

South Algonquin Library presents Algonquin history workshop



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

South Algonquin Township public library, in partnership with the municipality and Waaseyaa Consulting, are presenting a workshop entitled A Brief Ondjigitigweyaa Madaoueskarini Algonquin History on Jan. 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the township's council chambers in Whitney. The workshop will be presented by Algonquin educator, consultant and entrepreneur Christine Luckasavitch, the owner and principal of Waaseyaa Consulting. The workshop hosted by Luckasavitch, entitled A Brief Ondjigitigweyaa Madaoueskarini Algonquin History is happening on Jan. 16 at 6:30 p.m. The workshop delves into Canada's reconciliation era, what it means and how it impacts non-Indigenous people in unceded Algonquin territory. It will also look at ways to honour the lands where we live, work and recharge and honour all beings, human and non-human, that we share the land with. It will also look at ensuring that future generations can hold on to those same connections. Charlene Alexander, the CEO and head librarian of the South Algonquin libraries, says that the library understands the need to recognize and embrace the principles of Truth and Reconciliation with Ontario's Indigenous population, as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Report. "With this understanding, the Township of South Algonquin Public Library acknowledges the First Peoples on whose traditional territories we live and work. We believe that acknowledging territory shows recognition of and respect for Indigenous peoples, both in the past and the present. We believe that

recognition and respect are essential elements in establishing healthy, reciprocal relations and are key to reconciliation," she says. Alexander goes on to say that part of this acknowledgment and steps toward reconciliation are to provide collections, services and programming related to Indigenous cultures, languages and peoples, including books, audio and video materials. She says the library collection will include titles by and about First Nation communities. As for how this upcoming Jan. 16 workshop came about, Alexander says that Waaseyaa Consulting is a Whitney based organization and she's known Luckasavitch for many years. "Christine also has served on our library board as a member and as chairperson in the past. While serving on our board, Christine used her knowledge and skills and developed our Land Acknowledgement statement and led us into meaningful thoughts and discussion. Since then, we have developed an Indigenous Awareness and Respect Policy," she says. Luckasavitch confirms that she's had a long relationship with the Township of South Algonquin Public Library, and remembers how exciting it was going to the Whitney library when she was a kid. "I've always loved books. Libraries have played a crucial role in my learning stories and histories. When I returned back to the community, I sat on the library board for a few years. I have deep gratitude for the work of the library board and having libraries in both Whitney and Madawaska. They're community hubs that have so many free resources for the community. Hopefully this event, one of many in a series of annual events held by the Township of South Algonquin Public Library, is a way to inspire more people to visit the libraries in South Algonquin," she says. As already stated, Luckasavitch is the owner and principal with Waaseyaa Consulting, which offers services and workshops that are centred around Algonquin history and knowledge systems. Her work centres around creating spaces for Indigenous peoples to share their knowledges, both in physical and digital spaces and encourage the re-emergence of ancestral kinship ties. Alexander reveals that at the first meeting of South Algonquin council on Dec. 7, they discussed working/partnerships between the council and the library board. "Our first two public events of the year are a great start and we are hoping that many and/or all the new council will be in attendance as this is a great learning opportunity for everyone," she says. According to Alexander, the next program with the same partnerships will be called A Deeper Dive: Making Land Acknowledgments Matter on March 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the township council chambers, and again hosted by Luckasavitch. The workshop will include a discussion on the colonial impact on Indigenous territories and will examine why it's important to know full, true histories to attempt to bring consciousness to the times we're living in. The workshop is described on the library's Facebook page in the following manner; A territorial or land acknowledgement is an act of reconciliation that involves making a statement recognizing the ancestral territory of Indigenous peoples who live in a particular region, often since time immemorial. However, these acknowledgements can easily become a token gesture rather than a meaningful practice. We have a responsibility to consciously and continuously reflect on the fact that no matter where we are, we are on Indigenous lands. Further, we have a responsibility to not only acknowledge and learn about the histories and legacies of colonialism, but to take tangible action to contribute to Canada's reconciliation process. Luckasavitch reiterates that the workshop on Jan. 16 (and on March 17) is free of charge and everyone is welcome to attend. She says it will also be conversational in nature and there'll be a question-and-answer session after the talk. Alexander tells Bancroft This Week that she plans to attend the workshop on Jan. 16 and invites everyone to come by. "So far, the response has been positive," she says. "I hope we have a good turnout."