications Services of Kahnawake Shakotia'takehnhas Community Services (KSCS). Our purpose is to provide information on health and wellness issues that affect Kahnawa'kehrónon. All community members are welcomed and encouraged to submit articles provided that they are comprehensive to the general public, informative and educational. Slanderous material will not be accepted. Views expressed in the articles may not necessarily reflect those of KSCS. We reserve the right to edit all articles. All questions concerning this newsletter should be directed to:

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This newsletter is intended to complement, not replace the advice of your health care provider. Before starting any new health regimen, please see your doctor.



Editor's Notebook

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It's been a couple of months since the suicide death of comedian/actor Robin Williams. I was a big fan. I grew up watching him on Mork and Mindy. His energy, his presence, was a breath of fresh air for television and comedy at that time, which was often very scripted, giving little room for improvisation. His energy was kinetic, even frenetic.

Who knew that that energy was masking a long battle he was having with depression and, later, alcohol and drugs. If there was one good thing to come from his death it was the conversation it seemed to open up about mental illness. But the conversation shouldn't start and stop with Robin Williams. We need to keep discussing it, bringing it out in the open, de-stigmatising it, so that the people who are affected by mental illness are not going through it alone or in silence.

That's what our annual December issue attempts to do, to open up the conversation on mental illness/mental health and to provide information that can help or on where you can get help. One of these articles is a reprint of a five-part series that ran on the Indian Country Today website that talks about opening up the conversation on suicide in Indigenous communities. This is a great series because, while there are plenty of resources on suicide, few speak specifically to the issue in terms of Indigenous communities. We'll be running the series in its entirety and we hope you enjoy it.

We have pictures from the recent Holiday Parade that happened in community. What's the parade have to do with mental health? Hopefully, you can see from the pictures that people who attended the parade had a good time. They were smiling and laughing and having fun. According to the Mayo Clinic, the long term effects of laughter include improving your mood, pain relief, and improving your immune system. That's no joke! Happy holidays from all of us here at KSCS!

Sken:nen tánon obserá:se!

Marie

Cover design: Marie David. Photos by Christine Taylor. Stock photos from RGB Stock and Free Pik.





Mental Health

A Capacity to Enjoy Life

BY MARY MCCOMBER, PREVENTION

What does mental health mean to you? At times, it can be a struggle to maintain mental health when you have a busy lifestyle and stressors, especially if one has an existing mental health issue.

Maintaining one's mental health may be like maintaining one's physical health, you need to take care of it daily.

Mental health can be viewed as "a capacity to enjoy life, use one's ability to achieve goals, contribute to community, deal with life's challenges, and bounce back from difficult times, and form and sustain relationships with others" (CYCC 11).

This is reflective of a strength-based approach to maintaining mental health. It may include a wide approach, from an individual developing strength to an individual participating in skill-building family programs.

Relational strengths-based approaches are important and encourage positive dynamics between youth and families. Studies reveal that parent and adult participation is important to support youth in and outside of school (Harvard 3).

Open communication can help the youth to develop coping skills and wellness strategies. It is vital to teach youth to speak openly and for adults to

act as positive roles models.

Receiving services can also be a challenge for families these days, due to budget cuts and availability of English language programming. For this reason, it is important to look at how parents, families, teachers, and the community can promote skill development and prevention in their areas.

Youth exposed to violence can be traumatized and this can impact their mental health as adults. In order for the cycle to stop, we all need to reflect on our behaviours and get help when needed.

Of course there are, at times, genetic links to mental health issues but a stable and supportive environment may help an individual develop strength and maintain a sense of wellness.

You are not alone. Use a good mind and strive for wellness in all areas of life.

Source: Kreider, Holly et al. Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education. Harvard Family Research Project. 3 Spring 2007.

Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts. Coping with Violence: Promising Practices for Child and Youth Mental Health. Canada: CYCC, 2013.

Be Respectful

Ringling in the New Year

BY WENDY SKY DELARONDE, N.,BA, KMHC

Respect. How often do we hear this word? Every year close to New Year's Eve, many people worry about the gunfire that may take place to ring in the New Year. One can only hope that no one will get killed or injured.

In the past, bullets from New Year's Eve gunfire have gone through the roofs and landed next to sleeping children. It was disturbing to parents to find bullets in the wall and on the floor. Parents have shared these stories with us and have permitted us to share these with others. It is their hope that it will not happen to anyone else. We have also been made aware of the fact that many people have found bullets in their roofs and gutters when they went to do home repairs.

It is hard to understand how this can happen in this day and age. No one should have to worry about this but every year many do. They seek shelter from stray bullets by hiding in the basement and a good number of people stay out of town to escape the gunfire that goes on New Year's Eve.

It's time to stop this dangerous practice and keep Kahnawake safe and worry free.

It all comes down to respect for your fellow community members. I challenge you to be respectful this holiday season.

Wendy Sky Delaronde is a community nurse with the Kateri Memorial Hospital Center.

Suicide Chronicles

Part 1 of 5

BY CHELSEY LUGER & GYASI ROSS

REPRINTED AND EDITED WITH PERMISSION FROM INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY

SILENCE KILLS

Suicide is a HUGE problem within our Native communities, yet it's something that we barely speak about. I put myself in this category as well—even though we've had several people within my family commit suicide, my family has never gotten together specifically to talk about either 1) why these suicides keep happening, or 2) how we can prevent further suicides from happening in the future. While sexy political topics dominate headlines, this life and death issue that affects the heart of Indian Country—our homelands—hardly ever gets any press. We haven't yet collectively tackled this crucial question, "Why do we do this to ourselves?"

WE ARE NOT HAVING THESE NECESSARY CONVERSATIONS

Now, don't get me wrong—there are Native people and organizations who do absolutely *amazing* things to shed light on suicide as a priority and to remember those Natives whose lives were tragically cut short by suicide. Absolutely. Thank goodness we have those folks and organizations memorializing and acknowledging that it's going on within our communities at alarming rates; those good folks *try* to push the topic. Yet, most of the time the rest of us don't acknowledge the constant presence of suicide within our communities until *after the fact*. Perhaps it's a funding issue. Perhaps it's a priority issue. In either event, we simply are not proactively having intentional and awkward *conversations* about suicide—we avoid those; those painful and weird conversations with our 5 or 6 or 7 or 12 year old sons, daughters, nieces and nephews, or even our older siblings...until something goes terribly wrong.

Those conversations suck—like talking to our 12 year old sons or daughters or nieces and nephews about sex. But we gotta have them. Twelve-year-olds DO get pregnant.

Let's make this very, very clear: TALKING about suicide does NOT increase the likelihood of someone we love committing

suicide. That's fact. IN FACT, if there is an effect at all, it will only DECREASE the likelihood of someone we love committing suicide.

We can't wait for the "right time" or the "right person" to talk to our kids about suicide. This IS the right time; we ARE the right people until better people come along.

There is no wrong time to talk about suicide. Period. ESPECIALLY for Native people. We CAN'T simply bury our heads and act like it doesn't affect us, as if our loved ones who committed suicide were just anomalies or accidents that we don't talk about.

No, we need to talk about this. Badly. Native people are committing suicide at a rate that is three times the national average*, and yet we seem to be hiding our heads in the sand.

Historically, many of our communities had people who were trained to guide these kinds of awkward conversation *in the place of* the biological parents. No, the conversation wasn't specifically about suicide (I don't think), but these proxy parents were second mothers and second fathers to children, filling in where the parents had difficulty. Consider this at—as simply an honest conversation from concerned family members. We're going to do our *tiny*, little part to kill the silence that's been killing our people.

Therefore, this is the introductory piece of a five-part series to talk about suicide within our Native communities. We're gonna talk science, but we will also feature stories about how it's plagued our communities. We'll also highlight some *positive* things that are happening to reduce suicide and its effects. We're not scientists—heck, we're not social workers! Still, we live within our homelands and travel throughout Indian Country, we're concerned with the wellness of our people, and we see the devastating effects of suicide WAY too often. Therefore, we're going to do what we can to push this conversation. Specifically, we're going to include pieces that contemplate



- why suicide's effects are so extreme within Native communities;
- the intersection of diabetes/sugar/depression and suicide within our communities;
- the best practices to reduce the effects of suicide within our communities; and
- some straight-forward journalistic stories about suicide straight from members of our communities.

Obviously suicide is a very complex and multi-faceted epidemic. Yet, despite suicide's complexities, there are bite-sized steps that we can implement that will help reduce suicide's reach within our communities. We CANNOT make suicide a bogeyman—suicide ISN'T a bogeyman. Bogeymen cannot be beat. With suicide, Native people CAN beat this if we simply do the research and have the honesty to take the steps. We are not victims—it is a long road, but Native people WILL win if take the first step in this very long journey.

THE VERY FIRST STEP?

Talk about it. Don't be scared. It won't hurt to talk. But it WILL hurt when we don't talk about suicide. We see that literally everyday.

Silence kills. But we're gonna get loud and beat suicide together. Let's talk. Awkwardly. But necessarily.

*According to Health Canada, suicide rates for Indigenous and Inuit youth are five to seven times higher than for the non-Indigenous population (2013)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Chelsey Luger is from the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe & Standing Rock Lakota Nation in North Dakota and focuses on spreading ideas for Native health and wellness. Follow her on Instagram at [chelswhoelse](#) or Twitter [@CPLuger](#). Gyasi Ross is from both the Blackfeet and Suquamish Reservations and is a concerned dad, uncle and big brother who understands the need for awkward conversations. www.cutbankcreekpress.com Twitter: [@BigIndianGyasi](#).

Read more at Indian Country Today and use the search term "suicide" along with the author's names "Chelsey Luger" or "Gyasi Ross." to find the original article.

Acting on What We Know: Preventing Youth Suicide in First Nations. n.d. Archived on 2013-09-11. Accessed on 15-10-2014. Advisory Group on Suicide Prevention.

Healthy Activities: Why I love Doing It

BY CHRISTINE LOFT (ODS), ROBERT MARCHETTERE (PREVENTION), DOUG LAHACHE (COMMUNICATIONS), & JOY CANADIAN (COMMUNITY MEMBER)

Running! Why I love doing it: because I never imagined I would be a runner before two and a half years ago, but I realized that it comes naturally to me. I don't care for the treadmill, unless it's the dead of winter, I'd rather run outside where I can feel the ground and the weather. I prefer to run alone, at my own pace with some music.



Running helps to clear my head, shake off any stress and leave it far behind me. When I am done, I feel happy (endorphins), accomplished, and ready to share that energy with my family. » Christine Loft «

Editors' Note: Christine placed first in the women's intermediate 10K run at Mohawk Miles Race in Kahnawake. Congratulations!

Being behind the drums and playing live is the greatest feeling. Music is the most wonderful gift I have been given.
« Robert Marchettere »

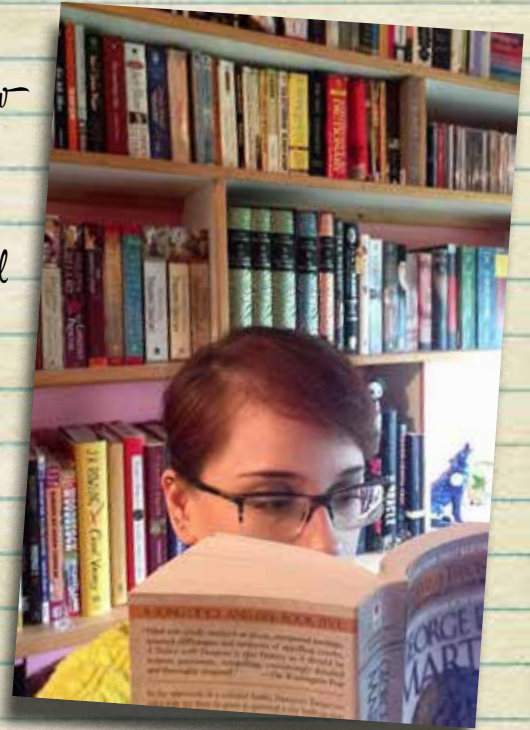


I like to cook using traditional cooking methods, both Iroquoian and other people's. Cooking helps me relax; it gives me instant feedback and it's nice to see it makes others happy.

The first photo is toasted cornbread, something my dad inspired me to make. It's rich in corn essence, cooked on the BBQ without the corn flavour boiled out. The second photo is a homemade salt reduced ham (<5% sodium) I made from scratch this past Thanksgiving. « Doug Lahache »



1. Walking my dog is a daily ritual because it keeps me active and helps me grow a closer bond with my dog.
2. Reading is essential to me. Reading is gaining knowledge, travelling through time, experiencing an assortment of emotions and when I complete a book I feel overwhelmed with positive energy.
3. I love cooking and trying out new recipes. I have an ample amount of food allergies so trying new foods that I can actually eat is exciting.
4. My day feels incomplete if I don't exercise because it gives me a burst of energy and helps relieve my stress. I enjoy an array of workouts from Pilates, weight training, yoga and much more.
5. Writing is such an amazing way for people to express themselves. I wish more people would do it. Writing allows me to let go of negative emotions and gain a more positive outlook on life.
6. Drinking a cup of tea! I love brewing up a tea and sitting outside or by the window. I feel more connected with nature and it's also very humbling for me.



7. Gardening is one of my favourite activities. It's truly amazing being able to see a tiny seed grow and know you helped create this magnificent plant. It's magical.
8. Playing with my dog or the little ones in my family. I enjoy bonding and creating happy memories that I will always cherish.
9. I have loads of fun extracting seeds and herbs; they all need to be extracted differently and delicately. Learning from nature is very peaceful and exhilarating.
10. Learning and researching homeopathic remedies. I get sick quite a bit, so I'm constantly searching for natural remedies to cure or help my ailments which has been a very empowering experience. « Joy Canadian »

Photos on page 6: Top right: courtesy of Christine Loft. Bottom left: courtesy of Robert Marcheterre. Bottom right: photo by Doug Lahache.

Photos on page 7 by Joy Canadian.

Reducing Anxiety

Using Compassionate Intention

BY DAVID ARCHER, MSW, SUPPORT

Picture this. You are a human living 10,000 years ago. You live in a hostile environment, uncertain of where to turn or what to do. You're focused on survival.

Suddenly, you see a wild animal that wants to eat you. What happens next? Your body enters fight or flight mode; you're driven to survive that specific moment. Your heart rate increases, blood pressure rises, reproductive drive reduces, and blood goes towards your limbs instead of the digestive tract. You become stressed and enter into survival mode.

Let's think of a different situation. Now you're in the 21st century. You work in an air conditioned environment. You're at your desk. You've got deadlines that haven't been met. The clock is ticking and your boss is waiting. You start to believe that your job is on the line. Guess what happens next? Everything that happened in the first situation: you're back in survival mode.

It goes like this: our bodies read our minds. The body cannot tell the difference between "objective life or death situations" (e.g. facing a pre-historic wild animal) or "subjective life or death situations" (e.g. whether or not people will like your latest Facebook selfie). Our biological responses to stress, which were wired into our genetic code to protect our ancestors in the past, are not very healthy for us today (Church 2007).

Stress hormones are produced whenever we get stressed out. However, "circulation of these stress hormones

through your system on a regular basis will compromise your immune system, weaken your organs [and, among other things] age you prematurely" (Church 37). Additionally, cortisol, one of the primary stress hormones, "wears down the brain, leading to cell atrophy and memory loss. It also raises blood pressure and blood sugar, hardening arteries and leading to heart disease" (Cool 92). High blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, mental health disorders, the list goes on for what prolonged stress can do for you.

Consider your stress at your job as an example. Our bodies react the same whether we are facing a Siberian tiger or facing a project deadline. It's not healthy to keep facing paper tigers day in and day out. The more we practice feeling stressed about perceived "life-or death" stressors, the more physical and mental health problems we get. So let's change what we practice.

Dawson Church (2007) outlines ways to increase wellness by using our intention, beliefs and imagination. Here are some well-researched ways that you can use to reduce your stress and improve your health:

- Maintaining a positive outlook.
- Praying and sending out a positive intention.
- Volunteering, helping other people.
- Cultivating spirituality.
- Meditating and self-care.
- Positive visualizations.

Since these sound simple, try any one of them. Keep up a regular practice.

There are many ways that we can harm ourselves with our worries and fears about the past or future. But what we practice is what we master. Practice being stressed and you'll get it. Practice loving-kindness and something interesting can happen. Optimism, self-care and the practice of love and compassion are all things that not only help us make better decisions in the present; they allow us to be gentler to ourselves and to others in the long term.

If you or someone you care about is overwhelmed with sadness, stress, grief or other forms of emotional suffering, please don't hesitate to speak to a loved one, trusted friend, doctor and/or mental health professional.

Cool, L. C. (2004, May). The power of forgiving. Reader's Digest, p.92.

Church, D. (2007). The genie in your genes. Santa Rosa, CA: Energy Psychology.



Drama: How It Makes One Feel

Setting Your Kids up for Success

BY TERRY MCCOMBER, PREVENTION

Drama programming in Kahnawake is back in action, with five directors and 25 children (between the ages 6–12 years) working diligently towards showcasing their Christmas production—slated for the second week of December.

This year's script was written by the directors and is titled "What Christmas Means to Me" and features the children's own ideas as the foundation of the story.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THEATRE?

You do not have to be a child to benefit from the theatre. One needs only to look at the five directors of this year's play—all past members of Kahnawake theatre; some having gone through children's drama programming themselves. Maybe this is proof that if we expose children to theatre they are likely to develop an appreciation for the arts? From what I can see, yes!

Whether you're an introvert or an extrovert, drama and self-expression help build confidence. The extrovert gets to act and play and enjoy the attention they get on stage. The introvert learns through acting and role-playing and may come out of their shell.

I saw first hand this past summer how beneficial theatre is for the extrovert and the introvert child. I was able to witness a transformation of both and it was something that brought tears to my eyes.

Theatre also encourages self-expression and imagination that may help one through the ups and downs of life and where they can find comforting release.

Taking part in theatre may stimulate an individual's creativity, it can also promote emotional, physical, mental and spiritual balance while building social and communication skills too.

Theatre is not all about the stage or reciting lines either. Some of the children in our group are too young to read but

with encouragement from the adults around them — and from their own peers — they have found creative ways to express themselves and build their self-confidence.

It has been great watching the younger children being instinctively taken under the wings of their older peers. This past summer, I also saw how the children blossomed while drawing, painting and creating their own props and sets.

Drama, while creating a safe space for children to explore the arts, also offers a sense of belonging, as theatre is a community in and of itself. There are the friendships and encouragement one receives from their "community" that allows for their stars to shine brightly.

To see those stars shine, mark your calendars when this year's Christmas play hits the stage!



Childproofing Your Home

BY GINA MONTOUR DELARONDE, KMHC



The holidays and the possible stress that can be associated with this time of year can wreak havoc on both parents and children, but for different reasons.

Children are excited about not being in school for two weeks, sleeping in, and the anticipation of receiving gifts. Parents are anxious about all of the preparations: decorating, buying gifts—accompanied by the worries of what to buy and the expenses—and all that cooking.

Planning ahead, delegating responsibilities and ensuring a safe home for everyone in your life may alleviate some of the holiday stress related to avoidable injuries.

If you are going to a large family gathering or you are having company come to your house there are safety measures that you can take that can go a long way to help protect all of the young members of your extended family.

Each year, children are injured by hazards in and around the home which is a shame because these injuries are almost always preventable. There are fairly inexpensive safety devices that can help reduce injuries to young children at any time of year. These devices are easy to find at your local hardware or other stores. Some of these are

- safety latches and locks for cabinets and drawers
- window guards and safety netting to help prevent falls from windows, balconies and decks
- barriers to help stop children from touching wood stoves and fireplaces
- doorknob covers and door locks to help prevent children from entering rooms that are not childproofed
- anti-scald devices for regulating water temperature

- safety gates to help prevent falls
- corner and edge bumpers to help prevent injuries from falls against sharp edges
- outlet covers and outlet plates to help prevent electrocution
- keep blind cords out of the reach of children whether the blinds are up or down
- anchors to avoid furniture and appliance tip-overs.

During the holidays, avoid using decorations that are sharp, breakable, have small removable parts, or look like candy. Keep cosmetics, perfume, medications and household chemicals secured and out of reach.

To keep everyone safe, ensure that you have smoke alarms on every level of your home and carbon monoxide detectors.

In addition to the above, it's an absolute must that a parent or other designated responsible person is there to watch, listen and stay nearby young children. Taking these precautions when there are 50–75 people crammed into all areas of your house will not only help protect the little ones but will also give you peace of mind. Stay safe and have a wonderful holiday season.

Resource: United States Consumer Products Safety Commission. Safety Guides.

Childproofing Your Home: 12 Safety Devices to Protect Your Children.

Gina Montour Delaronde is a child injury prevention worker with the Kateri Memorial Hospital Center.



Holiday Parade Photos

PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE TAYLOR, PROMOTION & EDUCATION



The Back Page....

“Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of but stigma and bias shame us all.”

~ Bill Clinton, former US President

Emergency Numbers

IN KAHNAWAKE:

KSCS	450-632-6880
Peacekeepers/Fire/Ambulance	450-632-6505
Kateri Memorial Hospital Centre	450-638-3930
Native Court Worker	450-638-5647 ext: 227

IN MONTREAL:

Emergency Services	911
Tel-Aide	514-935-1101
Kids Help Line*	1-800-668-6868
Alcoholics Anonymous	Main: 514-374-3088 Helpline: 514-350-3444 (English) Toll Free: 1-888-424-2975
Al-Anon/Alateen	514-866-9803
Cocaine Anonymous	514-527-9999
Project 10*	514-989-4585
Suicide Prevention Hotline	514-723-4000 1-866-277-3553
Info Santé	811
Sexual Assault Center	514-934-4504

Line* 1-888-505-1010* as of 2012, Gay Line suspended services until further notice. If you are a lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, queer, trans, two-spirit, or a questioning youth who are in crisis, they recommend calling *Project 10* or the *Kids Help Line*.

Tsothórhra/December

- 1-5 Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week
- 1 World AIDS Day
- 3 Intl. Day of Disabled Persons
- 6 Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women in Canada
- 10 Human Rights Day
- 24 **Christmas Eve (KSCS closed)**
- 25 **Christmas Day (KSCS closed)**
- 26 **Boxing Day (KSCS closed)**
- 31 **KSCS closed**

Tsothohrhkó:wa/January 2015

- 1 **New Year's Day (KSCS closed)**
- 5 **KSCS reopens**
- 18-24 Non-Smoking Week
- 21: Weedless Wednesday
- 27 Family Literacy Day

Do you have questions or suggestions? Is there a topic you would like to see covered in a future issue of the newsletter? Contact us and let us know.

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