

# The Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association

BY A. CASKANETTE AND P. TERBASKET

**A** Metis community near the town of Burleigh Falls, Ontario, has become the subject of increasing interest. Intrigue has been aroused within Government departments, public areas and other Native communities.

A group of dynamic women from this small (population: 150) native community is the centre of this sudden burst of interest.

Commitment, determination and a positive attitude, aptly describe the qualities the membership exemplifies as they have worked to build the structure that has become known as the Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association.

The following is their story.

## BEGINNINGS

In 1982, Bev Brown, a native woman from the Metis community enrolled in a Native Economic Development and Small Business Course at a nearby college in Peterborough Ontario. Life from that time on has never been quite the same for the Metis village.

Bev's educational experience made her aware that the lack of development is universally felt by native communities in North America, just as it is evident in Burleigh Falls. The same factor can be seen diminishing self-confidence of Native women and affecting their ability to view themselves as able to excel in the area of development of their communities.

Bev Brown would have many supporters of her

statement "I was so shy and introverted, I had never really been outside of my community."

The events of the following years would do much to change this obstacle.

## HISTORY

Early in 1982, from Bev Brown's kitchen, she called on anyone interested in working together, to meet, plan and discuss how a women's group could contribute to the betterment of life in their community.

Brainstorming revealed that "organization" was primary to establishing the future direction of their group.

Bob Anstey, a friend and consultant, was very supportive and helpful in the initial planning stages. The group acknowledges his input with much gratitude.

The Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association was formed in 1982. The Association originated with a directorship of seven,

no money and no office, and was faced with the question, "What is our goal and purpose?"

The first major concern was for the youth of the community. The youth was seen as representative of the community's future. Solutions needed to be found for the underlying problems indicated by such statements as "there's nothing to do and no transportation." These remarks were frequently heard amongst the youth.



The task at hand was to establish an overall long term goal that was to become the "mission" of the Association. This mission was "to own and operate a Native Heritage Camp for Youth." Other objectives were also identified, such as economic development, education and employment opportunities; these were added to the list of concerns of the Association.

The Association itself was not without its problems and the directorship dwindled down to three members: Bev Brown, Brenda Anstey and Marlene Byrd. Bev Brown described the situation facing the Association when she stated, "We have had our problems like everyone else, so we had to take the ball and run with it."

## RESOURCES

Using a combination of available government grants, as well as various fund raising efforts from the community, they established a means of supporting ongoing economic and social activities. In doing so, they also met their short term objectives, while continuing to work towards keeping their long term goal at the forefront of any plans. Keeping their goal at the forefront has reinforced the strength of the Association's work over the years.

## 1983-88 MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

### 1983

- The idea of collaborating on a cookbook, based on wild game, was developed as a fund raising project.
- Canadian Employment and Immigration Canada approved the project as a viable training program. Six women were hired to collect the recipes from native and rural sources. The result was 2000 recipes originating from all over Ontario.
- A Wild Game Feast was held to promote further fund raising. Promotion of the Native Heritage Cookbook was increased.
- This event also resulted in an offer to publish the cookbook on a national scale.

### 1984

- The first of the cookbooks was published.
- The Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association records reveal that their sales had realized \$57,000. The cookbook has proven to be a large part of the Association's fund raising efforts.
- A Provincial Environment \$2000 grant was also accessed in this year. The result of negotiation of this grant has meant an enhanced working relationship between the Metis community and the Ministry of Natural Resources. This contact has enabled the Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association to negotiate land for use as a small summer camp. An interim measure to allow the Association to gain much-needed experience, as well as administration knowledge towards their efforts that would be required in their work with the youth camp plans for the future.

### 1985

- A major survey was conducted to support the Native Heritage Camp as a viable project. Support was provided by 25 Native communities and tremendous support was gained from the surrounding communities of the area. As a result of the survey, the Provincial Ministry of Citizenship granted \$250,000 for initial site development and land purchase for their camp. Increased credibility and excellent public relations between the Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association and above resources have further developed the attainment of the Association's goal.

### Present (1988)

- The Lovesick Native Women's Association has come a long way from Bev Brown's kitchen in 1982.

The concrete evidence of the ideas and work of the Association is beginning to unfold. Land (247 acres) on the Mississauga River has been purchased and site development has commenced. Employment is a direct result for the community. An administration building out of which they now operate is near completion.

Yes, their dreams are becoming a reality. Camp "Tuc Qua Shin," meaning in Ojibway "he or she comes," is reflective of all the people, native and Non-Native, who have contributed to the success of their goal.

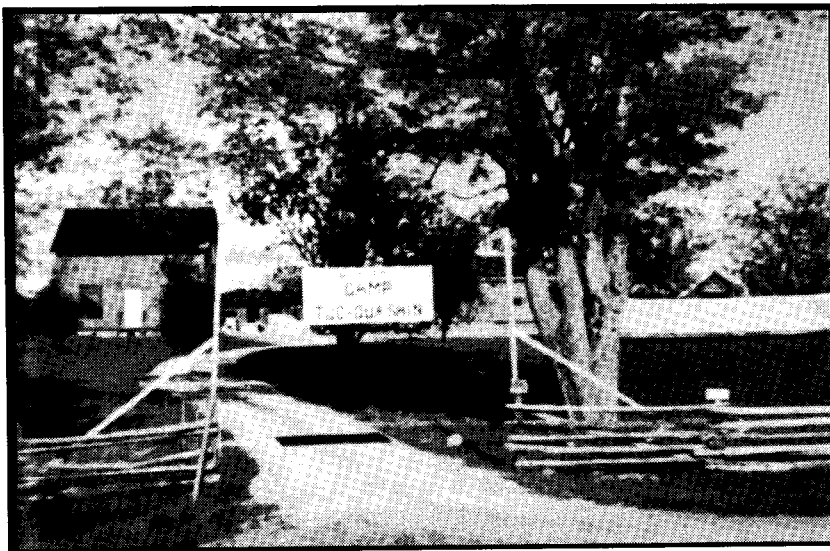
As they look back on all their past fears and frustrations, Bev Brown, president of Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association, responds, "we have to keep a positive attitude and carry on." This statement emanates their commitment and determination to the well-being of their community.

## FUTURE

The Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association has modeled the potential that anyone or any group can have with a desire for change.

Education, training, personal development, and social awareness each have had an intrinsic place within their community.

The foresight and insight of the Association, when they made the decision to place their future in the development of human potential, is proving to be a correct one which has been an underlying theme of all their accomplishments. These accomplishments built on "Commitment, Determination and Positive Attitude" will carry them throughout the future goal of "Self-Sufficiency!"



Site of proposed Camp "Tuc Qua Shin"