

# Dog attacks in northern communities ongoing problem

By JOAN DELANEY  
Epoch Times Staff

The shocking death of a 10-year-old boy who was killed by a pack of dogs has highlighted the problem of large numbers of roaming domestic dogs in northern communities.

Keith Iron was attacked and killed by three dogs as he was walking to his cousin's house on the Canoe Lake First Nation in Northern Saskatchewan on Jan. 30. His body was found in the snow in a neighbour's yard about half a block from his home.

The dogs, which have since been destroyed, were owned by people living in the community, Cynthia Ballantyne, Keith's aunt, said that over 200 dogs constantly roam the reserve in packs searching for food.

"Something has to be done about these animals because kids go out every day, and they are afraid," Ballantyne told the Globe and Mail. "It's not safe for them to go out. It is the same all across the north. Reserves need help with these animals. The dogs are overpopulated and not fed anything at all." Just last week, after another child had been attacked near the school, community members gathered at a meeting and demanded that band leadership take action to address the problem. But nothing was done.

"I feel responsible. The leadership feels responsible," said Canoe Lake Chief Guy Lariviere at a media conference in Saskatoon last Monday. He said



POPULATION CONTROL: Veterinarians with the Remote Area Veterinary Services Program perform surgery on a dog in Ile-la-Crosse in Northern Saskatchewan. LESLEY SHEPPARD

the owners of the dogs that attacked Keith are also "really feeling the impact of what happened."

The chief said that although a bylaw exists requiring dog owners to tie up animals that are deemed to be dangerous, the resources aren't available

to enforce it.

"We can't afford a dogcatcher, for one thing," he told reporters. He added that he has asked the RCMP for help in the past, only to be told that dealing with dogs is a municipal responsibility. It was in response to the "huge pop-

ulation overload of dogs" in northern Saskatchewan communities that Dr. Lesley Sheppard, a veterinarian in Regina, helped found the Remote Area Veterinary Services Program.

Since 2004, Sheppard has been bringing her spay and neutering pro-

gram to remote communities in an effort to curb unrestrained breeding among dog populations.

"We will go to the community, they house us and feed us, everybody volunteers, and over a two-day period we set up a portable surgery and we spay and neuter as many dogs as we can over those two days," she says.

While some of the dogs are feral, most are owned by someone, says Sheppard. But it's in the large numbers that the problem lies.

"There's enormous numbers and that just leaves the potential to have these incidents where dog-bites happen. Over the years actually there have been quite a few incidences, at least 12, of children either being very savagely bitten or dying."

Reserves in other provinces have a similar problem. In the North Tall Cree reserve in northern Alberta, five-year-old Lance Ribbonleg died after he was mauled by dogs in 2006. Earlier that same year in communities in Manitoba, a three year-old and a two-year-old were mauled to death in separate incidents.

Shiloh Bershfield, while playing with friends near his home in Ile-la-Crosse, was badly savaged by dogs last September but survived.

Sheppard says many communities are struggling to make ends meet and can't afford effective dog control or to travel to the nearest city to have their animals spayed or neutered.

"In a lot of these communities the closest vet is six hours away. If it's the difference between feeding your family or spaying your dog, well, you're going to feed your family. There are so many other financial problems going on that this is kind of put low down on the list."

New Democrat MLA Buckley Belanger, who lives in Ile-la-Crosse, told the Globe and Mail that "sometimes there isn't enough money left to do the very basic, necessary safety measures."

A "two dollar bullet" may be the "quicker, more affordable option" to deal with the problem, said Belanger. "In these northern communities there are many more challenging problems than dog control."

Sheppard, whose program offers dog-bite prevention seminars for children, says a three-pronged approach is needed: population control through spaying and neutering, responsible dog stewardship/ownership, and educating the children.

Her veterinary services program could be expanded but funding is needed to help with the cost of such things as anaesthetic and surgery materials, vaccinations for the dogs, and transportation to and fro, she said.

"Financially if we had a good solid donation base either from a large company or just get somebody excited about it, that would help to fund us on a regular basis and then we could broaden the number of communities that we go to."

## Earthquake trauma: Psychologist brings 'calm amidst chaos' in Haiti

QUAKE CONTINUED FROM P1

With no aftercare or adaptive equipment, very limited or no family left to care for them, and with most people sleeping outdoors, many who underwent amputations quickly became infected and had to have higher amputations.

Dr. Leblanc did her best to help people connect with others, whether it be with relatives, friends, coworkers, churches, or the community. "You really have to find a way to connect them up with a group for support," she said.

TEN YEARS TO REBUILD?

Fleeing the shaking hospital building during the Jan. 20 5.9-magnitude aftershock gave Dr. LeBlanc "a whole different perspective" on infrastructure.

"I had a very clear realization that if something happened, my ability to be flown out and home was very limited. I could pick up a secondary infection and lose my leg, and there's no infrastructure to protect me."

Akwatu Khenti, Director of International Health at the Toronto-based Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), said CAMH plans to provide support in Haiti after the current emergency phase is over.

Following the 2004 tsunami, Mr. Khenti participated in a three-year mental health initiative in Sri Lanka that emphasized self-care both for the community and aid workers, and a multidisciplinary approach to building partnerships across all sectors and levels of society.

Treatment after a natural disaster cannot follow the format of individual counselling, Mr. Khenti said. "The whole community is affected, so the needs of the individual have to be matched with the needs of the group."

His project focused on training teachers to set up healthy schools, recognize and deal with trauma in children, and work with families.

Haiti's situation is worse because of the severe poverty, political instability, and recent hurricanes, Mr. Khenti said.

The country needs long-term investment in both regular infrastructure, like schools and clinics, and social infrastructure, such as education, training, mentoring, and support for the limited numbers of educators and health professionals who remain.

"Ten years is a realistic timeframe, provided there are no more disasters



CHILDHOOD TRAGEDY: In this photo provided by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a child sits on a bed at a hospital in Jacmel, Haiti, on Jan. 28, 2010, following the massive earthquake on Jan. 12 that devastated the impoverished country and killed over 200,000 people. MARCO DORMINO/MINUSTAH VIA GETTY IMAGES

between now and then," he said.

CARE AND COMPASSION

Referring to the violence reported in the media, Mr. Khenti noted that "it's been well below what one would expect in such a desperate situation," considering that there are two million people in Port-au-Prince and that all the prisoners escaped from the collapsed jail.

"TV likes to show unrest, but what I saw was love, care, and concern," said Dr. LeBlanc. "The amount of care and compassion that I saw from the Haitian people in regard to helping each other and striving to improve things was significant."

She said she didn't doubt there were pockets of violence, since it's not unusual to see increased anger out of desperation post-disaster. But she never felt

unsafe or saw any violence, even as part of a search-and-rescue team that walked for hours over debris and decay through several neighbourhoods.

Because she is in charge of deploying psychologists in case a disaster occurs during the Vancouver Olympics, Dr. LeBlanc is currently back in Canada, but she plans to return to Haiti after the Games.

She hopes people will continue to assist Haiti's long-term reconstruction, and remember that "it's absolutely key to work with local people and ensure they are part of [the aid]."

"Partner, collaborate, emphasize transparency, local leadership, local capacity building, and you can't go wrong," Mr. Khenti said. "But if you go in to do for others, it's not going to work. You have to do with others."

## Regulator warns of immigration 'ghost agents'

By ANDREA HAYLEY  
Epoch Times Staff

Canada's professional regulatory body for immigration consultants has launched a national ad campaign to combat unauthorized immigration advisers who exploit new immigrants.

The Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants (CSIC) says unregistered "ghost agents" are an ongoing cause for concern, particularly at a time when many Haiti earthquake victims are seeking to immigrate to Canada.

According to CSIC, these agents provide immigration services without holding the mandatory CSIC membership—they don't have to prove their competence and are not accountable to anyone.

CSIC chair and acting CEO John Ryan says that although the law requires immigration consultants to be regulated and authorized, "there's a cottage industry of entrepreneurial consultants who have front-ended the process."

"These individuals have run out and printed up a business card and hung out a sign and they're practicing in the light of day," he says.

"The problem is unsuspecting immigrants that come to Canada who in many respects don't speak the language, don't understand our legal system or the immigration system and in some cases our culture, fall easy prey to these charlatans."

Ryan says unregistered agents often give inaccurate advice and in many cases "the immigrant who is responsible for their application and everything in it is left holding the bag—the

money's gone and the consultant is invariably long gone as well."

The problem of unscrupulous agents exists across the country and is not particular to certain ethnic groups. "It's across the board," he says.

"Our intelligence here right now is tracking 1,920 ghost agents that we've identified in Canada. We currently have 1,655 certified consultants who are authorized representatives and recognized by the government of Canada. So needless to say we're a little concerned that there seems to be more bad guys than there are good guys."

CSIC is calling on the government to crack down on ghost agents by making it an offence to pose as an immigration consultant. Ghost agents have been able to thrive by exploiting legal loopholes—something CSIC wants changed.

"We're of the opinion that if there is a deterrent—stiff jail and fines, or both—specifically written into the law to prohibit this activity we think it would give the law enforcement community far more accurate tools to go after these individuals rather than trying to use other provisions under other acts," Ryan says.

Although it's advisable to seek the services of an authorized consultant, Ryan notes that it is not a requirement and will not result in faster processing of applications or guarantee approval.

CSIC launched its \$1 million national ad campaign last Wednesday in Montreal and Toronto to raise awareness about the issue. The society also released a number of recommendations they hope the government will implement.

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