

The butterfly effect



June 30, 2020

By Nate Smelle

Watching Stage-2 of Ontario's reopening unfold has so far been an incredibly interesting and enlightening experience. It has been great to see that every store I have visited has taken precautions to implement measures to encourage physical distancing, improve sanitation, and shield their workers and customers from each other.

Line-ups, tape or stickers on the floor, Plexiglass in front of the cash register, sanitation stations at the main entrance and checkouts, staff wearing masks or shields; all these measures are now part of what we are starting to accept as our "new normal." As inconvenient and awkward as these barriers might be, I cannot foresee a time when it will ever make sense for us to let down our guard.

With many scientists and members of the medical community now saying that COVID-19 could be with us from now on, these protective shields are a small price to pay to promote good public health. Yet, for some reason there is still resistance. In the United States for instance, we have seen the President and Vice President refuse to wear a mask despite the message it sends to the public. At the same time we have watched their total number of confirmed cases and death toll rise to catastrophic proportions. In Canada the message regarding whether or not to wear a mask coming from all levels of government seems to vary. At first we were told it would not really help us protect ourselves and that it could even increase our chances of contracting the virus. Now, the message has changed somewhat with the government stating that "Wearing a homemade non-medical mask/facial covering in the community is recommended for periods of time when it is not possible to consistently maintain a two-metre physical distance from others, particularly in crowded public settings, such as: stores, shopping areas, and public transportation."

One thing for certain is that all countries seem to agree that because COVID-19 is a droplet-borne virus, masks help prevent us from spreading the virus to others. Currently there are more than 50 countries worldwide that have made wearing a mask in public mandatory. As uncomfortable and annoying as it may be to remember to wear one, these 50+ countries have all realized that in protecting others from COVID-19 we are in turn protecting ourselves.

This simple truth illuminated during this pandemic as it unfolds is a reminder of how interconnected we, and all living things for that matter, truly are. If we sneeze, cough, pave over a wetland, pollute the water, air and soil, cut down a forest, or blast, drill, crush and transport aggregate adjacent to a residential and commercial area there are consequences that can impact the lives, health and well-being of others forever. As Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin artist White Bear Standing (Sherry Crawford) said during

our conversation last week ?Hopefully people will start to see that when someone else is hurting, I'm hurting.?