

COVID in the House of Old – Stories from Wikwemikong Nursing Home
Episode 3 – The Pandemic

JAMES: Didn't know nothing about it. COVID, you know, what's COVID?

That was in... we were still having a good time, you know. We didn't think much of it until we seen it on TV and it came on people in the States. That what really sunk in. We learned how cruel it was, you know, people dying like that. And we all talked about Donald Trump, how much of an egghead he was, you know, letting his people die.

MATTHEW: The residents understood you know what was going on, but not necessarily either. Like, because it wasn't here, right. And the illness actually came in and a lot of us got sick from it and affected from it. But you see the stories of people talking to their loved ones outside a window... And then it finally came here, right? They see that happening.

JOSH: You don't think it's going to come right. You don't think it's going to hit you and when it hit it was like wildfire. You hear that all over the news and that's literally what it was. It was this person then this person then this person then. You're like, oh my god, and then you know, this is COVID. It's literally in the room right now. And I looked at my co-workers and they just kind of looked kind of blank, you know.

ELIZABETH: That was our real, true outbreak. It was frightening. we had to isolate, you know, a few residents that have dementia. And even isolating them in their room or isolating - we had to close off one wing and keep them separate. That was a bit of a challenge because we had residents that were wondering why they're locked up in this area. And even one of them even commented, "It's like residential school." It was just so sad. It was heartbreaking.

JOSH: So, I was going insane. So that started to spread around really fast here and I remember it was just day after day and day after day, more and more. And then the workers, and then I remember the first lady who's kind of hit out of nowhere and we're like, you know, she doesn't look too well. What the heck? Like is this seriously happening? Is this really happening?

MIKE JON: After a while, we only had maybe 10-15 staff running the building, as compared to 50 when everybody was getting sick, so. We had to do different areas as we lost workers. We became activity people. We became everything in the building and kitchen workers. Not just the scope of being a PSW. The workers were great though, I'm telling you. They jumped from areas to areas and they helped us.

LORETTA: One of them I lost...one of my own that I take care of with COVID. Yeah, there was only two of them that passed away here with COVID. You know, you get so attached to your residents like tears flow when they pass. Yeah it was heart wrenching.

FRED: I was scared when I caught it. I had no idea that I'd actually catch it, let alone have to survive it.

JAMES: Yeah. We all got it that time. I think we had to go isolation for two weeks I think before we finally got rid of it. And we didn't know what was going on. We just thought we were sick with the flu or something. But we were... we did have COVID I guess. Somehow, we beat it and the nurses know their business here so they're all top-notch women. It's the women that run this place.

FRED: The COVID. That really, like disrupted the whole general functioning of the nursing home. Then afterward, it was like, because there was no group activity because of COVID, then it, that effect lasted on. There's still a reluctance to, to do things. If I was looking for words, that's the ones I would choose. That's a shyness maybe? I don't know if it's from the COVID, but I think that's what it is.