

The push for purses

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By Chris Drost

The push for purses filled with hygiene products, shampoo, conditioner, warm mittens, hats and scarves, articles of clothing, hair brushes, toothpaste, toothbrushes, lip balm, flashlights, tea, stationary supplies and other useful items, is focused this year on supporting local First Nations women and girls from Tyendinaga to Whitney.

Now in its third year, the Annual Purse Drive, originated by two sisters from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Marleen Murphy and Charleen Gordon, sent almost 500 purses to Indigenous women and girls in remote northern Indigenous communities in 2018.

Locally, Christine McRae, her mother Maureen Luckasavitch and cousin Kenzie O'Connor from Kingston, managed to collect and fill 68 purses for the drive in 2018. When they dropped them off in Tyendinaga, Murphy broke down in tears as she was overwhelmed with the support.

In 2018, the purses were sent to Northern Ontario where they were distributed to young women in communities where the suicide rate among youth is very high. This simple gesture made by complete strangers was greatly appreciated and many of the young women were overcome with emotion when they opened the boxes.

This year, the group hopes to collect at least 100 purses. They will be distributed closer to home in such locations as Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Sharbot Lake and the Algonquin of Pikwakanagan First Nation.

There are two different ways to help. Fill a gently used or new backpack or purse with useful hygiene products and other items described above, or contribute \$50 through e-transfer or cash to have a purse filled on your behalf.

All donations and purses are due by Nov. 22. For more information or to facilitate a purse or donation drop off, please contact Christine McRae at waaseyaconsulting@gmail.com. Updates about the Purse Drive can also be found at <https://www.facebook.com/waaseyaconsulting/>

There is currently one drop-off location at the Township of South Algonquin office. If there is a business or organization in the Bancroft area willing to act as a drop-off location until Nov.22, please get in touch with Christine McRae.