

North, to adventure and learning

Kariann Wellington will teach at North Spirit Lake First Nation

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Teacher Kariann Wellington is preparing to spend two years at North Spirit Lake First Nation in Ontario, where the only way in or out is by plane.

Kariann Wellington is embarking on a two-year adventure that will take her to a remote part of Canada, where she will teach First Nations students.

The Truro woman will have to fly in to reach North Spirit Lake in northwestern Ontario. There she will work two years under the Teach for Canada program.

“It’s exciting,” Wellington said. “For me as a new teacher there’s that trepidation, you want to teach and do well and do justice by your kids. I want to teach them everything I know; I want them to learn and have these experiences.”

North Spirit Lake First Nation is a community of about 300. It connects with several other First Nations communities by way of ice roads in the winter. Aside from that, it’s a matter of flying in from other centres.

Before leaving this week, Wellington and others completed three weeks of training in Thunder Bay. The focus was on culturally appropriate teaching methods, as well as First Nations history, languages, culture and the outdoor education they will need in their communities.

In North Spirit Lake, Wellington will teach a class of about 20 grade 7 and 8 children at the Victoria Linklater Memorial School. While it’s a two-year commitment, Wellington will return home for summer and at Christmas.

North Spirit Lake has one small convenience store and outside supplies come in by plane. Many of the inhabitants, who are Oji-cree, hunt and fish for their own food, as their ancestors have done for thousands of years.

Wellington said that the local people she has met are friendly and quite open to sharing their culture and traditions. She knows resources will be limited but there is assistance.

“One of the benefits of Teach For Canada is that they help schools get set up with technology and that makes the inequity gap a little smaller,” said Wellington.

Teach For Canada is a non-profit that works with northern First Nations communities to recruit teachers.

While two years is the minimum commitment, many teachers stay beyond their term.

Co-founder Kyle Hill said Nova Scotians like Wellington are wellrepresented, with at least four teachers out of this year’s 45 recruits involved. They join 52 others returning for a second, third, or fourth year.

“The communities have told us that they really like Nova Scotians as they’re down-to-earth and polite,” said Hill.