Knowledge Keepers Discussion Guide
(A Guide to Accompany and Support the Knowledge Keepers Visual Narrative Posted on YouTube)
The College would like to acknowledge the leadership and contributions of Debbie Debassige, Elder Gloria Oshkabewisens-McGregor, the Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI), Deana Debassige, Melvina Corbiere, Neil Debassige, Chief Joseph Hare, and special thanks to Susan Bebonang in the collaborative development of the *Knowledge Keepers* visual resource and discussion guide.
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Knowledge Keepers

“We are all knowledge keepers. Every child comes to school with a wealth of knowledge. Every parent is a knowledge keeper. Every teacher is a knowledge keeper... we are all knowledge keepers... as educators it is our responsibility to take the knowledge that has been given to us and transfer that knowledge to the students.”

Debbie Debassige, OCT
(D. Debassige, personal communication, January 23, 2014)

Knowledge Keepers is a visual story of teaching. In this teaching story, a First Nation educator’s teaching journey is shared and told through her eyes and the eyes of local community members. Knowledge Keepers serves as an educative tool for fostering awareness, understanding and respect for First Nation perspectives, worldview, language, traditions and culture.

Knowledge Keepers holds many valuable insights for teacher education, professional learning and educational leadership. It is hoped that teacher candidates and practicing educators will use the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative and discussion guide as a tool to support ongoing professional learning. Knowledge Keepers invites reflection and critical exploration into ethical practices, pedagogy, teacher identity and many dimensions of professional knowledge.

Discussion Guide

The Knowledge Keepers Discussion Guide is intended to accompany and support the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014d). This discussion guide and the visual narrative were collaboratively developed in partnership with Debbie Debassige, Elders and community members. It serves as a professional learning resource for critically reflexive professional practice. A framework for critical reflection and inquiry is presented in this guide that invites educators to explore various dimensions of professional practice from multiple and diverse perspectives.
Teacher Education and Professional Practice

“This document can change the mindset of educators who come from a very academic knowledge base to a much more experiential knowledge base.”

Susan Bebonang, OCT
(D. Debassige, personal communication, March 24, 2014)

The Knowledge Keepers discussion guide and visual narrative resource are valuable standards-based resources to support initial and continuing teacher education. Course instructors, course developers, teacher candidates and experienced educators are encouraged to use these resources to explore concepts such as professional identity, social justice, resiliency, cultural identity, First Nation education and cultural perspectives.

This discussion guide will identify how the visual narrative, Knowledge Keepers, can support the enforcement of the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession and the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession within teacher education and professional practice. Exploration into many of the concepts embedded within both additional qualification courses and initial teacher education courses are a focus of this discussion guide using the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative as a catalyst for professional reflection and inquiry.

It is hoped that the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative and discussion guide will help to enhance professional knowledge and insight within initial teacher education, continuing teacher education and professional practice.
Knowledge Keepers and the Standards

“The ethical standards, the standards of practice and professional learning framework reflect the vision of an educator as innovative scholars and practitioners, critical pedagogues who advance social and ecological justice.”

Professional Identity and Image of the Learner (Ontario College of Teachers, p. 3)

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession and the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession are reflected throughout Debbie Debassige’s narrative as a First Nation educator throughout the Knowledge Keepers resource.

As you reflect on the visual narrative Knowledge Keepers, consider how each of the ethical standards and standards of practice are reflected in this teaching story.

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession and the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession describe the ethical stance, professional knowledge, skills and practices that educators embody within their daily practice. These standards or principles of professional practice are lived out in multiple and diverse ways that are reflective of the unique contexts that exist in the rich landscape of Ontario.

The ethical standards and standards of practice convey a dynamic and collective vision of professionalism. The standards serve as complex and interrelated insightful frameworks for exploring, inquiring and enhancing ethical professional practice.

As educators individually and collectively critically explore the evolving nature of professional practice through the concepts embodied within the standards, they are engaging in a form of professional self-regulation.

Engagement in processes of critical collaborative inquiry help to support educators in further refining the knowledge, skills and values embedded within the nine standards or principles of professional practice.
Ethical Standards

“At the heart of a strong and effective teaching profession is a commitment to students and their learning.”

(Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 7)

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession are:

**Care**
The ethical standard of Care includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students’ potential. Members express their commitment to students’ well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

**Respect**
Intrinsic to the ethical standard of Respect are trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

**Trust**
The ethical standard of Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members’ professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

**Integrity**
Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of Integrity. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.
Standards of Practice

“The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession provide a framework of principles that describes the knowledge, skills and values inherent in Ontario’s teaching profession.”

(Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 11)

The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession are:

Commitment to Students and Student Learning
Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

Professional Knowledge
Members strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

Professional Practice
Members apply professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection.

Leadership in Learning Communities
Members promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe and supportive learning communities. They recognize their shared responsibilities and their leadership roles in order to facilitate student success. Members maintain and uphold the principles of the ethical standards in these learning communities.

Ongoing Professional Learning
Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration and knowledge.

( Ontario College of Teachers, 2006b)
Professional Inquiry

“Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection.”

Professional Practice, Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession (Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 13)

The Knowledge Keepers visual narrative and discussion guide are educative tools for fostering critical inquiry and dialogue related to educators’ professional knowledge, practices, identity and beliefs.

Professional inquiry is a powerful form of professional learning. Engaging in critical inquiry empowers educators in the ongoing process of refinement of professional practice. As educators critically reflect on and analyze their practice through questioning and wondering, they are able to gain new insights, understandings and beliefs.

Professional inquiry enables educators to become critically aware of the assumptions and beliefs that inform their decisions and actions. The inquiry process also assists educators in recognizing the importance of engaging in thoughtful reflection and dialogue prior to embarking on actions and making judgments. The professional judgments and moral actions of educators are greatly enhanced through the adoption of a reflective ethical stance.

Professional inquiry assists educators to critically explore practices that are laden and interwoven with multi-faceted and complex ethical dimensions. Understanding and gaining deeper insight into these ethical dimensions can help guide the ethical thinking, decisions and actions of educators.

Exploring professional practices through the Knowledge Keepers video and the associated reflective questions and conversations in this discussion guide will help to enhance understandings related to the many rich and complex concepts and issues included in these teacher education resources.

The core concepts being explored in the discussion guide are organized around professional inquiry areas which include:

- Respecting and Caring for Mother Earth
- Cultural Identity and Role Models
- Cultural Identity
- Knowledge Keeper and Pipe Carrier
- Professional Identity
- Becoming and Educator
- Perseverance and Resiliency
- Professional Practice, Pedagogy and Social Justice
- Supporting First Nation Learners
- Honouring First Nations
- Ethical Standards
- Standards of Practice.
Respecting and Caring for Mother Earth

“In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.”

Respect, Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession
(Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 9)

Reflection
Reflect on the following statements from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

One day I received a rock from one of my relatives who was also a teacher; and she told me, if you ever need direction, hold this rock in your left hand and ask the creator for guidance. I thought it was magic. This rock held a special place in my heart.

Debbie Debassige, OCT

Professional Inquiry
1. Explore the image of the rock. What connection can be made to Mother Earth, all life, and/or the family unit?
2. Reflect on the ways in which you respect and care for Mother Earth within your professional practice.
3. What is your role as an educator to ensure that your students understand the collective responsibility to care and respect Mother Earth?
Respecting and Caring for Mother Earth

“…understanding spirituality and the gifts given by the Creator…”

Debbie Debassige with her daughter, Deidre Debassige

Reflection

Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

*She’s my rock, she’s very inspiring, motivating, she taught me the difference between right and wrong, how to make responsible decisions…*

Deana Debassige, OCT

Professional Inquiry

1. Consider the significance of Debbie’s image of the rock and how it influences her practices.
2. Explore the symbols in your life that guide your own professional practice.
3. From what or whom do you seek guidance in your professional practice?
4. Reflect on your gifts and discuss how you came to recognize these gifts and use them within your own professional practice.
5. Discuss how you recognize the gifts or strengths in your students.
Cultural Identity and Role Models

“The teacher must seek guidance and direction from Elders and community members as they are the holders of valuable cultural knowledge, language and experience. The teacher must establish a mutual partnership with parents and guardians for student growth and achievement.”

Humility, Theoretical Foundations of Teaching Ojibwe (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014c, p. 10)

Reflection

Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

Growing up, I would come home to see my mom marking books and cooking supper at the same time and I just thought that was the coolest thing. Right after school I would turn myself into the teacher and I would coax my little sisters into being the students. That’s where my dream began. I wanted to be a teacher, just like my mom.

Deana Debassige, OCT

Professional Inquiry

1. Examine and reflect on role models that have influenced your identity and life.
2. Discuss the impact role models can have on the lives of children.
3. Explore ways in which you can connect children and students with various role models.
4. Explore the role children’s play can have in shaping and transforming perspectives and identities.
5. Reflect on the moment you realized you wanted to become an educator.
Cultural Identity

“...exploring the significance of reconnecting to traditional values and culture as a part of...identity and collective healing processes.”

Healing, Theoretical Concepts
(Ontario College of Teachers, 2014b, p. 6)

Reflection

Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

I felt how right it was to be following in their footsteps, felt the powerful lineage that had been created, three generations of university graduates. Under us all there was the creator, who we knew was there to guide us. It was my university education and my grandmother’s teachings that helped me discover my culture and traditions, and knowing my roots, I felt connected.

Debbie Debassige, OCT

Professional Inquiry

1. Discuss how vital culture and traditions are in shaping the identity of First Nation, Métis and Inuit children.
2. Reflect on your culture and traditions and discuss how they have shaped your identity.
3. Discuss how cultural identity and land-based learning can enhance experiential learning.
Reflection

Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

*It’s critical that our children learn who they are and about themselves, their culture and traditions and keeping those alive. It is our culture and traditions that make us stronger.*

Debbie Debassige, OCT

Professional Inquiry

1. Explore the importance of one’s own language (mother tongue) as it relates to cultural identity.
2. Inquire how schools and school boards support the identity of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students.
3. Discuss the ways in which you empower your students through respecting and honouring their cultural identities.
4. Explore ways in which pride of identity can be fostered in all students to support their well-being.
5. Critically explore strategies to increase awareness of First Nation, Métis and Inuit languages, histories, cultures and traditions within professional learning communities.

…”exploring the relationship of cultural revitalization and the teaching of the... language”

Healing, Theoretical Concepts

(Ontario College of Teachers, 2014d, p. 6)
Knowledge Keeper and Pipe Carrier

“…understanding the role and place of Elders as the keepers of knowledge, tradition and wisdom.”

Course Components
(Ontario College of Teachers, 2014c, p. 6)

Reflection
Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

*Grandma was already a teacher in a traditional sense. She was a pipe carrier and a knowledge keeper, but she wanted a formal education.*

Debbie Debassige, OCT

Professional Inquiry
1. What responsibilities do you feel you have as an educator to honour various forms of knowledge alongside the students who are entrusted in your care?
2. Explore ways to foster ongoing relationships with First Nation, Métis or Inuit communities that can enhance your own professional knowledge, awareness and understanding.
3. Identify ways in which you can authentically connect parents, community and Elders to the classroom learning environment.
4. Inquire into the ways in which you can include First Nation, Métis and Inuit role models and mentors within the classroom and school context.
Professional Identity

“We’ve got three daughters, and they’re all teachers. After school, in our living room, they’d be playing school.”

Melvina Corbiere – Debbie’s mother, Retired Teacher and Lifelong Educator

Reflection

Reflect on the following statements from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

We’ve got three daughters, and they’re all teachers. After school, in our living room, they’d be playing school.

Melvina Corbiere – Debbie’s mother, Retired Teacher and Lifelong Educator
Professional Identity

“The ethical standards and standards of practice provide College members with guiding images that can foster a strong collective professional identity.”

Professional Identity and the Standards
(Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 17)

Reflection

Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

I’ve known Debbie my whole life. She was a friend first and then a colleague. ...She’s easy to work with. She’s very professional. She takes the job very seriously because it’s such a huge responsibility.

Neil Debassige, OCT, Principal, Lakeview School
Professional Identity

“College members strive to be ethical decision-makers who exercise responsible, informed professional judgment.”

Professional Identity and the Standards (Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 17)

Reflection

Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

*In the First Nations culture, if you are given an eagle feather that honours one of your recognized strengths or a significant contribution, you move forward in your life by honouring the gift of the eagle feather with great humility.*

Debbie Debassige, October 30, 2013, Ontario College of Teachers
Becoming an Educator

“The standards articulate the goals and aspirations of a teaching profession dedicated to fostering student learning and preparing Ontario students to participate in a democratic society.”

Reflection

Reflect on the following statements from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

I had reached my dream of becoming a teacher. And now I was bringing those school books home, and marking them while supper was cooking.

Debbie Debassige, OCT

Allow your students, allow your children, to follow their dreams. Always be there to support and encourage them as they travel along their life’s journey.

Debbie Debassige, OCT
Perseverance and Resiliency

“Members express their commitment to students’ well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.”

Care, Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession
(Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 9)

Debbie Debassige, OCT, Director of School Services, Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute

Reflection

Reflect on the following statements from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

I knew I was being called to change and I took the leap, not knowing if I would succeed. After a struggle for change, I learned to believe in myself when others didn’t. Believing in myself gained the respect of many, as my dreams continue to unfold.

I learned hard work from a young age; watching my dad haul logs, grandpa feeding the cows and mom cooking supper while grandma was weeding in the garden. We all helped out. We learned that life was never easy. There was always work that needed to be done to support the family.

Debbie Debassige, OCT
Professional Inquiry

1. Explore times of uncertainty when you used your intuition to guide you.

2. Explore a challenging time in your life or an obstacle which you had to overcome that invited you to let go of the past in order to move into the future.

3. Reflect on the challenges and barriers that you had to overcome to become an educator.

4. Identify processes to foster resiliency within students that are respectful of diversity, culture and various life experiences.

5. Discuss strategies to collaboratively build resiliency within students with colleagues, community partners and other caregivers.

6. Discuss the important connection between identity, resiliency and believing in oneself for life-long learning.
Professional Practice, Pedagogy and Social Justice

“College members strive to be responsive pedagogical leaders who are respectful of equity and diversity within Ontario’s classrooms and schools.”

Care, Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession (Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 9.)

Deana Debassige, OCT, Debbie’s daughter

**Reflection**

Reflect on the following statement from *Knowledge Keepers* (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

... *she taught me the difference between right and wrong, how to make responsible decisions, and growing up like I said I would have thought she was very strict, but now, I look back and realize it was all a part of good parenting, and she made me who I am today.*

Deana Debassige, OCT

**Professional Inquiry**

1. Reflect on how your life experiences have influenced your ability to make ethical and responsible decisions.
2. Reflect on the values that guide your professional practice and pedagogy.
3. Critically explore how your pedagogy aligns with your values and beliefs.
4. Reflect on the ways that you have been called to change as an educator.
5. Identify the ways in which your pedagogy supports ethical decision-making and social justice teaching.
6. Identify how you would like your students to describe you as an educator.
Professional Practice, Pedagogy and Social Justice

“...fostering a culture of ethical leadership committed to social justice that engages students as active, democratic and global citizens in supporting environmental, social and economic sustainability.”

Leadership in the Instructional Setting Additional Qualification Course Guidelines
(Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 9)

Reflection

Reflect on the following statement from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

I’ve known her all of her life. Besides her being a teacher, she’s a great volunteer, very involved in the community here.

Joseph Hare – Chief, M’Chigeeng First Nation
Supporting First Nation Learners

“The teacher must acknowledge the gifts of each individual student. The teacher must demonstrate a true attitude toward their own self-learning, and acknowledge that learning is a lifelong journey and that we can learn from others. The teacher must accept that they do not have all the knowledge themselves, and be willing to learn from their students, family and community.”

Care, Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession
(Ontario College of Teachers, 2008, p. 9)

Reflection

Reflect on the following statements from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

It’s critical that our children learn who they are and about themselves, their culture and traditions and keeping those alive and it is our culture and traditions that make us stronger.

Debbie Debassige, OCT

And hopefully as young people learn more and more about what they are all about, what their ancestors are all about, what the ancestors and Elders believed in, they will make a decision that there’s a better life for me out there.

Joseph Hare – Chief, M’Chigeeng First Nation
Honouring First Nations

“This Anishinaabe worldview is the guiding force... Anishinaabe education is based on this worldview and is a holistic process. Learning is a lifelong journey that addresses the whole person, including their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual capabilities in all stages of the life cycle from infancy to Eldership.”

Theoretical Foundations of Teaching Ojibwe (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014c, p. 8)

Reflection

Reflect on the following statements from Knowledge Keepers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2014) and then respond to the professional inquiry questions:

You see something that connects you to your culture, and that alone just gives you a sense of pride. Let that kid have a sense of pride in the classroom so that kid could open up to the rest of the class and share their story.

Deana Debassige, OCT

She knows that the whole notion of First Nations education is to re-claim that responsibility that was once ours and make it ours again. In order to do it properly, we need to infuse language and culture back into the curriculum.

Neil Debassige, OCT

Professional Inquiry

1. Identify new insights and understandings gained from the above quotes.
2. Discuss how these quotes inform your current and future professional practice.
3. Explore language and culture revitalization for First Nations education.
4. Reflect on the ways in which you foster a sense of pride and belonging for all students within the school environment.
Knowledge Keepers and the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession

**Ethical Standard: Care**

The ethical standard of *Care* includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students’ potential. Members express their commitment to students’ well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

Identify how the ethical standard of *Care* is reflected in the *Knowledge Keepers* visual narrative:

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**Ethical Standard: Trust**

The ethical standard of *Trust* embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members’ professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

Identify how the ethical standard of *Trust* is reflected in the *Knowledge Keepers* visual narrative:
Ethical Standard: Respect
Intrinsic to the ethical standard of Respect are trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

Identify how the ethical standard of Respect is reflected in the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative:

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Ethical Standard: Integrity
Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of Integrity. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.

Identify how the ethical standard of Integrity is reflected in the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative:
Knowledge Keepers and the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

**Standard: Commitment to Students and Student Learning**

Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

Identify how the standard of *Commitment to Students and Student Learning* is reflected in the *Knowledge Keepers* visual narrative:

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**Standard: Professional Knowledge**

Members strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

Identify how the standard of *Professional Knowledge* is reflected in the *Knowledge Keepers* visual narrative:
Standard: Professional Practice
Members apply professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection.

Identify how the standard of Professional Practice is reflected in the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative:

Standard: Leadership in Learning Communities
Members promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe and supportive learning communities. They recognize their shared responsibilities and their leadership roles in order to facilitate student success. Members maintain and uphold the principles of the ethical standards in these learning communities.

Identify how the standard of Leadership in Learning Communities is reflected in the Knowledge Keepers visual narrative:
Standard: Ongoing Professional Learning

Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration and knowledge.

Identify how the standard of *Ongoing Professional Learning* is reflected in the *Knowledge Keepers* visual narrative:
Knowledge Keepers Interviews from...

Melvina Corbiere, Retired Teacher and Lifelong Educator  
Deana Debassige, OCT, Teacher  
Debbie Debassige, OCT, Teacher  
Neil Debassige, Principal, Lakeview School  
Joseph Hare, Chief, M’Chigeeng First Nation

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