



# BIKIIWEWINIG NINDAWAASHISHIIMINAANAK

BRINGING OUR CHILDREN HOME INITIATIVE

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MENTAL HEALTH EDITION

## Meet The Mental Health Support Team

**Gary Quequish, MA**  
Mental Health Support Worker

Gary Quequish is from Round Lake, Ontario and is a member of the North Caribou Lake First Nation band. Round Lake is also called Weagamow. Gary comes from the Sandhill Crane clan. His last name "Quequish" means Whiskeyjack (Canada Gray Jay) or Camp Robber. He is known for his down to earth wisdom and a quirky sense of humour. Gary is often called to travel across Canada and the United States for speaking opportunities. He teaches people through workshops and also trains Indigenous resource workers. With a Master's degree in counselling and a teacher's certificate, Gary has also worked as a mental health consultant, crisis and trauma worker and counsellor in northwestern Ontario for over 25 years. Gary and his wife Christine work in the same field and they integrate faith and ministry in every aspect of their life and work. Gary and Christine presently live in Sioux Lookout. They have 2 sons, Joel Hanson and Christian Mark Timothy. They also have 5 grandchildren and 2 grand-dogs.



## **Christine Quequish, BRE, RSSW** Mental Health Support Worker

Hello, my name is Christine Quequish. I am originally from Opaskwayak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba. I live in Sioux Lookout, Ontario and am married to Gary Quequish. We have 2 sons; Christian and Joel. I attended Briercrest College in Saskatchewan and I graduated with my bachelor's degree in 1994. I also attended Confederation College in Sioux Lookout in 2000. There, I received a Social Services Worker (SSW) Diploma and registered under (OCSWSSW) Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. I have been working in the mental health field for over 25 years. Working with NAN territory tribal councils such as Shibogama, IFNA, and Windigo in various capacities such as mental health, addictions, and crisis work. I also worked for Nodin and did community counselling based here in Sioux Lookout. The last several years I have been working in Big Trout Lake First Nation as Choose Life Counselor 2018 to present. This all currently culminates in my current position a counsellor with the Bringing Our Children Home initiative.



## **Dr. Peter Hettinga, PhD** Mental Health Support Worker

Dr. Peter Hettinga provides clinical leadership to the Lac Seul Bringing Our Children Home mental health support team members and consults regularly with the Initiative staff team. Dr. Peter Hettinga holds a PhD in Clinical Social Work/Educational Psychology from the University of Minnesota 1978; a Master of Social Work with a clinical specialisation from the University of Calgary 1975 and a Bachelor of Social Work degree with a direct client service focus from the University of Calgary 1974. He is licensed as a Registered Psychotherapist (licensed Ontario health care provider) and as a Registered Social Worker in Ontario. Hettinga provides assessment, crisis-oriented psychotherapy, consultation, and clinical leadership for the Lac Seul Bringing Our Children Home Initiative including consultations on intergenerational family trauma having previously taught graduate level family therapy at the University of Nebraska at Omaha as a tenure track faculty member. Dr. Hettinga was an expert panelist with the Advisory Group on Suicide Prevention (mandated by the Federal Minister of Health and the National Chief AFN) which authored "Acting on What We Know: Preventing Youth Suicides in First Nations" -Appendix F "Community Crisis Assessment Guideline" was his design (2001). Hettinga also served as Assessment Team Leader with the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Youth Forum on Suicide which produced the report Horizons of Hope- An Empowering Journey (1996). Dr. Hettinga interviewed upwards of 30 survivors of residential institutions to prepare survivors for adjudication hearings as part of the Independent Assessment process and to support survivors in accessing healing and reconciliation funds. Dr. Hettinga is committed to First Nations self determination and works to support First Nations achieve full agency and believes that the Lac Seul Bringing Our Children Home Initiative is ultimately about healing for survivors and their families and communities.



## **Melanie Beardy, Registered Social Service Worker** Mental Health Support Worker

I am from Bearskin Lake but moved to Thunder Bay about 7 years ago to go back to Confederation College. I brought my four children with me to attend school and they have since graduated. I am married for 22 years. In college, I took the Native Family and Child Worker program and registered as a social service worker with the Ontario colleges. I am glad I was able to be here to attend school along side with my kids. My oldest son completed the Police Foundations program, my daughters are in the confederation college with the College Access Program and they will graduate this spring. My second son started a full time rotational cargo ramp attendant in Pickle Lake. I am working with the Bringing Our Children Home Initiative; we started last spring and all of us have become close. I get sad to see everyone head back home. I am honoured to be part of the team and love to attend our gatherings.



# Trauma Bond versus Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Edition (DSM-5) 2013 identifies a particular disorder which they call Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD). It is a serious psychological condition that results in a child's inability to form emotional attachment with parents, caregivers, and others in their life. RAD develops in infants and children ages 5 and younger, as this is the time when emotional bonds are established between the child and the caregiver. RAD is most often associated with children who are neglected or abused during the early stages of their lives. These children frequently exhibit maladaptive behaviours. Such is the case for many Indigenous people who were placed in Residential Schools at such a young age and for such a prolonged period of time. They are unable to connect, bond, or attach themselves to their loved ones. They become aimless, lost, and wander around for many years. At times, they tend to have very dysfunctional lifestyles.

However, in recent years, experts have discovered that children who suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) develop another disorder and that is what is referred to as a Trauma Bond. In working with Survivors of Residential School, there is a bonding that occurs in these victims towards their perpetrators, be it individuals, church and/or colonization systems. Trauma Bonds are emotional bonds that arise from a recurring, cyclical pattern of abuse perpetrated by intermittent reinforcement through rewards and punishments by perpetrator to victim.

The types of Trauma Bonding include situations like: domestic violence, narcissistic abuse, sexual assault, child abuse, incest, abandonment and neglect. These are to name a few. Many of our Survivors of Residential School suffer Trauma Bonding. Many seem to have respect (reverence) to the perpetrator, the church, the priest, the rituals to this very day. They have what some refer to as a love/hate relationship. It was the systematic indoctrination (conditioning and programming) that the perpetrator (the Church) did to the innocent, vulnerable children. This trauma bond is deeply rooted in our former residential school survivors. We need to find ways to address not only Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) but also the historic and ongoing Trauma Bond some survivors have with the Church.

-Gary Quequish, MA



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Week of Feb 13th Mapping Sessions in Winnipeg

We will be hosting mapping sessions in Winnipeg on the week of February 13th, 2023. These mapping sessions will allow us to map out potential locations that need to be investigated at the former Pelican Falls IRS grounds. Survivors from the school will be prioritized.

### Week of Feb 27th Mapping Sessions in Thunder Bay

We will be continuing to host mapping sessions for the Pelican Falls IRS grounds in Thunder Bay from February 27th, 2023 to March 2nd, 2023. Survivors from the school will be prioritized.

### Survivors Working Circle Gathering April 18th to 20th, 2023

We will be holding a Survivors Working Circle Gathering in April to discuss initiative updates and next steps.

## CONTACT

A phone line was established for all Survivors of Pelican Lake Indian Residential School to share their stories, records and information.

**807-738-3282**

Please call the National Residential School Crisis Line at **1-866-925-4419** if you or someone you know is feeling distressed.

[www.bikiwewinig.com](http://www.bikiwewinig.com)



**A big thank you to the Mental Health Support Team  
for all their work on this initiative!**

