



IODE CANADA PRESS RELEASE

IODE RCMP Community Service Award 2019

Sergeant George William Whelan
RCMP "D" Division, Winnipeg, Manitoba

George Whelan began his career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 2005. Prior to the RCMP, he served with the Canadian Military for three years with a tour to Afghanistan. He is dedicated to community service and began in an official leadership role acting as Detachment Commander in 2008, in the remote community of Little Grand Rapids. As the school liaison in the community, he noticed a need to engage youth and he started a youth ball hockey initiative where RCMP officers would join the kids weekly to play. He also set up baseball games, three-legged races and a home run derby for the kids, volunteering his time running those events. He chaperoned six at-risk youth to a Manitoba Moose AHL Hockey game in Winnipeg. He also assisted in taking kids from the community fishing, purchasing the kids tackle out of pocket and imparting his passion with them while showing the kids that the police are trustworthy and friendly role models.



In October 2014, Sergeant Whelan was promoted to the rank of Corporal at Leaf Rapids Detachment. He hosted and served holiday dinners to the community, along with barbeques and mental health awareness support groups where he would serve cupcakes at the detachment and counsel local community members struggling with various mental health issues.

Sergeant Whelan arrived as the new Sergeant Detachment Commander in God's Lake Narrows in the summer of 2017. Upon arriving, he found there was a high level of mistrust between the community members and the police. His positive attitude, love for his job and excellent interpersonal skills paid off dividends. He met with the community leaders to address their concerns encouraging the members in his detachment to become involved with the community along with him. He again started a ball hockey league playing floor hockey with the youth which became hugely popular and continues to have great turnouts at every game.

Like many isolated First Nations Communities in Northern Manitoba, substance abuse and addiction issues are prevalent and there is a lack of treatment options or community based programming which is culturally significant and relevant. Sergeant Whelan's passion project, a first of its kind traditional healing camp, the Aski Minoyawin Kapehsowin Camp, was developed by him in consultation with community leaders and elders, AWASIS Child and Family Services and local stakeholders, right in Gods Lake Narrows! This traditional camp was spearheaded with a focus on addictions treatment and to encourage participants to listen and share their stories during the workshops provided.

Wilfred Snowbird, an ex-councillor of the Gods Lake First Nation, stated that "George's commitment to the community and this healing camp has done more for a positive police relationship in this community than the previous ten years combined."

Since the camp was held, there has been a significant decline in calls for service particularly in regards to those battling Meth addictions. Because of the program, three families have seen their children be returned and continue to prosper in a sober and healthy home environment.

The Detachment has received multiple letters of appreciation from exterior partners commending Sergeant Whelan 's contributions to the camp and the impact it has had and continues to have on the community.

Sergeant Whelan has recently been transferred to "D" Division Headquarters and is currently a Career Development and Resourcing Advisor but he has not let distance get in his way from continuing to be involved with the community of Gods Lake Narrows, the Healing Camp and Communities of Northern Manitoba. He has used the opportunity to diversify his networks to further the funding and support of his Healing Camp. By engaging with "D" Division Contract and Indigenous Policing Services and Media Relations he is continuing to promote the idea to initiate further camps in other communities that are struggling similarly to God's Lake Narrows. Sergeant Whelan is currently making plans to travel to Oxford House, Island Lake and Norway House in an effort to expand the Traditional Healing Camp idea.

Sergeant Whelan has a gregarious personality which is highly contagious to the people around him. His positive attitude and his commitment to the RCMP improve morale and encourage others to follow his example.

We are honored to present Sergeant George William Whelan the IODE RCMP Community Service Award for his tireless commitment to his community and the youth of Manitoba. He will use his award to assist God's Lake Traditional Healing Camp.

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