

# Gathering as one

Thomas Simpson School hosted an incredibly powerful and positive event last week.

From Feb. 24 to 26, the school ran the ninth annual Mackenzie Regional Youth Conference. The conference brought together 260 students from 12 communities including Lutsel K'e, Hay River, the Hay River Reserve and Fort Resolution in addition to all of the Deh Cho communities.

The power behind the conference is the gathering of the students from different communities and the sharing that takes place as a result. As principal Robert Byatt pointed out, since its inception in 1996, the conference's primary goal has been to promote healthy social interaction among youths.

A prime example of this took place during the handgames workshop on Feb. 25.

A group of teenagers, a mix of boys and girls from Fort Resolution, sat on one side of the mat. On the other side was a mixed team made up of teenagers from Wrigley, Fort Simpson and Nahanni Butte. One of the more outgoing players from Wrigley dubbed it a Wrigley-Fort Resolution match up.

Fort Resolution made the first call. All of the Deh Cho players opened their appropriate hand but with a mischievous smile on his face the same Wrigley player proclaimed that he hadn't understood the call, it must be a Fort Resolution one, he said. Players on both sides responded in laughter before the game continued.

It was that simple exchange that illustrated what the conference allows to happen. Handgames calls

vary from community to community, but players always manage to decipher unfamiliar ones during tournaments.

Likewise, bringing the students from different communities together allows them to share their experiences and find common ground. This is especially important for students from the smaller schools who have small peer groups.

The added benefit to the conference is all of the participants are exposed to a wide variety of ideas and subjects normally not available in the curriculum. Students were able to learn about everything from contemporary dance and hoop dancing to archeology and song-writing.

Organizing a conference of this magnitude – involving 45 presenters and eight workshop rotations – requires a lot of time and dedication. The teachers and staff of Thomas Simpson School deserve recognition for once again pulling off a fantastic conference while calmly overcoming unforeseen difficulties, including the loss of running water to the school for part of the conference.

By putting in hours or work above and beyond their regular duties, teachers and staff have created an event that was undoubtedly a formative one for many of the participants.

## THE ISSUE:

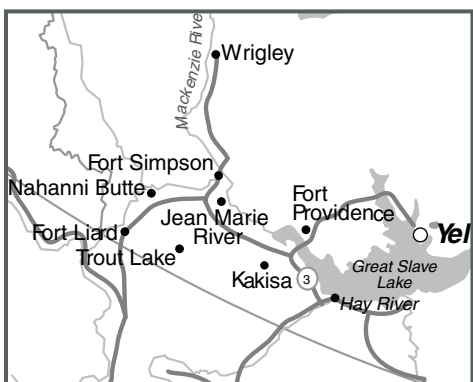
Youth conference

## WE SAY:

Broadens young minds



**ROXANNA THOMPSON**



## NNSL WEB POLL

**IS WRIGLEY LARGE ENOUGH TO WARRANT A FULL-TIME NURSING POSITION?**

**Yes. Every community in the North, regardless of size, deserves to have immediate access to a nurse or doctor.**



**No. Wrigley is too small to warrant a full-time nurse.**



## HAVE YOUR SAY

Will the demolition of Dehcho Hall help bring closure to former residential school students? Go online to [www.nnsl.com/dehcho](http://www.nnsl.com/dehcho) to vote in this week's poll.

## BUSH - the lighter side



photo courtesy of Brooke Suwala

## AHEAD BY A CHICKEN

Joey Moses, left, and Angel Baton triumphantly hold up a rubber chicken after crossing the finish line in the rubber chicken skiing relay race. The race was part of the mini Olympics event hosted by Chief Julian Yendo School in Wrigley on Feb. 19.



A Northern News Services Publication

PUBLISHED THURSDAYS

Serving the Deh Cho Region:

Fort Liard – Fort Providence – Fort Simpson  
Jean Marie River – Nahanni Butte – Trout Lake  
Wrigley, Kakisa and occasionally Lynx River

Member: Canadian Community Newspapers Association



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Printed on recycled newsprint at Canarctic Graphics in Yellowknife, NWT  
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ISSN 1483-4154

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**Subscriptions.** \$65 per year; \$115 for 2 years Web subscription \$50

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