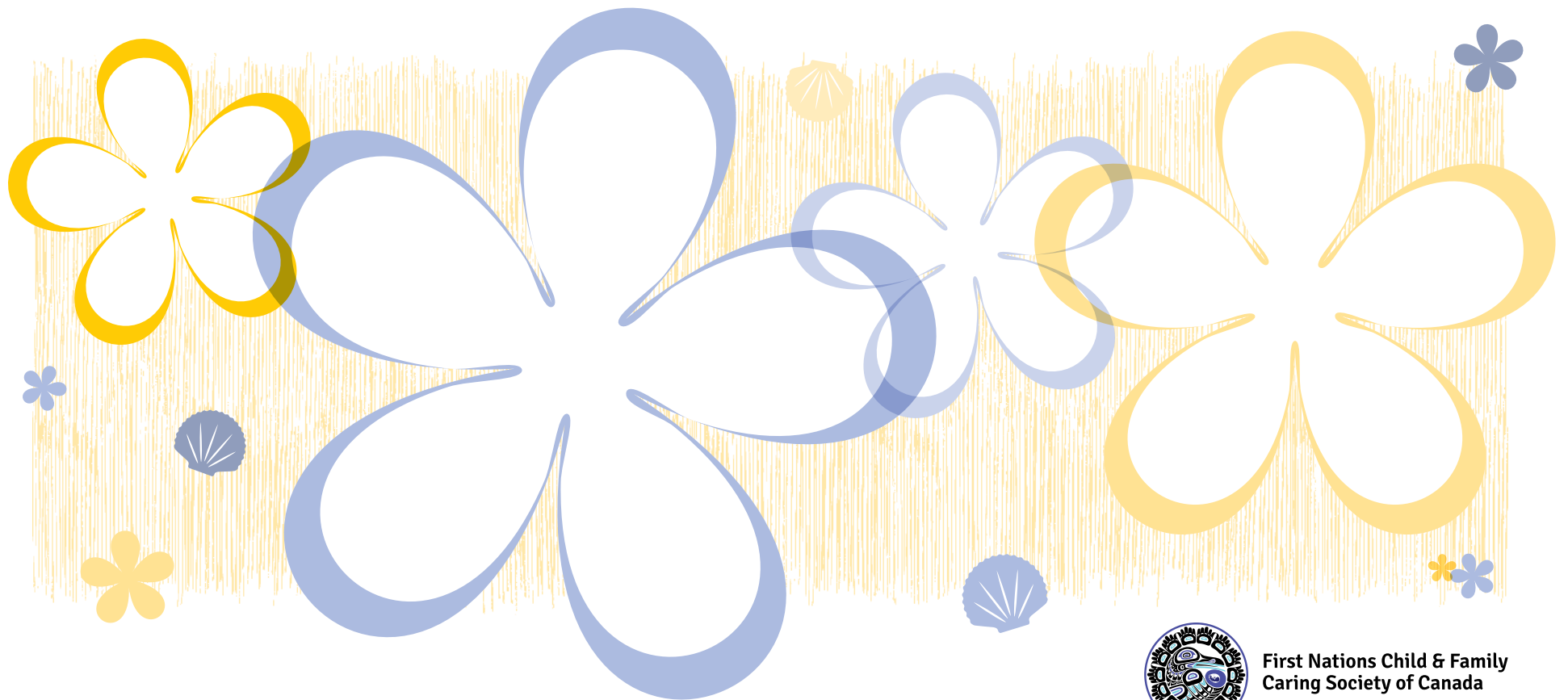


First Peoples

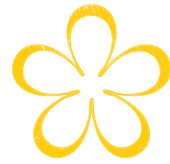
2021
volume 16 number 1

Child & Family Review

Special Edition by Children and Youth ✨ Our hopes and dreams for making **Shannen's Dream** come true ✨ Understanding the unfair ways First Nations kids are treated ✨ How we can stand with First Nations kids and youth ✨ What we can learn from youth like Shannen ✨



First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada



Contents

- 3 **Foreword**
Emily Williams and Brittany Mathews
- 5 **Letter from Shannen Koostachin and the students of Attawapiskat First Nation to Marie-Claude Côté-Villeneuve**
- 12 **My Hopes and Dreams for How to Make Shannen’s Dream Come True**
Macheshuu, Age 16, Constance Lake First Nations, Treaty 9 Territory
- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 14 <i>Artwork by Macie, age 9</i> | 26 <i>Artwork by Amro, age 12</i> | 39 <i>Artwork by Mario, age 12</i> |
| 15 <i>Artwork by Wilford, age 12</i> | 27 <i>Artwork by Olivia, age 9</i> | 40 <i>Artwork by Jaela, age 12</i> |
| 16 <i>Artwork by Claire, age 9</i> | 28 <i>Artwork by Charlotte, age 9</i> | 41 <i>Artwork by Mary, age 9</i> |
| 18 <i>Artwork by Mason, age 9</i> | 30 <i>Artwork by Whitney, age 9</i> | 42 <i>Artwork by Imran, age 12</i> |
| 19 <i>Artwork by Nour K., age 12</i> | 32 <i>Artwork by Owen, age 10</i> | 43 <i>Artwork by Matteo, age 10</i> |
| 20 <i>Artwork by Isla, age 9</i> | 33 <i>Artwork by Isaac, age 9</i> | 44 <i>Artwork by Lauren, age 9</i> |
| 22 <i>Artwork by Noor F., age 12</i> | 34 <i>Artwork by Brooke, age 9</i> | 45 <i>Artwork by Fatima, age 12</i> |
| 23 <i>Artwork by Lola, age 9</i> | 36 <i>Artwork by Meweda, age 12</i> | 46 <i>Artwork by Alexey, age 12</i> |
| 24 <i>Artwork by Molly, age 9</i> | 37 <i>Artwork by Madison, age 9</i> | 47 <i>Artwork by Mila, age 9</i> |
| 25 <i>Artwork by Lauren, age 9</i> | 38 <i>Artwork by Max, age 9</i> | 48 <i>Artwork by Liv, age 14</i> |

Foreword

Emily Williams and Brittany Mathews

Coordinating Editors of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review*

In 1979, the only school in Attawapiskat First Nation was contaminated by a diesel fuel leak. The Government of Canada finally closed the school in 2000 after repeated complaints from students, families and school staff that they were getting sick. As a temporary measure, the government set up portable trailers next to the contaminated site. However, as the years dragged on, the portables began falling apart, with the heat often going off and the doors not closing to keep the elements out. Shannen Koostachin and her fellow Cree youth went to school in these unsafe conditions. Nearly ten years after the government failed to deliver on its promises of a new school, Shannen and her classmates led a movement for “safe and comfy” schools and quality, culturally-based education for all First Nations children with the support of her community. After Shannen tragically passed away in 2011 attending high school away from home, her loved ones founded the campaign, Shannen’s Dream in her memory.

As we write, Nations and communities across these lands grieve First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children who died in residential schools and are affected by their enduring legacy. On May 27, Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation identified 215 children buried at the site of the Kamloops Residential School. Shortly after,

the Cowessess First Nation identified 751 unmarked graves at the former Marieval Indian Residential School. These findings confirm what Survivors have always known about residential schools and told Canadians, particularly during the course of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Residential school Survivors participated in the TRC to protect future generations of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis kids and youth. Yet Shannen and her community’s experiences show us that the legacy of residential schools shaped their education and continues to shape this generation of First Nations children. Today, Canada continues to underfund First Nations children’s education and other public services such as child welfare, healthcare, housing, and water. This means First Nations children continue to attend unsafe schools, receive inadequate support, and face limited access to education in their communities and languages. Shannen’s Dream has not come true. First Nations communities have always known how to educate the next generation. Shannen’s Dream echoes this understanding and calls for education that honours First Nations communities’ distinct rights, sovereignties, cultures, languages, ways of knowing, and relationships to their lands.

It is with great pride that we present to you this Special Edition by Children and Youth in honour of Shannen Koostachin and Shannen's Dream. This issue's submissions by kids and youth learn from Shannen's experience and action, explore the unfair ways First Nations kids are still treated by Canada, and articulate the change that is needed to ensure all First Nations kids and youth have the opportunity to pursue their dreams. The young authors in this issue remind us that children and youth understand colonial injustice and deserve opportunities to meaningfully participate in the learning and action required to end it. It is essential that we centre, learn from, and stand with youth like Shannen and the authors in this issue.

Shannen's courage and vision call us to action and affirm the power of youth to speak truth to power. In testament to this, we begin this issue with a 2008 letter by Shannen and her classmates, Chris Kataquapit, Solomon Rae, and Jonah Sutherland to the Government of Canada seeking participation in the United Nation's review of Canada's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC). We are inspired by the passion, wisdom, and strength of these youth, the young contributors to this issue, and all kids, youth, and community who learn, speak, and act in pursuit of justice. We are grateful to all the young authors and creators for sharing their reflections and voices with us and respectfully peer-reviewing one another's work. We are uplifted by their vision.

In good spirit,

Emily Williams and Brittany Mathews



ATTAWAPISKAT FIRST NATION EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Attawapiskat, Ontario P0L 1A0
Telephone (705) 997-2232
Fax (705) 997-2419

July 11, 2008

Marie-Claude Côté-Villeneuve
Human Rights Program
Department of Canadian Heritage
Destination code: 15-11-C Gatineau, QC K1A 0M5
FAX: 819-994-5252
E-mail: marie-claude_cote@pch.gc.ca

RE: Attawapiskat Children Seek Input into UN Report on the Rights of the Child

Dear Marie-Claude Côté-Villeneuve:

We are 13-year-old children from the Attawapiskat Cree First Nation. We live on the isolated, sub-Arctic lands of the James Bay coast in Ontario. Our first language is Cree. The nearest road to our community is 400 kms away. We are writing to request that the failure of the federal government to follow up on its repeated promises to the children of Attawapiskat to replace a school contaminated by a diesel leak with a safe school that supports learning be included in Canada's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) regarding Canada's implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

We intend to follow up this letter with a Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child that will outline the systemic discrimination and negligence that we have suffered at the hands of the Federal government, through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC). We will be working on this report with our partners in the provincial and national education and child rights fields.

These allies include but are not limited to: the Attawapiskat Education Authority, the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council, the Ontario Public School Boards Association, (members of the) Ontario Catholic School Board Association, Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA), Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF), Canadian Teachers Federation (CTF), various NGOs, plus students, principals and teachers from schools across Canada who have joined the fight to ensure that children in our community should have comparable rights to proper schooling and funding as are guaranteed by Canadian and provincial/ territorial laws to Non-Native children and ensured under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These organizations fully understand the legal responsibilities that exist for ensuring that governments provide adequate education resources in Canada. They will work with us to identify how we, as First Nation children, have been denied the basic rights taken for granted by other students in Canada. As we are within the jurisdiction of Ontario, we will make direct comparisons to the rights enjoyed by students under provincial school board authorities.

Our shadow report will look at the obligations of Canada under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and contrast these commitments with the massive and unnecessary inequities that are faced by Aboriginal children born on reserves due to federal government policies and decisions.

This report will come at a later date. For now, we felt it was important to send this introductory letter to let you know who we are and why we have made appeal to you.

We are known in Canada as “the Forgotten Children of Attawapiskat.” We are a generation of children that have never seen a real school. For nearly 30 years the school grounds and building of J.R. Nakogee Grade School has been poisoned by the largest diesel contamination leak in Ontario. This leak was caused when the Federal government was operating our school. By the time the leak was discovered, nearly 50,000 litres of diesel contamination had seeped into the earth under the school building and playground.

Between 1979 and 1990, the leak continued as the federal government did nothing to stop it. Children were getting sick. Teachers suffered headaches and some quit midway through the year. Numerous attempts were made to get INAC to take action. No money was put aside to clean up the school even though children as young as five were breathing carcinogen-laden benzene fumes on a daily basis.

We were very young then and didn’t understand what was happening to us. Now we know better. We know that, in the Province of Ontario, there are very clear laws and regulations protecting students from health threats. Provincial school authorities have legal obligations to identify health risks and set timelines and action plans to address potential threats to health that might be raised in the context of a school environment.

And yet, none of those protections were applied to our school population. The federal government knew of the health threats we faced and yet, children and teachers were left in this toxic environment despite numerous requests from the community for help. Our health was put at risk because the policy of the federal government has been to spend as little money as possible on First Nation education issues.

In the year 2000, our frustrated parents pulled their children out of the school. We were put up in makeshift portables. At the time, our parents believed that this massive contamination, which had been caused under the watch of the federal government, would be cleaned up and we would be given a new school.

In 2000, Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault promised the community that a new and safe school would be built. Nothing was done. This promise was repeated in 2005 by Indian Affairs Minister Andy Scott and in 2007 by the staff of Minister Jim Prentice.

Over that period of time, our elders provided INAC with every study they requested. Our Education Authority prepared financial plans, school plans and enrollment plans. Our elders worked in good faith, believing that the federal government would ensure that we were finally given what every other child in Ontario takes for granted.... a proper school. And yet, despite these years of promises and negotiations from the Federal government, nothing was done.

In the year 2001 the Education Authority asked that a complete comprehensive assessment of their school programs be carried out.

A group of external educational experts was contracted to do the work. Their report (a copy of which was provided to Indian Affairs) concluded:

“The temporary accommodations are acceptable as buildings, but totally unacceptable in terms of providing a broad inquiry-based, student-centered, integrated and seamless program... These teaching/ learning compromises are a great disservice to the students and teachers, and totally unacceptable in today's educational environment.”

In the meantime we grew up in makeshift portable classrooms where the fire doors jammed shut in the winter (because of shifting ground) and the windows remained jammed open. On January mornings we sat in classrooms with winter coats on to keep out the cold. We went through our grades with teachers who were frustrated by the lack of resources available to them. We grew up without knowing what it was like to have a real library, a proper gym, adequate computer labs or a common area so we could develop a proper school community.

The federal government routinely denied adequate funding to our students who had special needs despite the fact that, non-Native children are guaranteed by law adequate support resources.

And yet we put up with all of this because we believed that the government would keep its word to our community. We believed that a new school would one day be built.

In December 2007, the new Minister of Indian Affairs Chuck Strahl broke our hearts when he cancelled plans for our school. He simply walked away on years of negotiations. Written commitments that had been made by the federal government just a few months previous were ignored.¹ The government announced that it no longer had any plans to build a school in Attawapiskat and would not provide any timelines for when such a school would be built.

When we learned that the government had completely dropped our community from its list of priorities, we made the decision to continue to fight for a school. We decided to reach out to non-Native schools across Canada and ask them to help us pressure the government. We began a grassroots campaign with YouTube, Facebook and letter-writing. Over 100 schools have joined this campaign. Over 65,000 visitors have watched our YouTube videos. We have received the support of every major educational organization in Ontario and many others across Canada. We are thrilled by the support we have received from so many non-Native and Native students who are working with us to try and get a school built.

Our fight has gathered national attention. The *Toronto Star* wrote an editorial (March 11, 2008) condemning the government’s disinterest in our situation.

1 July 30, 2007 letter from Bob Howsam, Director of Ontario region of INAC to Attawapiskat Education Authority “This acceptance will allow the new elementary school project in Attawapiskat to move forward to the next stage of development.”

For eight years, children in Attawapiskat have been going to school in cramped portable classrooms after health concerns over decades-old diesel fuel contamination closed the local school.

In most parts of Canada, such appalling conditions would spark public outcry and quick government action. But in Attawapiskat, a remote First Nations reserve on Ontario’s James Bay coast, parents and children are being told they will just have to wait for a new school.

“I just can’t tell them right now when it is going to be built,” says Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl.

Strahl’s lack of a sense of urgency on this file is troubling ... A government that has the money for tax breaks but not for rebuilding and repairing decaying aboriginal schools is a government with a wrong sense of priorities.

This past spring, our grade 8 class took the unprecedented step to go to Ottawa to personally plead with the Minister Chuck Strahl to live up to his obligation to build us a school. He told us he had no money. He told us he had other priorities. This did not make much sense as Canada has been running a 20 billion dollar surplus budget. We politely, but firmly told him that we didn’t believe him. We didn’t believe that a country as rich as Canada couldn’t afford to build a school for children who had gone 8 years on a poisoned school ground.

We learned afterwards that during those 8 years, nearly \$579 million had been taken out of the federal government’s Capital

Infrastructure Fund for building schools in First Nations and spent on other items — including lawyer's fees and management fees.²

Imagine all the schools that could have been built with this money! No non-Native community would ever have to worry that school projects might be cancelled because money was being moved to other areas. Policies that threaten one segment of the population in such an arbitrary manner are, by its very nature, discriminatory and unjustifiable. As we will show in our shadow report, every non-Native child is guaranteed transparent rights regarding classroom size, teacher-to-student ratios, capital project envelopes and special education funding. And yet our community has to live at the whims of the Department of Indian Affairs.

The inequity is made worse by the fact that the Federal government mandates our local education authority to meet the requirements of the provincial education curriculum, without making any commitments to provide comparable funding as is provided to provincially-funded schools. This blatant discrimination is not a function of the Indian Act. This is not something written into the treaty. This is simply an arbitrary policy of Indian Affairs that leaves children like us without adequate resources or protection.

The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) has been one of the educational organizations that have been very vocal in denouncing the discrimination we are facing in Attawapiskat. In an April 2008 newsletter that went to every public high school

teacher in Ontario, they asked teachers to join our campaign for a school in Attawapiskat. The title of the article was, "*Education Is A Right Not A Privilege Unless You Are A First Nation Child.*" They went on to say that "two standards of education exist in Canada and that a situation of Educational apartheid exists in Canada."

As you well know, the word "apartheid" describes deliberate and systemic discrimination based on race. The term "educational apartheid" was used in an editorial by the *Timmins Daily Press* (Editorial, January 26, 2008) to describe our situation:

"Apartheid is not a word to use lightly so when it's used in Canada, it's going to raise a few eyebrows and question how such a word with negative connotations could be used in a country that prides itself on being a multicultural network.

"... For more than eight years, students in the Northern community of Attawapiskat have been attending classes in portables since the J.R. Nakogee School was closed due to diesel fumes rising up from the ground the school was built on, causing sickness among the students.

"Year after year since the closure, the federal government has failed to provide the funding to build a new school leaving hundreds of students attending cold, drafty and deteriorating portables.... Canadians should hang their heads in shame for allowing such social situations on our First Nations to continue to go unanswered.

The students in Attawapiskat deserve better. They remain separate, remain unequal.

² "\$579 Million Shuffled From Native Projects," Toronto Star, June 9, 2008.

“It’s time to break down the walls of educational apartheid and treat the students as equals.”

This systemic discrimination is a breach of the key clauses of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child which Canada is a signatory to. This discrimination is made clear when we look at the massive discrepancies between the funding envelopes for non-Native students and reserve-based students. Further, the discrimination is institutionalized by the refusal of the federal government to set any clear or transparent goals and corresponding financial obligations to address the needs of isolated First Nation communities.

As we shall show in our shadow report, there are anywhere from 40 to 80 Aboriginal communities suffering from substandard school facilities, condemned school facilities or no school facilities. And yet the federal government will not come forward with a clear and transparent plan for addressing this terrible backlog.

The Ontario Public School Boards Association (with the backing of their 72 member School Boards) has challenged Minister Strahl on this point. In an April 28, 2008 press release, Trustee Grace Fox is quoted as saying, “All children have the right to quality education. The children of Attawapiskat have endured substandard conditions for too many years. It is high time for them to be a priority for this federal government and get the school they so desperately need.”

In fact, the OPSBA goes further in calling on the federal government to provide a public action plan to address the shameful backlog in education projects on First Nation territories all across Canada.

As will be shown in our follow-up shadow report, the failure of the federal government to provide a coherent plan and timeline for addressing issues like the Attawapiskat school crisis speaks to the failure of Canada to meet some of the most basic requirements under the UN Convention of the Child.

We will show how we have been routinely discriminated against in terms of funding for special education school funding formulas.

We will provide evidence of the appalling negligence of INAC regarding the diesel contamination of our school and compare how similar situations would have been handled in non-reserve schools.

We will provide the United Nations committee a picture of the inadequate resources provided to our Aboriginal students for computer training, trades and other opportunities. We will document the hopelessness that creeps into our children causing them to begin dropping out of school in Grade 5.

We will compare the refusal of INAC to set targets and timetables for addressing the backlog of school needs with the legal obligations of regional school boards and provincial education ministries to develop transparent goals for non-Native students.

But even more than a simple report, we look forward to meeting with the members of the committee. We want the committee to know how passionate we are to have a proper school built in our community. We simply refuse to give up on our younger brothers and sisters who should not go through what we have gone through.

Just this past spring, the federal government stood in the House of Commons to deliver a historic apology to the previous generation of First Nation children who had been mistreated and forced to attend the government's residential school systems. This was a historic moment for our people. We were pleased that the government had finally recognized the damage its policies did to generations of First Nation children.

And yet we are part of a new generation that is suffering from deliberate policies that limit our educational hopes and opportunities. We will note that there are other First Nations children across Canada who, like us, are getting far less educational support than other children. The apology from Canada needs to be acted upon.

We want the government to take responsibility for what is happening to the present generation of children.

When we met Minister Chuck Strahl in May 2008, we asked him to come to our community and walk a mile in our moccasins so he could understand the situation we are living in. He refused.

We would like to invite the UN members of the committee to visit Attawapiskat. We believe that when they see the situation faced by the children on the James Bay Coast they won't be able to turn away from us and say, as Mr. Strahl said, that they have other "priorities."

In conclusion, we are excited about participating in the UN's review of Canada's international obligations under the rights of the child.

Meegwetch,

Shannen Koostachin

Chris Kataquapit

Solomon Rae

Jonah Sutherland (on behalf of the students of Attawapiskat First Nation)

cc.

Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, Assembly of First Nations

Grand Chief Stan Beardy, Nishnabi Aski Nations

Grand Chief Stan Louttit, Mushkegowuk Tribal Council Chief

Theresa Hall, Attawapiskat First Nation

Charlie Angus, MP (Timmins-James Bay)

Ontario Public School Boards Association

Ontario Catholic School Boards Association Ontario

English Catholic Teachers Association

Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation

Canadian Teachers Federation

My Hopes and Dreams for How to Make Shannen's Dream Come True

Macheshuu, Age 16, Constance Lake First Nations, Treaty 9 Territory

What does it mean for me to have hopes and dreams? I heard about Shannen in the documentary *Hi-Ho Mistahey* by Alanis Obomsawin which featured Shannen Koostachin's story when I was in Grade 3. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (2007, p. 13), article 14, states that Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination. This is our right as *Naskumituwin* (Treaty) people and as Indigenous people. Having access to education is part of our natural rights as Omushkegowuk Cree people or any other Indigenous people. Shannen understood this and advocated to ensure that First Nation youth have schools in their community and the right to an education similar to non-Indigenous youth. In this paper I discuss my hopes and dreams on how to make Shannen's Dream come true.

Indigenous youth in Canada must have access to schools and, most importantly, schools that support their goals. Shannen challenged the Canadian government to have truly safe schools for Indigenous youth. Imagine having to fight to have a school to be able to learn. As a Treaty 9 person a right to an education is important. Our ancestors knew this and that is why they included education in our Treaty. Yet we are denied that right. Shannen showed courage

when she challenged the government to make Indigenous youth a priority and build the school in the community. It is distressing that youth have to remind politicians about lack of schools and access to education. This describes to me a broken Treaty system and a dishonour to our ancestors who had us deep in their thoughts during the Treaty-making process when they included education. These rights are not acknowledged, and Indigenous youth are discriminated against in Canada.

It is discouraging that some First Nations youth have to go far away to school in places that are often hostile and do not recognize our gifts. I have heard about many youth who leave their homes. This makes me reflect on Tanya Talaga's book *Seven Fallen Feathers* and think about Shannen's legacy and passion for Indigenous youth and our rights. It makes me think about Cree youth across Canada with hopes and dreams like mine. This is our Land, and we must speak. We should not need to exist under deplorable conditions and have our rights constantly taken away. If we listen to the stories of Indigenous people who were forced as children into Canada's brutal residential schools where they were severely abused, discriminated against and in some cases even [died], it shows how as Indigenous people we have experienced discrimination for far too long.

My [hopes] and dreams of making Shannen's dream come true are many. I want us to get funding to build better and safer schools. In many cases simply just a school in our community. We want schools that reflect who we are. The best schools I attended were schools that taught Indigenous language. Our languages should be up front and centre. We want schools that teach us math that reflects who we are as Indigenous people. We want teachers that do not dismiss us. I have that experience of being dismissed many times in schools. We want schools that want us. We want mold free schools. We want schools that are built with love and that are designed for our learning needs as Indigenous youth.

In order to make Shannen's Dream come true, those that have the power must listen to us. As Indigenous youth we have our own power within ourselves. We must be consulted and taken seriously. This will not happen if we are not seen as human beings and worthy. We are Indigenous peoples and Indigenous youth of these lands, our lands. My ancestors come from Northern Ontario, and we understand what works for us. We had everything we needed. We are a people with dignity like so many other Indigenous people. The government benefiting from our Lands should provide all First Nations and Indigenous schools with well-funded opportunities. They must rethink their priorities. Shannen knew that our education is important and Shannen's Dream goes beyond her community. It has impacted people across Canada. We will continue to honour Shannen's Dream and her legacy for our well-being. We are Omushkegowuk Cree. We are Indigenous.

References

- Talaga, T. (2017). *Seven fallen feathers: racism, death, and hard truths in a northern city*. House of Anansi Press.
- United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. (p. 1) https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

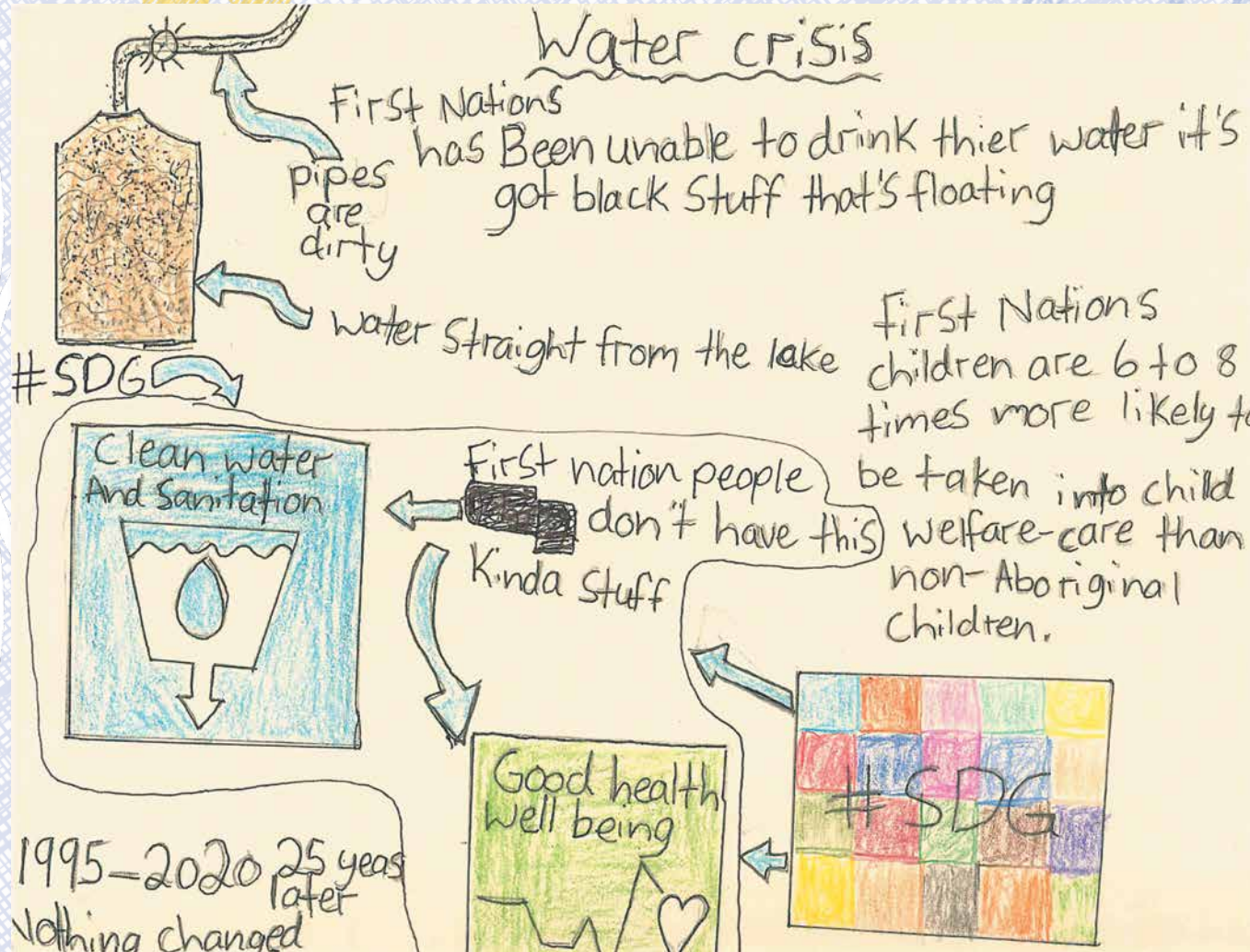
By Macie

Shannen's Dream

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
Every child deserves a school.
Black or white isn't,
That alright?
Shannen was brave,
Shannen had right,
She knew things,
Weren't fair so she
Made them right.
North, South, East and,
West We are all Canadian,
Don't we deserve,
The best? Young have power
Young have rights. Just,
Like Shannen they can,
Make things right. She wanted,
Opportunities. Shannen was extraordinary,
Shannen was unique. She got put in
Portables because of a terrible oil leak.
She speak to the Prime Minister about how thing
Weren't fair. A few years later after Shannen's death a new
School was built in Attawapiskat.



Macie, age 9



Wilford, age 12



Shannen wants every Canadian child to have a school.
 Have a heart and do your part to take place in 'Shannen's dream'.
 Attawapiskat doesn't want help, they want opportunities.
 Now Attawapiskat has a school, why didn't they get it when Shannen asked the same?
 Never forget about Shannen Koostachin.
 Every child should get a school to have proper education.
 Now there is a school named Shannen Koostachin Elementary school.

Know that Shannen Koostachin is a hero to all First Nation communities.
 Over and over, the government refused to listen to Shannen and her dream.
 Oh my, the children must have been cold when they had to walk to play school but
 Shannen Koostachin wanted to change things and she succeeded to do so.
 The children were not able to have library classes.
 Attawapiskat is cold, some of the kids might have gotten sick.
 Change is what Shannen wanted and she got what she wanted.
 Her school was J.P. Nalaggee that got closed down because of the oil spill.
 In Attawapiskat they have to leave every year in the spring because of that.
 No indigenous communities should be treated differently than us we are ^{all humans} _{children}.
 Shannen cared about her dream and we do to!

Dream anything possible, like Shannen did.
 Really stand up when you know something isn't right.
 Even know Shannen is no longer with us, her story lives on.

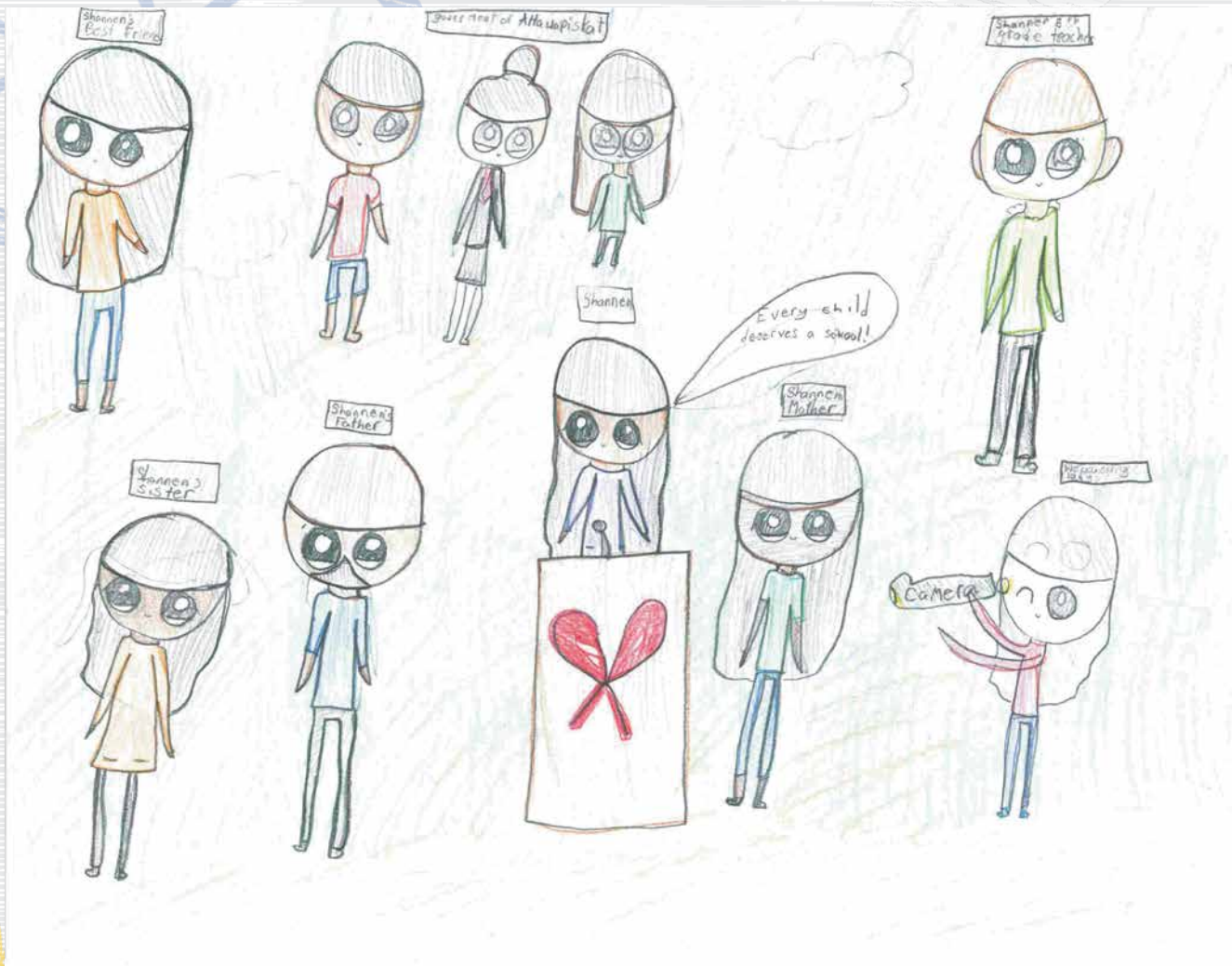




Attawapiskat is a cold place where you need to boil water to drink.
 Maybe someday you can make your own dream come true, just like Shannen did!

By: Claire





Claire, age 9



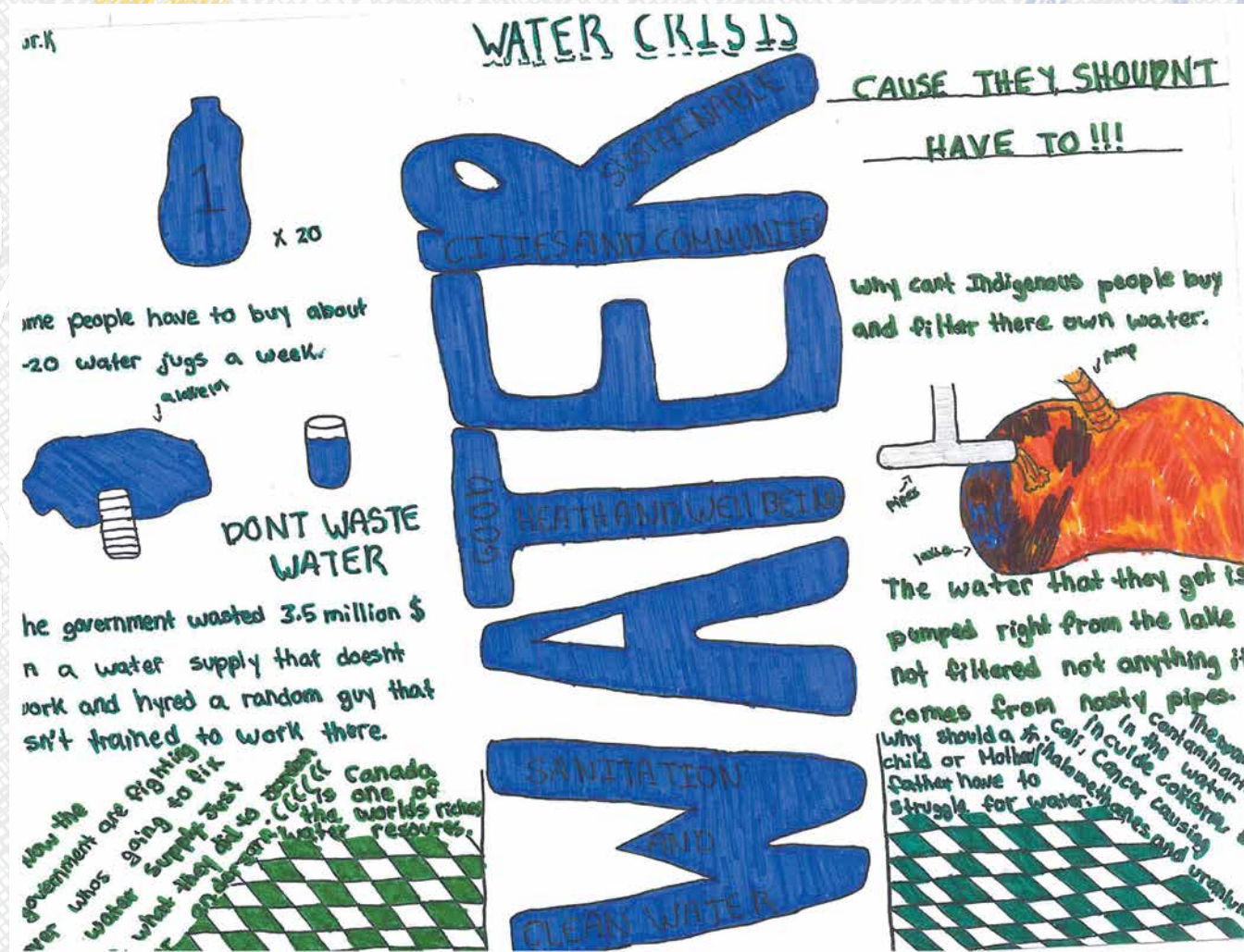
✱  ✱  ✱

She is stuck inside of my head.
Help First Nation's people.
A spark is in her.
Not fair that we get a school and they dont
never again shold have no school
Everden deserves
Now!!!
by: Mason

✱  ✱  ✱



Mason, age 9



Nour K., age 12



Isla, age 9



Dear Mr. Marc Miller,

My name is Isla and I stand up for Shannen. Shannen's Dream is a big deal. Her dream is also special. I heard about Shannen's story and it hit me. I thought about this and you should too. If you were Shannen Kwanochin you would want to give your friends in your school and out of your school, the real experience of a school, not only portables. You also would feel really sad and mad if Shannen said you don't deserve a school. You would not feel very good and I promise you that. Sometimes you can't only think about yourself. Shannen's dream should not have taken her death to only get a new school. It wasn't fair. Just because you are the Minister of Indigenous Services does not



mean you can treat them like that. I also made you a poem.

Roses are red.
Violets are blue.
Young kids can
make a difference.
And so can you!

Sincerely,
Isla



Water comes directly from the non-purified lake.

Dirty water with black stuff.

The non-purified water contains coliform, E.Coli, cancer causing Trihalomethans.

Can die because of the dirty water.

Treatment facility is ignored by the government.

Pipes are not working they are all rusted and broken.

Now stopped testing the water because of the pandemic.

174 Advisories

Really bad water.

Some people have to leave homes.

Now is = 2020
They are not working from = -1995
25 years

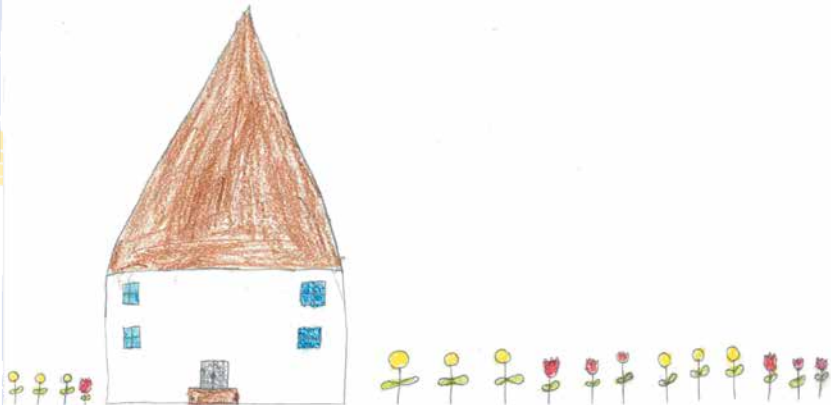
Have to \$ buy really big water bottles.

Water Crisis

lack of water.

Noor F., age 12

Kattawapiskat elementary School



Every child deserves a school. I'm so happy that there is a new school called Kattawapiskat elementary school but there is still children that have no school. I think every child deserves a school like Shannen. Back then when Shannen was alive she wanted a real school. I think she should of had a real school not a portable. Sorry for the loss of Shannen Koostachin but im happy that Shannas dream came true and she got a new school called Kattawapiskat.

sincerely Lola



Lola, age 9

✦ ~~~~~ ✦ ~~~~~ ✦

over here is a poem I hope you like it
 Sshannans dream
 Hhave more schools
 Anttannaf (city)
 Nno more portables!
 Nneed schools
 Oil spill fix it
 Nnothings is impossible

Shannon Koostachin is a good kid. My teacher, Ms. Thevissen (well for you she must be Ms. Filban), and anyway she told us all about the story. And Shannon is right, evryone needs a school no mater what! It really is not fair! Kids have the power too! I hope Shannon does not feel embarassed beceuce we have a school and she does it. I think they should have just made a new school or fixed the oil tank. I wish Shannon was still here to keep fighting. All kids deserve a school not just us. You are Canadians too! They dont even have a library because they have portables. Its so sad, but I hope you like what I sent you and I hope you get it too. Now I will tell you about my drawing. I drew the school that had an oil spill and its crossed off, and then some portables. I hope you like it.

WE All have Senciruly Molly Power!!!

✦ ~~~~~ ✦ ~~~~~ ✦



Molly, age 9



My name is Lauren and my and my teacher Mrs. Theunissen (or known to the children of Attawapiskat who had her as a teacher in the early 2000's Mrs. Filson who actually taught Shannen) and she saw a spark in Shannen and she was right! I think Shannen's dream was an amazing one and we need to make sure everyone gets a school for children to feel safe and happy. I don't think it's fair for me to go to a real school in Nova Scotia without a portable in sight and also have safe water to drink out of a tap, while Attawapiskat and many other First Nations communities have to boil their water. I feel like it's unbelievable children had to protest for a simple playground. I



Knew Shannen's Dream was an important dream and we need to raise money and fight until every single portable school gets a real school!

By: Lauren



Lauren, age 9

Water water crisis in First Nations communities

we all need clean water

Water governance structure

Some of the advisories date as far back as 1995 - like Shog Lake 40 First Nation.

73 per cent of first Nation water systems are at high or medium risk of contamination.

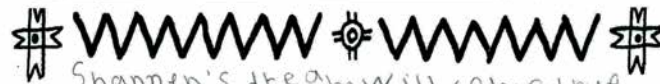
In 2010, the United Nations declared water and sanitation human rights, acknowledging they are essential to the realization of all other rights.

In May 2012, there were 17 drinking water advisories in over 100 First Nations.

A single drinking water advisory can mean as many as 5,000 people access to safe, clean drinking water.

If Canada raises CERP rates from 15 to 25.5 percent, all First Nations could have working water systems.

Amro, age 12



Shannen's dream will come true.
Schools are helpful to make people
happy. Shannen needs a big
neighbourhood so she has space.
Kids in Canada need a school!
Everybody needs a school in the
world. Shannen needs people to have
a school. Shannen reserves a
school because she doesn't have a
school and it's not fair for Shannen
and her friends. Shannen died in a
terrible car accident. Shannen
Koostachin died in June 1st, 2010.
In Shannen's school there was
an oil spill at the school so
they had to go in a port-a-bles so
they can stay safe and not
be sick. All of the people were
getting really sick and that's why the
people in the school had to go in to a
port-a-bles.



Olivia, age 9



Charlotte, age 9



Dear Mr. Marc Miller,
 I think it is so unfair that the First Nations do not have, clean water, schools or fresh fruit and vegetables. It is also unfair that the First Nations people have to boil dirty water to drink it and they could get sick. Over here in Dartmouth, we can just turn on the tap and fresh clean water and that is very unfair to the First Nations people. In some communities, they do not even have school for children to learn in and they should have the same education as us. First Nations people should have, clean water, fresh food, clothes and good homes. All of Canada should have the same things as us. First Nations people matter too!! Shannen Koostachin should have been listened to before she died. It is like she needed to die before understanding what was going on. She tried so hard to get a school, but now they do in Attawapiskat, but there are still communities that only have portables and not real schools for the children to learn in. First Nations people matter too!!



Shannen Koostachin Do First Nations Deserve Portables? NO

Help First Nations Remember, all kids matter

All kids matter Everyone has a story

None will stop us. More happiness, more happy children.

None will not come to school.

Everyone has power

Nation

By Charlotte



Dear Mr. Marc Miller,
I hope Shannen's dream continues on by people making speeches, letters or even making a sign. Shannen's dream was important because every town in Canada should get a full school no matter what. I want to continue on Shannen's dream by making people notice these types of towns, and what they don't get. Attawapiskat and any other town who doesn't have rights deserves to have schools, clean water or anything else that we get and they don't. Shannen didn't do this for the same. She did this to have rights. I'm making this letter to try to make a difference in the First Nation communities. It wasn't until her death when the finally realised that a portable is not good for a child's education. It's wrong that they had to put their warm clothing on every time they went to physics, computer lab or anything else. I couldn't imagine walking to school and not

getting to go in a school building. I think Shannen was very brave to fight for rights for her town. It's time for every child to deserve rights, no matter their culture or where they live in Canada.

Sincerely
Whitney
Makin

Whitney, age 9

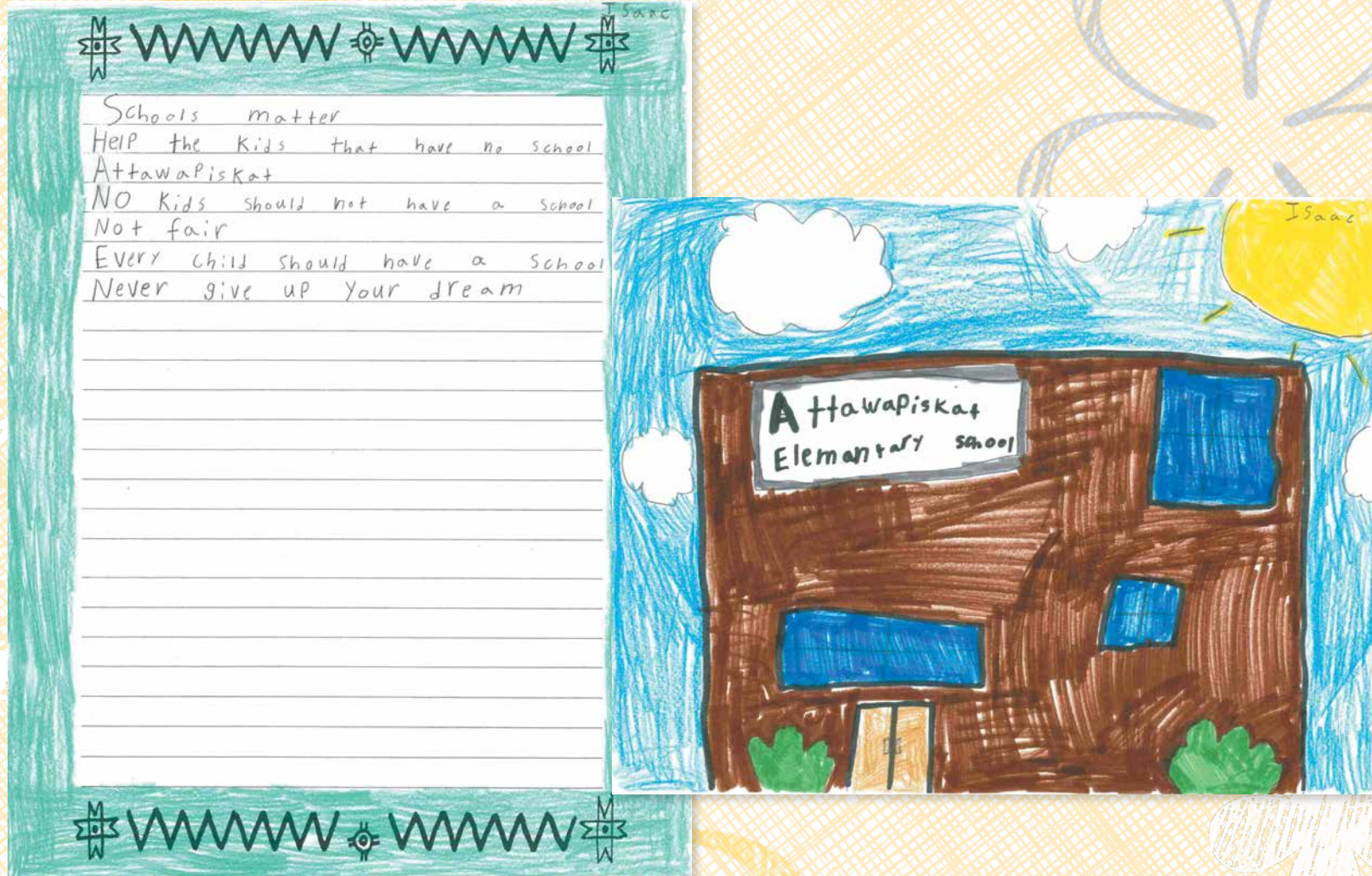




Shannen Koostachin
Help us
Attawapiskat
Notice us
Notice Attawapiskat
Everyone needs a school
Nova Scotia has schools but not some places
Don't forget about us
Remember me
Everyone needs an education
Anyone? We're not anyone
Make a difference



Owen, age 10



Isaac, age 9



Dear Mr. Marc Miller,
I go to Colby Village Elementary School and I think that it is not fair that kids in Nova Scotia like me get to have a nice big warm school, but the kids in Attawapiskat had to get stuck in portables because of the oil spill at their old school. Shannen KooStachin had to lose her life just for her to be able to go to school, while we get to wake up and go right to our school. I hope that Shannen's dream comes true because young people have just as much power as older people do. All Shannen wanted was a school after she died her dream came true and she was pretty young. I can make a difference by making posters, protesting for equal schools and even sending a letter like I am now. My hope for Shannen's dream is to get more schools in First Nations communities because every child's education matters. Shannen KooStachin did not only want schools for Attawapiskat she wanted schools



for all Canadian children. Isn't that nice how a young special kid did what she did. It is not fair at all how we can just go to gym and computer lab without having to get all geared up while the kids in Attawapiskat had to put on their warm gear just to go to gym class or computer lab. Just imagine all of the little kids who had no library and just wanted to learn how to read. What is really special is that the Indigenous people did not want to be given things they want to do it by their selves and be proud. I feel sad because of her story but I feel proud of her. I know that we can make a difference and you know it to.

Sincerely Brooklyn



Brooke, age 9



Meweda

WATER CRISIS IN FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES

- 870,000 people under a water crisis
 $\begin{matrix} \uparrow \\ 174 \text{ Advisories} \\ \times 5000 \text{ people each} \\ \hline 870,000 \end{matrix}$

Some people get brown dirty water from their taps

Some people find unknown little black things in their water

Government
 The government provide a water treatment facility that costed 3.6 million but it didnt even work.
 The council of Canadians learned that the federal government has

WATER TREATMENT

- The water advisers started in 1995

2020 (this year)
 - 1995 (when it started)
 = 25 years

This adviser is saying that the water is undrinkable

First nations shouldn't have to pay for water like other places in Canada in order to drink safe water they use big jugs of water.

Quality monitoring activities suspended since the beginning of the pandemic which was on march. This causes the people who live in reserves not to know whether or not the water is safe to drink

Sustainable Development Goals that could help in this problem

#3 Good health and well being because everybody needs to have access to clean water so they can stay healthy

#6 Clean water and sanitation because everyone needs to have clean and drinkable water

#16 Peace, justice and strong institutions because everyone should be

- The water that First Nation Community gets is from the lake directly to their taps

These houses directly get water from the lake

Contaminants in the water include coliform, E-Coli, cancer-causing Trihalomethans and Uranium

73% percent of first nations water systems are at high or medium risk of contamination

Meweda, age 12



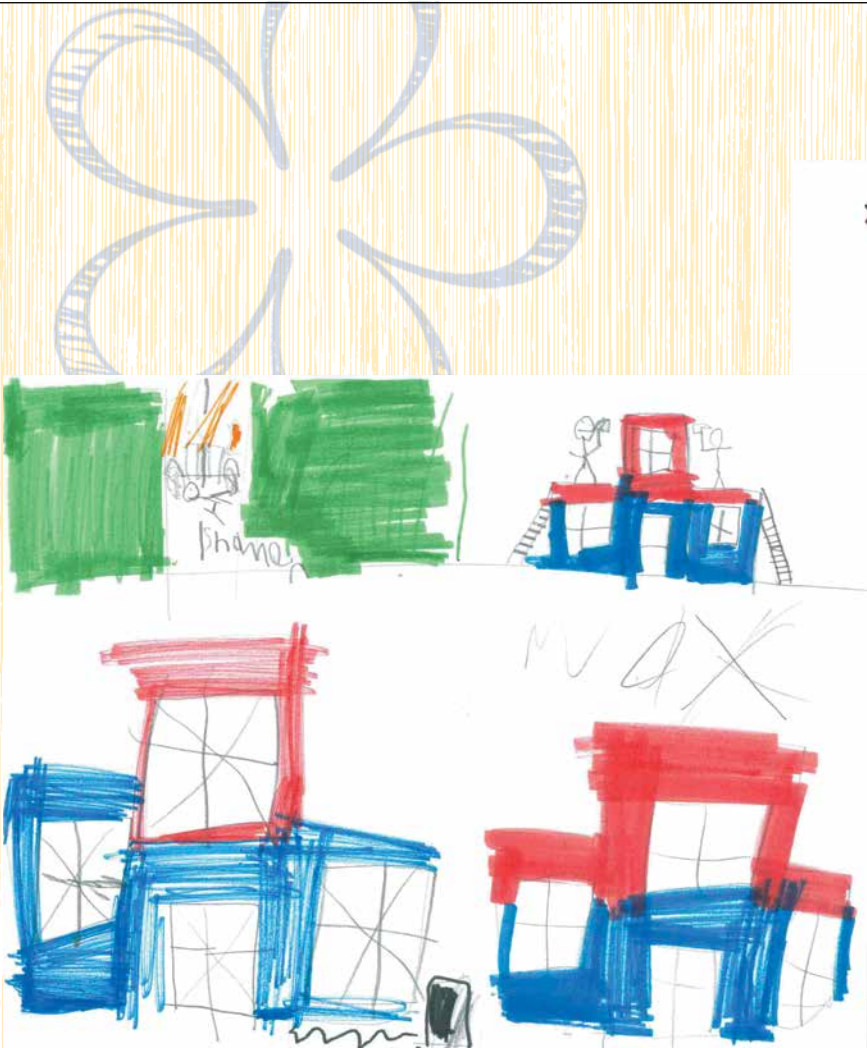
Hello my name is Maddy and I wanted to let you know every child deserves a school. There was person named Shannen Koostachin and she was first nations. She did not have a school any more because there was an oil spill so they had to learn in portables our teacher taught Shannen Koostachin. There are still 43 schools to be built!

After her death they built a school and she lived in Attawapiskat. If you do something about it Canada could be a better place my point is we have a warm school, clean water some people don't. I am not just writing this to you just because I want this to happen it's also because it's the right thing to do. What if you were in a portable with no clean water it's really not fair. You're so lucky you have all these things other people don't have. My point is every child deserves a school.

Yours truly Maddy



Madison, age 9

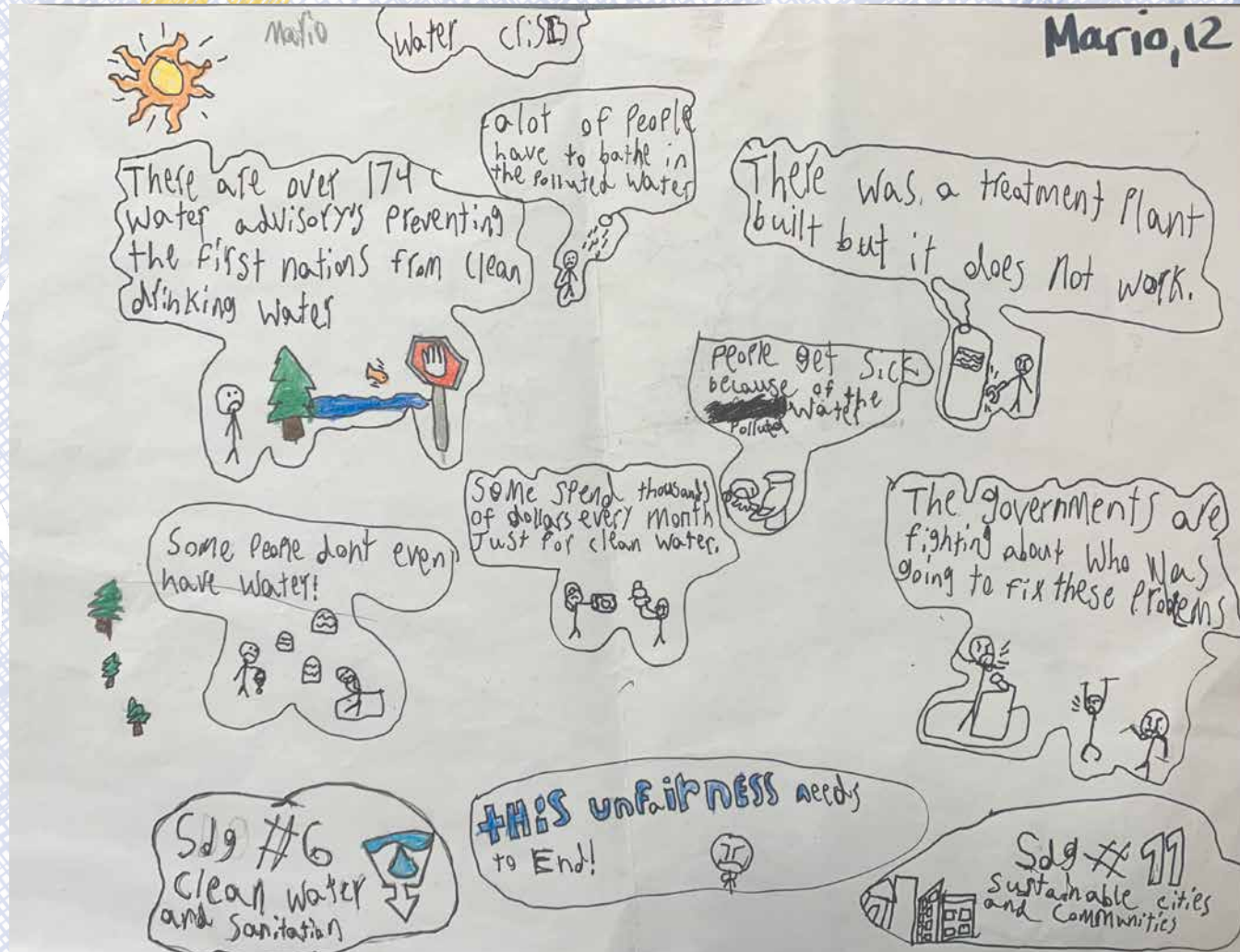


Dear Mr Matt Mixer
The he are indigenys communities without
schools and I think it is not fair for the
communities without schools. Now in
atta Wars Kat has a school because shannen
koo Stachin died and after she died and after
she dies a school was built. It is not fair
because she died for a new school and
people are still without a good
education in these schools.

Sincerely
Max



Max, age 9



Mario, age 12

WATER CRISIS

The water many Indigenous communities depend on is contaminated, difficult to access or risky due to faulty treatment system.

Contaminants: The contaminants in the water include Coliform, E.coli, and cancer causing Trihalomethanes.

Each water advisory, at least 5,000 people lack of access.

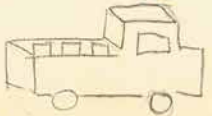


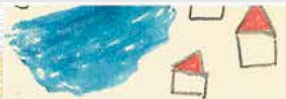
In 2018, there were 174 water advisories.

$5,000 \times 174 =$
870,000 people

25 years - ago
Some advisories date as far back as 1945 - Like Shoal Lake.

They have to order water.
↳ might get delayed in winter

Right now, there's covid the First Nations are in a huge disadvantage.



Jaela, age 12



Roses are red, violets are blue,
 Indigenous people deserve opportunities
 too. You don't care, but other people
 do, just give them a chance please
 do, they are just like us like
 me and you. Normal people just
 walking in the blue, they need
 opportunities like me and you, not
 lots of gifts, they should be
 proud of the way they live. It's
 up to you to change your chance.
 I have a hard life and
 they should too, you should
 see now that it's not very
 fair, not fair at all to the
 people out there, just
 walking without a home
 or food too. They are
 very special special
 indeed their colour doesn't
 matter it's what's underneath.

BY Mary



Mary, age 9

Water Crisis

1995 - 2020
25 years later nothing changed.
#SDG

- 5,000 indigenous people lack access to clean water.

- In May 2018 174 advisories for drinking water.

- When you do the math $5,000 \times 174 = 870,000$ people lack water.

Contaminants in the water include coliform, E. coli, cancer-causing, Trichloromethans, and Uranium.

Dangerous chemicals

The government is arguing again for indigenous people can have clean water.

water for first nations was contaminated.

Imran, 12

Diagram labels: Lake, Sink, Dirty water, Water bottle with chemicals, Unsafe water, Clean water, Lake, birds, Unsafe water.

Pie chart labels: 10% no service, 44% Trucked water, 25% lead in water, 21% other.

Text: If you do 2020 the year we are in right now - 1995 the government should have fixed it 25 years ago!

Imran, age 12



Shannens dremes,
help First Nation communities.
And help children that are in poverty.
Need help.
Need fresh water.
ending no school build more.
Nation are reason we have to sit together to help our country.
Sitting for a long time in a portland is not for

Dreaming for a new school.
Reading they dont have a library.
education is important.
make more schools.
education has a big meaning to them.
save our country with schools.



Matteo, age 10



My name is Lauren and my and my teacher Mrs. Theunissen for knows to the children of Attawapiskat who had her as a teacher in the early 2000's Mrs. Filton who actually taught Shannen and she saw a spark in Shannen and she was right! I think Shannen's dream was an amazing one and we need to make sure everyone gets a school for children to feel safe and happy. I don't think it's fair for me to go to a real school in Nova Scotia without a portable in sight and also have safe water to drink out of a tap while Attawapiskat and many other first Nations communities have to boil their water. I feel like it's unbelievable children had to protest for a simple playground. I



Knew Shannen's Dream was an important dream and we need to raise money and fight until every single portable school gets a real school!

By: Lauren



Lauren, age 9

WATER CRISIS

Meaning of Water Crisis:

- Lack of water
- Can't drink it
- Wasting water
- Not enough water
- Really bad

Never Had clean Water for 25 years.

2020
- 1995

25 years

INDIGENOUS FAMILIES AT RISK:

870,000 indigenous people lack access to water in the Reserves.

Sustainable Development Goals

5000
x 174
870,000 - all together


Contaminants in water include:

- Cancer-causing
- Coliform
- Uranium
- Trihalomethanes
- E. Coli

GOVERNMENT doesn't pay for the water treatment


Water comes from Lake - **unclean**

73% 73 Percent of First Nations' water systems are at high risk of Contamination.



BEFORE

→



AFTER

NAZKO FIRST NATION WATER TREATMENT

The filters and backup generations broke and failed to work.

-atima.M

Fatima, age 12

Alexey, 12 water crisis

146 cases of No clean water
 - Some places go to have had a case in 1995

- government is not doing any thing about it
- they have treatment water filter that cost 3.0mll that does not work.
- the town asked the government to repair the water in the place but the government did not respond water is being payed for by the town people
- the water causes cancer causing.
- the water is dangerous when kids live with no water
- kids and adults get sick from the water
- they don't get fair water the first nations are being treated poorly.
- the towns have chugson water the only thing that can be cheap is chugs of water

Solutions and stuff that they could

- the government should be more aware.
- the government needs to be more helpful like the water giving them more money
- one thing that the government do to help is donate or give money.
- the government should be giving money to the towns
- the government could also make the people
- the government should give water for free

- the government is spending/ spending with quality monitoring.
- towns are being put into jeopardy because the first nation
- a lot of towns are at risk and they
- some places on reserves are at risk because the water and other problems.
- some places need other supplies too

Alexey, age 12



Mila
Roses are red, violets are blue
every child deserves a school too.
Some people are black, people
are white, everybody is different isn't
that alright. from east to west, North
or South, Everbody is great inside and out.
42 schools left to be built, shalldent
the government feel tot's of guilt.
Children are struggling, cant you
see, let them feel good, help them
be free. It's just so sad, it's so
uncool, it took Shannen's death to
build the kids a school. It's just
a colour, the colour of your skin.
dont you realise what your
doing is a sin! Imagine not being allowed
to read, the creators of the
reserve are so full of greed.



Mila, age 9

As a non-indigenous youth, I don't know what it feels like to be discriminated against. I have always had a good education and access to good health care. But there isn't equality in Canada and not everyone has these same rights and that needs to change. That's why I want to be an ally, because I know that what's happening currently and what's been happening in Canada isn't right. Here are some children's rights around the world: education, health care and safe drinking water. Those rights don't all apply for children living on reserves. There is discrimination and systemic racism in this country and that has to end now.



We are all kids who have plans and dreams for the future. We are all kids who want to have a good life with a good job and family. Why is that so hard to achieve for indigenous children? People need to hear their story and the side of Canadian history that is often forgotten. I, and many others, hope for a future when everyone is equal and there is no discrimination towards indigenous peoples. But before that, there needs to be change. Shannen had a dream so let's make it happen.

Liv, age 14



**First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada**