

George Kenny saved by Telemedicine
Rick Garrick Oct. 2007

"Telehealth saved my leg."

George Kenny clearly remembers the day in 2003 when his leg was saved by a specialist in Winnipeg after a Telemedicine examination showed that his swollen leg was due to an infection that spread from a baker's cyst behind his calf.

"To this day, I feel that service (Telemedicine) saved my leg," says Kenny from his farm just east of Dinorwic. "My leg was all purple and red and swollen up. I actually ended up with a 22 cm blood clot in my leg."

The blood clot formed due to the pressure on his veins from his swollen leg muscles.

"If any part of that blood clot had broken off and lodged in my brain or my lungs I might have become a vegetable or I might have died," Kenny says.

Kenny's leg was scanned by Telemedicine staff in the Sioux Lookout Menowawin Health Centre using a Telemedicine view camera, which enabled the specialist in Winnipeg's St. Boniface General Hospital to examine the swollen leg in enough detail to accurately make the leg-saving diagnosis in conjunction with Dr. Claudette Chase at the Sioux Lookout Menowawin Health Centre.

"Dr. Chase and the specialist at the St. Boniface General Hospital conferred and made a diagnosis that saved my leg," Kenny says. "My leg looked like it was two times bigger than my left leg. If they didn't have that service, they might have amputated my leg."

His partner Mary Kenny remembers it as "a pretty scary" situation. "He was in so much pain," she says.

The Lac Seul band member, who is currently writing a family history project for the Lac Seul community, came down with the infection about two weeks after feeling a "pop" in the back of his knee while burying some ancient human remains that had been discovered on the shore of Lac Seul across from Archie's Landing that spring.

"Within three days, it got so bad Mary took me to the hospital," Kenny says. "I was so much in pain I almost passed out."

Kenny, whose leg infection eventually spread all the way from below his groin to his foot, spent about three months in hospital before he was released.

"I was on crutches for weeks after that," Kenny says. "The muscles that had been swollen were all weak. My leg shrank to about half its normal size."