

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Herbert Blake elected new chief of Inuvik Native Band

Elections for chief of the Inuvik Native Band and eight councillor positions on the Nihitat Gwich'in Council concluded January 24. Herbert Blake was re-elected chief, while Donald Andre, Herbert Blake, Jozef Carnogursky, Duane DeBastien, Leonard DeBastien, Barry Greenland, Richard Ross and Amy Thompson were elected to council. A total of 145 ballots were cast in the competition for chief, representing 35 per cent of eligible voters, and 202 votes were cast in the council election, representing 21 per cent of eligible voters. Both elected positions are for three-year terms.

### Yellowknife bar owners unimpressed with liquor inspectors

Steve Dinham, owner of the Money Tree Bar in Yellowknife, has complained he is fed up with "over-enthusiastic" liquor inspectors. Yellowknife Centre MLA Robert Hawkins called a meeting with members of the GNWT liquor board and various bar owners on January 23 to address the issue. Its purpose was to discuss the sudden increases in liquor fines. Another meeting has been planned, though no date has been set.

### Firebag, Richardson bridges closed

The Firebag and Richardson bridge structures are closed as of last Friday, announced the RM of Wood Buffalo. Residents are advised to use the ice bridges at the Firebag and Richardson locations instead. The speed limit for the ice bridges is five km/hr. The load limit for the winter road has been upped to 35,000 kg. The speed limit remains 50 km per hour. Road maintenance work is ongoing and the public is reminded to use extreme caution when using the road. Motorists are advised that there are no regular services on the winter road like gas stations or road patrols. Cell phone coverage is very limited. Travelers must be prepared for emergency situations. For more information or to report any concerns, please call the Winter Road Hotline at 1-866-743-6111 or 780-697-3600 during business hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Photo: Meagan Wohlberg

The Matrix Program's wellness team in Fort Smith: Lida Blesse, Julie Beaver, Leili Heidema and Chris Wanamaker.

### Across The North Health and Wellness

## Matrix Program fights addiction

By ANDREW WHITSON  
Combating drug and alcohol addiction is a challenge being taken on by the Matrix Program in several South Slave communities.

The program offers daily resources and support to help addiction in Fort Smith, a high school program in Fort Providence and a new program about to start up in Fort Simpson. In its fourth year in Fort Smith, Matrix is free of charge to anyone in need, and its success to date was recognized in 2010 with a Premier's Award.

"When you are able to adapt a program to fit the needs of the community, success follows," said Leili Heidema, a clinical

supervisor for mental health and addictions in Fort Smith.

The program's successes stem from a community counselling services team that is inspired to create change, and is always open to adding new program elements based on client feedback. The program's connection to participants is attributed in part to a spiritual approach to the healing process. Traditional Aboriginal healing methods such as talking circles and smudging are used. Creative elements and activities such as mask-making are also incorporated, allowing staff to engage participants in different ways.

"The program mainly helps

those who are struggling with current addictions, and those who wish to maintain sobriety," said Heidema.

The Fort Smith program begins holding daily sessions on February 8, continuing for 12 weeks through April 20. It offers 1.5-hour group sessions and bi-weekly one-on-one meetings with a counsellor.

Prospective participants must book an initial intake appointment with Community Counselling Services, located in the Jack Taylor Building, and be able to commit time from 10:30 a.m. to noon.

Carolyn Wilkes, a clinical supervisor with Deh Cho Health and Social Services in

Fort Providence, launched a modified version of the Matrix program for senior high school students on January 31.

The relapse prevention approach allows for a stable environment, which has benefited clients in Fort Smith and Fort Providence.

Fort Providence had success running a pilot version of the Matrix program in 2011, and Fort Simpson plans to run the program as soon as staffing allows.

For more information or to book an intake appointment in Fort Smith, call 867-872-6310.

For more information on programs in Fort Simpson and Fort Providence, call 867-695-3815.