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Youth Rising Together rally in Mattagami

Xavier Kataquapit
Special to Wawaaty News

Youth Rising Together held a rally in Mattagami First Nation to allow local First Nation youth an opportunity to show their support of grassroots youth movements. The event was led by youth organizers in Mattagami FN to give voice to young people in the community who are concerned about recent government legislation.

Chief Jennifer Constant spoke to the group and showed her support to First Nation youth as they voiced their concerns regarding legislation that will affect First Nation lands and rights in the future.

"It's important for our leadership to support our youth. The youth taking a stand is always an important process to support. They are doing the advocacy that is innate in all Indigenous people. I feel that this is not just for Mattagami FN, but for all First Nations in general and also not just for those here today. These youth are speaking on behalf of their ancestors, for other young people and also for those generations yet to be born. We are honoured to stand with them today and participate in this youth rally," said Chief Constant.

The event was started with a community lunch at the Binogeesh community centre. An opening prayer was provided by Elder Joyce Luke and speeches were made by Sierra Groulx, Ramon Kataquapit, Shem Mattinas, Elder Joyce Luke, Trenton Thomas, Tristan Ashishkeesh and Chief Jennifer Constant. The rally then marched from the community on the First Nation access road to Highway 144. They held a ceremonial tobacco laying to commemorate their rally.

"This is the first rally we have held for our group in our home community. We're really happy to do this because it gives our young people an opportunity to come together to share their concerns because not all of us are able to attend rallies in big cities like Ottawa, Toronto or even in Timmins. So we wanted to bring the event to our young people so that their voices can be heard and allow them to talk about what is important to them," explained 19 year old Sierra Groulx, a member of Mattagami FN.

Groulx is part of the Youth Rising Together youth movement and she was the lead organizer of the rally in Mattagami FN. The event was also in collaboration with Okiniwak, a First Nation grassroots youth movement led by Ramon Kataquapit of Attawapiskat FN and Kohen Mattinas of Lac Seul FN.

"We want to give a platform to First Nation youth in every community we go to. We want to share that youth voice with everyone, our leadership and our elders. Often we are told to just listen and follow but we started these youth movements so that our young people can be heard and share their message directly," said Kataquapit.

He was also in the community to take part in Mattagami FN's Annual Pow Wow as head dancer.

Youth Rising Together came about as a response to major government legislation including Ontario's Bill 5 and Canada's Bill C5. Ontario's Bill 5, called the Unleashing Our Economy Act, is prioritizing resource development over environmental assessments and consultation requirements. The federal government's Bill C5, called the One Canada Economy Act is being designed to fast track development projects, including mining and resource extraction, in special economic zones, many of which fall on First Nation territories.

photo submitted by Trentin Thomas

Youth Rising Together brought together local youth and supporters for a community rally in Mattagami FN on August 18. The group is pictured here with Chief Jennifer Constant (in front with the Mattagami FN broach) overlooking Mattagami Lake.

Cofounder of Youth Rising Together, Shem Mattinas, a 17 year old member with roots in Moose Cree FN and Attawapiskat FN was on hand to speak to the gathering.

"This is a gathering to send a message that youth from all our communities are standing up and they all agree that these bills are not a good thing for us. The people who are making these decisions will not be the ones who will see the results of their work, it will be young people now that will be most affected in the future. That is why it is important to have rallies like this because we are educating our youth, supporting them and giving them space to speak out," explained Mattinas.

The gathering was led in prayer and ceremony by Elder Joyce Luke, a past Chief of the community. She is part of a family of leaders from Mattagami FN including her daughter current Chief Jennifer Constant, her brother Chief Gerald Luke, their father Chief Alec Luke and grandfather Chief Andrew Luke, the first recognized Chief of Mattagami FN and signatory of Treaty Nine.

"My message to our youth is for them to stand strong. Our ancestors worked hard for what we have and our future generations need to do the same. These bills are a threat to our people, our lands, our way of life and our sovereignty. These government decisions also want to criminalize any opposition in the name of public safety and development but we know better when we have to stand up to say no. It is our sacred duty to protect the land," said Elder Joyce Luke.

Ashishkeesh, who was part of a group of youth leaders who completed a protest walk from Timmins to Queen's Park in Toronto this month, spoke to the gathering to offer his support and talk about their youth group Mahmo Inninuwuk Wiibuseegostamok (Uniting the People to Stand Together).

"Every one of us can become grassroots people and we can speak up for ourselves. We are not confined to a box or space to wait, we can speak for ourselves as grassroots people," said Ashishkeesh.

Youth Rising Together was founded in June 2025 by lead organizers KatherineJeremiahGenier, a 24 year old youth of Missanabie Cree FN and Shem Mattinas, a 17 year old youth from Moose Cree FN and Attawapiskat FN. Although originally founded as opposition against government legislation, the youth group is hoping to grow its advocacy to address other issues on environment, mental health and social issues. Supporters can find their most recent information on their facebook page at 'Youth Rising Together'

Representatives of their group were on hand recently at the NishnawbeAski Nation (NAN) General Assembly in Moose Factory where they took part in a youth workshop and rally on August 13. They will be holding an upcoming event on August 23 in Timmins.

Youth Rising Together is one of several groups of First Nation Youth movements protesting the government including Okiniwak, Mahmo Inninuwuk Wiibuseegostamok, and Here We Stand – Call To Action, a wilderness protest on the Attawapiskat River led by Jeronimo Kataquapit.

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Politics

National Site Search forum held in Ottawa

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Deputy Grand Chief Mike Metatawabin highlighted how he met two Elders from northern Manitoba who speak the same dialect as his community during the National Site Search Forum 2025. Livestream recordings and information about the forum, which was hosted by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) from July 22-24 at the Fairmont Chateau Laurier in Ottawa for community technical staff, program leads and survivors, are posted at: www.sitesearchforum.com.

"I was really excited, it's so nice to know there's people that we can relate to, we can understand, we can speak with each other in the same language," Metatawabin says. "I wanted to make sure I mention them and I also wanted to acknowledge my colleagues, my friends, family, Elders, people that we work with together in doing this work, moving it forward, doing the best we can to find closure, to bring closure. As you can imagine, we are all still walking with scars, but you never know, it could be any time that scar becomes open. It never heals, it stays — I used the word ambient one time in my poetry — it's ambient, it's there and can be easily triggered, it could be through the tears of a child or a song."

Metatawabin says NAN was proud and honoured to be hosting the National Site Search Forum.

"I hope that we can all get to know each other better, hear the stories, listen to the stories," Metatawabin says. "I was told it was more of a technical forum, but I see a lot of colleagues that went to residential school, so it might be a survivors' storytelling time."

Metatawabin says he also talked to an Elder on the evening before the forum about healing.

"What he said was, 'How can we heal if our families, we can't even reconcile, if we don't make time to reconcile as family,'" Metatawabin says. "I couldn't agree more with that conversation that I had last night, I think about my family and it's very necessary that we make that effort to reconcile. Reconcile so we can move forward in a more healthier way, with an open mind, a mended spirit."

Metatawabin says he is still a broken person.

"I have not fully healed, I can be easily triggered as well," Metatawabin says, noting that he wanted to convey a message to the people with influence who attended the forum that at the grassroots level the work has not begun yet. "Our grassroots people back home are still waiting to have that opportunity to tell their story. I spoke about reconciling with family, they're still waiting for that and they need that."

Metatawabin says there is still a lot of work that needs to be done.

"We were happy and excited when the word reconciliation was announced a few years back," Metatawabin says. "But there are some new developments that are taking place that cause us to worry, to worry about reconciliation, Bill 5 and (Bill) C5, it's kind of put a damper. We just have to take a moment to think and reflect, what about the work we started, what about the work we're doing, what about the work we're carrying — like I said, we have not begun at the grassroots level."

Metatawabin says many colleagues still carry the same stories and conversations they had at residential school.

"Many of them have not moved a step forward," Metatawabin says. "They're still caught in that cycle, so there is lots of work that needs to be done and I hope you can take time to sit with us, listen to us, hear our story. We can help pave the way, mark a trail for you."

The forum also featured Tanya Talaga, founder and CEO at Makwa Creative and author of The Knowing, All Our Relations and Seven Fallen Feathers, and her cousin and Moose Cree First Nation's residential school survivors initiative researcher Paula Rickard on searching for records.

screenshot
Deputy Grand Chief Mike Metatawabin speaks about healing and reconciliation during the National Site Search Forum 2025, held July 22-24 at the Fairmont Chateau Laurier in Ottawa.

"What we're talking about today is residential site searches but what we're talking about too is our stories, it's our family's stories, it's who we are and that's all baked into all the work that's going on from coast to coast to coast," Talaga says. "(Rickard) is going to be talking right after me and we're kind of a one-two tag team today, and the reason why is because we both kind of do something rather similar, we spend long periods of time looking through dusty records alone late at night on the Internet searching through library archives, Canada records, searching through National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation records, connecting on Facebook and we actually do a lot of talking really late at night over family records."

Talaga says people who come from families like hers are still looking for their relations.

"You're still looking to what happened to your family, why they don't talk about their experiences, why there are people that are missing and what are their names," Talaga says.

Rickard says that people need to know where they come from to know where they are going.

"Knowing our ancestors and their stories is culture," Rickard says, noting that her families are the Marks and Chums. "It is important to have those conversations with people and do those analyses of records to be able to develop your own understanding and perspective of who your people are."

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Politics

Keewaywin Conference held in Moose Cree

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Extended discussions about Bill 5 and Bill C-5 were held on the first and second days of Nishnawbe Aski Nation's (NAN) Keewaywin Conference, held Aug. 12-14 at Moose Cree First Nation. Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025, was passed by the provincial government and Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy: An Act to enact the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act, was passed by the federal government. Bill 5 received Royal Assent on June 5 and Bill C-5 received Royal Assent on June 26.

"It is so important that we organize ourselves in terms of how we move forward with Bill 5 and Bill C-5 because what is happening right now is that Ontario is picking us off one by one, writing letters directly to the chiefs or even to NAN but disregarding their obligation to properly consult or to properly engage with us," says Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. "I know with a three-day meeting how jam packed it can get with our agenda, with so many important priorities and issues, but it is important that we take time to have this very important discussion that we are having right now because moving forward there will be more, more discussions, more meetings, more expectations on the part of Ontario to talk to us. But if we are not organized, if we don't have a plan, then they will win."

Fiddler says he thanks those chiefs that have stood up and voiced their opposition to Bill 5 and Bill C-5, noting that some chiefs said they welcomed Bill C-5 at the Prime Minister's Summit in July.

"But your position has been clear and very strong right from Day one, that we reject Bill 5 in its entirety and that's been the mandate that's been given to the NAN executive for us to convey to Ontario and to Canada that we will not engage until we see Ontario and Canada fulfill their own obligations and their own responsibilities," Fiddler says. "We've heard different ministers or even Premier Doug Ford talk about how they will respect the treaty, that they will respect their obligation to consult, they even talk about Free, Prior and Informed Consent in some of their meetings but the problem is those words are not written in the bill. So that is why it is so important that we quickly organize ourselves, and that's the discussion that we will have, which will hopefully lead us to a resolution by tomorrow to give us direction and guidance in terms of how NAN will respond."

Amy Westland, lawyer at Westland Law, delivered a position paper on a Minimum Requirement for Treaty Nations' Participation in Priority Projects submission to the federal and provincial governments on the first day of the conference.

"On the Consultations and Negotiations pillar, as I mentioned, I would recommend that NAN First Nations make very strong and consistent submissions to both Canada and Ontario in their consultations, in meetings and ideally set out very clearly in the written position paper on the principles that need to govern the implementation of this legislation," Westland says. "That could be done as part of a response to these consultations that have gone on so far and calling for a meeting within Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory or regionally, in my view ideally with both Canada and Ontario at the table at the same time because these two pieces of legislation are going to be operating at the same time and it would be good to have a sense of their overall plan for the projects that they are contemplating in your territories, so getting a sense of the overall picture rather than just with one level of government at a time."

Westland says these submissions should clearly articulate the First Nations expectations and minimum requirements for priority project participation.

"The reason I suggest this is because it will inform and strengthen your positions at those negotiating tables and also take control of the agenda, because what we've seen so far certainly at the Prime Minister's Summit and at the Premier's meeting, Canada came to that summit for example with its own agenda, the questions it wanted to ask and they weren't seeking input on what that agenda was going to be or how this discussion should unfold," Westland says. "So the benefit of submitting a clear statement of this is what we expect in our territories, it helps to set the agenda and say we want to meet with you on these terms and and to talk to you about these expectations."

screenshot

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler speaks about the importance for Nishnawbe Aski Nation's communities to organize themselves as they move forward with Bill 5 and Bill C-5.

screenshot

Amy Westland, lawyer at Westland Law, delivered a position paper on a Minimum Requirement for Treaty Nations' Participation in Priority Projects submission during the Keewaywin Conference

Mishkeegogamang Chief Merle Loon moved Resolution 25/27: Approval of Treaty Vision, Tor for Chiefs Committee on Treaty and Notice to Legal Profession on Class Actions, and Frank McKay, proxy for Slate Falls seconded the resolution, which was carried on Aug. 13 with abstentions by Constance Lake Chief Rick Allen, Proxy Mike Morris and Matachewan Chief Sonny Batisse.

"Today when I speak to this resolution, the message of unity needs to be sent," Loon says. "Unity, how that looks as a nation, we have to send that strong message, and I'm very strong in that way of thinking, that's the message I get from our people so that's why I move this resolution, it's a symbol of unity."

"I also want to mention the forefathers, our ancestors and the Elders that had a vision that they wanted to establish a strong voice for our northern community First Nations," McKay says. "We had nothing, we were dependent on our own to survive every year, every day, but we had the chiefs at that time and the Elders (who) founded an organization that would provide us with the strong voice and advocacy to advocate for the treaty and Aboriginal rights that were promised to us by the settler governments."

McKay also acknowledged the late Andrew Rickard, former grand chief from Moose Cree who founded Grand Council Treaty #9, later renamed as Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and the late Stan Louttit, former Mushkegowuk Council grand chief.

"I wanted to acknowledge all those people in the community and our past leaders for their efforts that they made to where we are today," McKay says. "In the resolution I seconded, I know that is our main vision that our Elders had, was to protect our treaty and Aboriginal rights and to ensure that the governments fulfill the promises that were made in that treaty, and today we still continue struggle to get those promises fulfilled by the governments."

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Commentary

Attawapiskat Election 2025

Xavier Kataquapit

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

My home community of Attawapiskat First Nation will be holding a local election this month on August 29.

It is an exciting time not just for those living in the community but for those members, like myself, who now live and work in southern cities and towns away from the James Bay coast. This will officially be the first community election where off-reserve members who don't reside in the community will have the opportunity to vote for their leadership.

Although off reserve voting had occurred in previous elections, it was in a very limited capacity. This will be the first ever organized effort by local election officials to widely include off reserve members. Election officials will travel to Timmins on August 18, Sudbury on August 20, North Bay on August 21, Kingston on August 23, Cochrane on August 25 and Moosonee on August 27.

As plans are being finalized, members are being asked to stay in contact with election officials and to monitor notices provided on the Facebook group pages 'ACB - Attawapiskat Community Bulletin' and the newly created group page 'Attawapiskat First Nation Election 2025'.

Many First Nations across the country are now implementing ways to allow their membership whether they are on-reserve or off-reserve to take part in community elections.

Neighbouring community Fort Albany First Nation recently conducted a bi-election for two First Nation Councillors in their community in October 2024 using One Feather, an Indigenous tech and services company located in Victoria, British Columbia that provides services to allow First Nations to conduct secure digital voting events for any individual regardless of their location. Hopefully, communities like Attawapiskat FN can take advantage of services like this in future elections.

In this latest election for Attawapiskat FN leadership, there are an estimated 3,035 eligible voters with about two thirds of that vote residing in the community and the remainder with off-reserve membership.

I remember growing up in Attawapiskat and witnessing the excitement of our local elections first hand. In the 1980s and into the early 1990s, there was no internet, no cable TV and radio broadcasts were limited to just a few hours of air time with Wawatay Radio.

Everyone was always looking for something exciting to do in the community and when elections rolled around, voters took part as one mass gathering. It was usually multiple events over a month in the summer as nominations had to be held first to select candidates.

These events were held at the local gym at the old JR Nakogee Elementary School and the place would be packed with almost the entire community.

As children, we always knew something big was happening when we saw our normally quiet and conservative Elders standing up to cheer, clap and call out their candidates and promote them to everyone.

Here is a partial historic list of Chiefs of Attawapiskat FN I found through an online search of government documents. The document only provided a listing of Chiefs from 1929 to 1991. These Chiefs were
Chief Xavier Chookomolin, 1929;
Chief John Nakooche, 1932;
Chief David Hookemawillillene, 1941;
Chief James Kataquapit, 1945;
Chief John Nakogee, 1948;
Chief Alex Wesley, 1951;
Chief Xavier Tookata, 1957;
Chief Joseph Iahtail, 1960, 1962;
Chief George Kebokee, 1964;
Chief Antoine Wheesk, 1969;
Chief Emileon Nakogee, 1971;
Chief Antoine Wheesk, 1973;
Chief Emile Nakogee, 1975;
Chief Fred P. Wesley, 1977, 1979;
Chief Louis Sutherland, 1981;
Chief John B. Nakogee, 1983;
Chief Reg Louttit, 1984;
Chief Fred P. Wesley, 1987;
Chief Reginald Louttit, 1987, 1989 and
Chief Ignace Gull, 1991.

Since 1991, the community has elected (in no particular order) Chief Ignace Gull, Chief Mike Carpenter, Chief Bruce Shisheesh and Chief David Nakogee. Our First woman Chief was Chief Theresa Hall who was then followed up by other local women including Chief Theresa Spence and our current Chief Sylvia Koostachin-Metatawabin. As another historic note, our first women in leadership were Councillors Lottie Hookimaw in 1971, Mary Lou Iahtail and Angela Shisheesh in 1973 and Martha Sutherland in 1975.

The position of Chief of the community for 2025 will be chosen from the following candidates: incumbent Chief Sylvia Koostachin-Metatawabin, Raphael Bonez Wheesk, Paul Wesley, Conrad Iahtail and David Freitag Nakogee.

I was happy to take part in the nomination process on line and to see the long list of candidates that will be working towards the additional positions of one Deputy Chief and 11 Council positions.

I wish all the candidates for the election the best of luck in everything they do. I know that even if they don't achieve their positions, they will still play roles in our local leadership and in supporting our community.

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Red Rock holds Annual Traditional Gathering

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Four jingle dress dancers share their styles at Red Rock Indian Band's Opwaaganisiniing Traditional Gathering.

Summer 2025: Warnings for Wildfire Smoke, Heat And Wind Continue

Graham Saunders

WEATHER

Northern Ontario has a reputation for changeable weather. Mark Twain (1835-1910) is often credited with originating, "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes, and it will change" but there is no record that he ever said it.

Abrupt changes in the weather are common in the summer season. Sometimes this happens because of the development of lake breezes for which there is another saying, "Colder by the lake". Thunderstorms often result in multiple changes in weather conditions: colder temperatures, quick changes in wind direction, strong winds, downpours of rain and occasionally, hail and even tornadoes are possible.

An obvious question is, why do we sometimes get the same type of weather for extended periods of time? The quick answer is ridges of high pressure can block the more typical pattern of flow of weather systems from west to east. I mentioned a persistent high pressure ridge last month. This summer, the periods of persistent wildfire smoke across the region are primarily caused by such blocks.

This atmospheric situation is known as an omega block. It has resemblance to the Greek letter Omega (Ω). When one occurs, there is usually a large strong area of high pressure, with two areas of low pressure on the west and east sides. Areas that are under high atmospheric pressure will tend to have dry conditions - clear and sunny skies resulting in warm days. Cool overnight temperatures are common because of the dry conditions. Areas under the lows will see unsettled weather with excessive moisture and cool conditions. Typically, these omega blocks will last for several days, up to week or longer. These blocking situations have been fairly common in the summer months this year. Last month I talked about how subsiding air in high pressure systems can result in smoky air coming down to ground level. Warnings about wildfire smoke also have very been frequent this summer.

Average temperatures in July were slightly warmer than normal in Northwestern Ontario and western parts of the Far North. Drier than normal conditions in many of these areas has resulted in much more wildfire activity than the 10-year average.

In contrast, average temperatures were slightly cooler in the Northeast of the region. There was more rainfall than average in many locations in northeastern Ontario. More news about this in the next section.

Significant Regional Weather Events in July

Canada Day, July 1

In Thunder Bay and Fort William First Nation, strong winds associated with a thunderstorm brought down many trees. Some streets and roads were blocked by large trees and there was damage to vehicles and houses. A peak wind gust of 91 kilometres an hour was recorded at the nearby Thunder Bay airport.

The damage from this storm was brief and very local. Other parts of the city and other nearby areas experienced the thunderstorm but not strong and damaging winds.

July 15 and 16

Heavy rains east of Lake Superior resulted in a number of washouts. Highways and roads from the Wawa area to Espanola were closed for hours up to a day or two. Washouts closed Highway 17 between Wawa and Montreal River. Highway 6 was closed near Espanola and stopped access to Manitoulin Island.

July 27, 2025

A moderate EF2 tornado with winds up to 190 km/h touched down near between Fort Frances and Mine Centre. The Northern Tornadoes Project reported that the tornado created a six kilometre-long path of forest damage.

I discussed above how ridges or blocks of high pressure influence the weather. The Severe Weather forecast map issued by Environment Canada on August 5, 2025 warned about a corridor from Manitoba to James Bay that would have both very warm temperatures and smoke. The denser high pressure air can deflect weather systems to the north over the top of the omega block (I added the outline of the omega block). Daytime temperatures next to Hudson Bay reached 30° C or warmer and relatively warm overnight temperatures. Very poor air quality was experienced in all almost parts of Northern Ontario, especially in the Far North.

Weather Outlook for August and early September

Environment Canada suggests warmer than normal conditions are most likely across Ontario. "Precipitation guidance does hint toward wetter conditions in parts of the Northwestern Ontario".

The first advisories about frost were issued in mid-August for locations from Armstrong to Timmins. The cooler overnight temperatures in the coming weeks bring potential for overnight frost and formation of fog in the morning.

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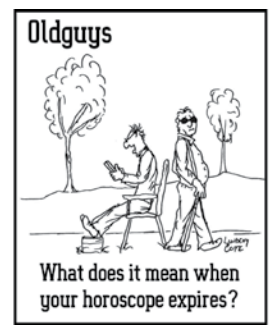

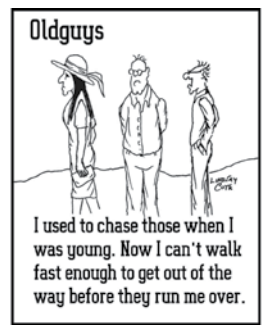

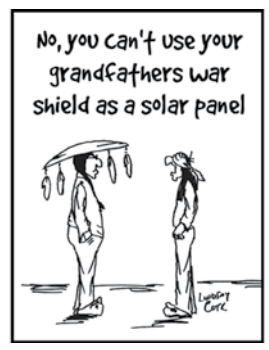

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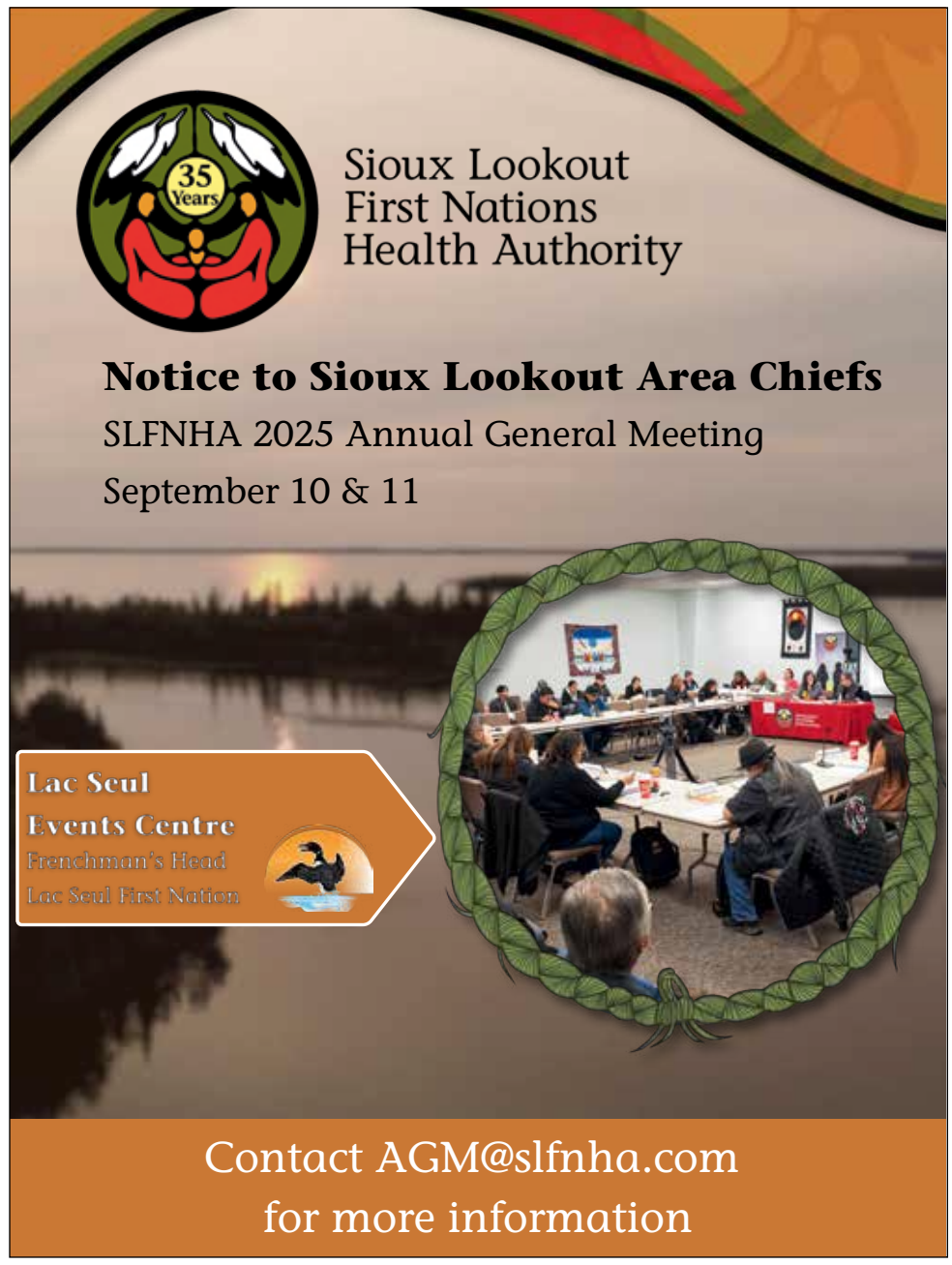

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Community

Anishinaabe Keeshigun 2025

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Aroland's Douglas Gagnon enjoyed cooking fried bannock over a campfire during the bannock making contest at Fort William Historical Park's Anishinaabe Keeshigun celebration, held Aug. 16-17.

"I enjoy cooking, I've got five kids, nine grandchildren, so I'm a pretty good cook," says Gagnon, spiritual advisor at the Anishinaabe Keeshigun powwow. "When I do make (fried bannock), there's nothing left because the kids, they love that. My grandmother used to make it, just like that, five to 10 minutes, we were fed and away we went. We call it pakweshigan, and it translates to pakwe, like when you take a piece off and eat it."

Gagnon says it is important to take your time when cooking food such as fried bannock.

"You just mix that stuff all good," Gagnon says. "It's all by eye, but some people measure, and I use very little salt."

Orville Councillor, emcee at the Anishinaabe Keeshigun powwow, says he likes Gagnon's fried bannock.

"He's been doing it for a long time," Councillor says.

Councillor says the powwow went very well on the first day of Anishinaabe Keeshigun.

"We've been keeping it going, trying to get everybody out there whether they dance or not to just join our circle," Councillor says. "We had a healing song earlier and that turned out really well."

Councillor says they also held an exhibition for female and male dancing categories.

"And we did some spot dances sponsored by the powwow committee here at Keeshigun," Councillor says.

Larry Moonias, a drummer with the Makoonz drum group, says it felt pretty good to participate in the Anishinaabe Keeshigun powwow.

"It's good to see all the cultural stuff with Old Fort William and the Native people coming together having a powwow, it's pretty cool," Moonias says. "We sang the Crow Hop so far — there's many teachings for it, usually the Crow Hop comes from the west side."

Darren Lentz, principal at Algonquin Avenue Public School in Thunder Bay, says he had snowshoes at his table that he was getting ready for winter.

"We've got a few pairs I made from scratch and I haven't finished weaving and a few pairs from some relatives and friends from (Eabametoong) that were given to me to repair, so I'm trying to get those done as well," Lentz says. "I was lucky enough to learn traditional snowshoe weaving from Gilbert Baxter from Marten Falls. He used to weave snowshoes here a long time ago and I learned from him how to do it. I used to come out here but I also used to go visit him at home and we made snowshoes together for a number of years."

Eabametoong's Alyssa Lentz, Darren's daughter, says she was sharing how to make birch bark baskets at her table.

"First you have to cut your template and then you can fold your basket up," Alyssa says. "You have to harvest black spruce roots. You soak them in water, peel them, split them and then you're ready to sew up your basket. This basket I'm actually etching, so that's when you etch off the bark and it leaves a design behind."

Lac Des Mille Lacs' Audrey Deroy says she was sharing the process of moccasin making at her table.

"I'm just explaining (about) honouring an animal and using everything that it's offered to us," Deroy says. "Before we came here as human beings, the animal beings told us that they would offer themselves to us as long as we respected them and made this commitment to always make sure they had a good home and that we would take good care of them. You can tell that we're still doing that because we have brain-tan hide here, we have the tools that come from the animal bones and anything else that's left we just leave it out in the bush for the animals to take advantage of."

Joe Weston, an American visitor with Yankee RV Tours, says they enjoyed their visit to Anishinaabe Keeshigun, noting they are on an RV caravan with 30 people and 16 RVs that is doing the Lake Superior Circle Tour.

"Our boss, the owner of the company, Rod Coe, was here six years ago with a group and he was so impressed he said this was a stop he wanted to make," Weston says. "It was very interesting, very informative. We were very impressed with the area, it's a very nice place."

Anishinaabe Keeshigun also featured screenings of the Remembering Richard Lyons documentary; a community feast on Saturday evening; food samples including bannock, corn, manomin, smoked fish and a strawberry drink; Indigenous sports including atlatl, baggataway and double ball; Woodland Era pottery; axe throwing; canoe paddling; and napawagan (bone and pin game).

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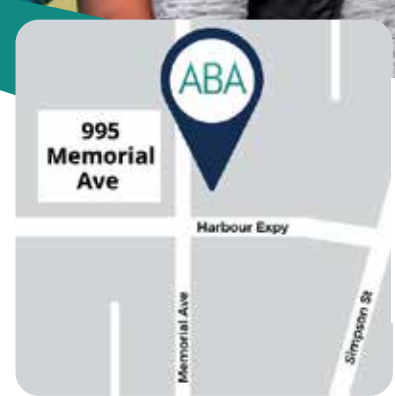

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Community

Marten Falls and Webequie hold teepee ceremony

photo from Wyloo Eagle's Nest Facebook page

A group of chiefs, councillors, Elders and community members participated in a joint ceremony to take down a ceremonial teepee at the Wyloo mining exploration site in the Ring of Fire.

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Marten Falls and Webequie recently held a joint ceremony to take

down a ceremonial teepee they erected last year to mark the next step in Indigenous-led development at the Ring of Fire.

"We were up at the Esker camp, the Wyloo mining exploration site," says Marten Falls Chief Bruce Achneepineskum. "They are closing camp for a while, closing down their operations so they're asking us to take down our ceremonial teepee, so we went up there to have a ceremony to take down the teepee … in a good way. For us, it symbolizes a good working relationship with the company as they are extremely receptive to building a good relationship, and that means knowing about the culture and the lifestyle of the original peoples who come from that area, so that's Marten Falls and Webequie."

The joint ceremony, led by the chiefs, councils, Elders and community members from both communities, highlighted the joint and mutually respectful process required between the First Nations and development proponents. Leaders and staff from Wyloo also attended to observe and note the need to continue strong consultation and engagement with both First Nations.

"It's been a long time coming working with different companies up there, Wyloo is the latest and probably the largest company that we worked with," Achneepineskum says. "It's extremely important for us to acknowledge the land and the environment that they are on so we do things in a good way."

Ring of Fire Metals, Wyloo Metals and Mincor Resources unified under the brand name Wyloo in the fall of 2023.

"Our vision is to unearth critical minerals, innovate how we mine and process them, and sustain the planet for future generations," says Luca Giacovazzi, CEO at Wyloo, in the fall of 2023. "When people think of the cleanest, high-grade nickel sulphide, in the tier-one jurisdictions of Australia and Canada, they will think of Wyloo."

Achneepineskum says their people have occupied the Muketei River area near the Esker camp, which they call Wawangwajing, since time immemorial.

"This area is important to both of our communities — Marten Falls has worked on land use planning in this area for the past 15 years mapping sacred sites, birth sites, burial sites, culturally significant sites related to moose harvesting and fishing and other ecological sensitive areas that are known to our people," Achneepineskum says. "We want to see development that recognizes our special connection to this land and involves us in all aspects of the work. We want to ensure that future opportunities benefit our people, and that any work done in our ancestral lands happens with our complete involvement, in compliance with our ways and our laws."

Achneepineskum says his community has a high unemployment rate.

"It's extremely important for us to find ways to find that employment, for a better quality of life for our members," Achneepineskum says. "Also, it's not only about jobs, it's about seeking those kind of economic opportunities like revenue sharing agreements with government and also land management."

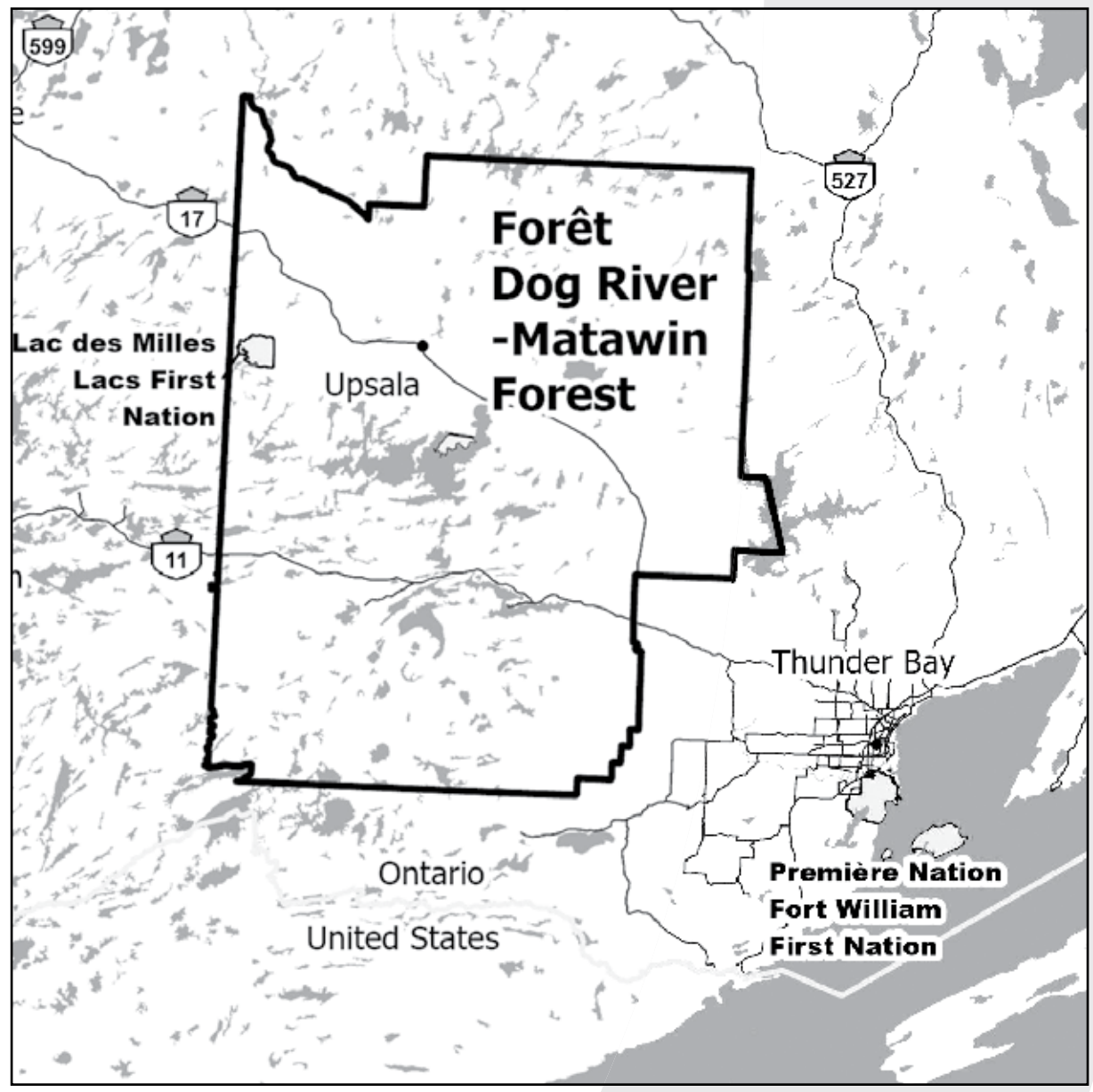
Webequie Chief Cornelius Wabasse says they share a common vision with Marten Falls to change how development occurs in their traditional territory.

"Today, we are leading the planning and assessment of the road projects in the region to ensure that environmental risks to our traditional ways of life are thoroughly assessed and mitigated, and that opportunities for First Nations people are maximized," Wabasse says. "Our people have been stewards of these lands since time immemorial, and that will not change through this process or the development of the Ring of Fire. We continue to lead the Environmental Assessments because we know that no one is in a better position than us to make informed decisions that protect our lands, our waters and our inherent and traditional rights. We do this by leading with the voice of our community, our Elders and through the use of our traditional knowledge and governance."

Inspection

Inspection of MNR-Approved Prescribed Burn Plan for Dog River-Matawin Forest

The Ontario **Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)** invites you to inspect the MNR-approved prescribed burn plan that will be carried out in the **Dog River-Matawin Forest** (see map).



As part of our ongoing efforts to regenerate and protect Ontario's forests, some recently harvested areas have been selected to be burned under the guidelines of the MNR's *Prescribed Burn Manual.* The prescribed burn will prepare and enhance the site for subsequent regeneration and growth. The burn is scheduled for ignition between **September 15, 2025** and **November 30, 2025.**

The approved prescribed burn plan, including specific locations and maps, is available for inspection by contacting Resolute FP Canda Inc. and on the Natural Resources Information Portal at **https://nrip.mnr.gov.on.ca/s/fmp-online** until **March 31, 2026,** when the Annual Work Schedule expires.

Interested and affected persons and organizations can arrange a virtual or in-person meeting with MNR staff to discuss the prescribed burn plan. For more information, please contact:

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Arts & Entertainment

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Sara Kae performs her music.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Lancelot Knight performs his music.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Nadjiwan performs their music.

Maamawe waterfront performances featured Kae, Knight and Nadjiwan

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Thunder Bay's Maamawe edition of the Live on the Waterfront performance series featured performances by Indigenous musicians Sara Kae, Lancelot Knight and Nadjiwan on Aug. 6 at Marina Park.

"It was good, it's really nice just to see people come out even when it's raining and a little gloomy out," says Kae, a Red Rock Indian Band recording artist, performer and storyteller who was recently selected for the Reverie Indigenous Music Residency in Toronto. "You can tell that people here love their music and I'm just happy to put on a show when I can."

Kae says it was important for the artists to share their music at the event, which was one of eight Live on the Waterfront performances scheduled on Wednesday evenings from July 16-Aug. 28.

"I think it's encouraging the arts and it's encouraging creative self-expression," Kae says. "So I just think it's a good space to keep inspiring other people to be who they are and shine through everything."

Kae says she has two new songs coming out, including Tofino on Aug. 22.

"And then I have a bunch of programs that I'm participating in the rest of the year, so just keeping busy as much as I can," Kae says.

Knight, a Cree singer-songwriter, actor and activist from Saskatoon and son of Chester Knight, says his performance went really well.

"I was really excited, it went so nice, it felt good," says Knight, who began creating his own music when he was 23-years-old. "But I've been constantly supporting other people. This is my first time actually starting to go out on my own."

Knight says he began doing music because of his father.

"My dad was always playing music around me," Knight says. "He bought me a guitar when I was 18 and I just fell in love with it."

Knight says he joined his father's band after dropping out of school, noting it was a good experience.

"With him it's good, but when I'm by myself it's still a bit scary," Knight says. "I'm a big man, six-foot seven, 320 pounds. It's really tough, it's scary and it gets lonely, but for those times when you get to see places like this, it's not easy but it's lovely because I get to be who I want, when I want."

Knight says he recently released an alternative rock single, The Woods, the first single off his upcoming debut solo album.

"I've got an album coming out in October, so I'm very excited about that," Knight says.

Marc Merilainen, a Chippewas of Nawash singer-songwriter and member of Indigenous rock band Nadjiwan, says the performance was great.

"The weather held out and we had such a great time," Merilainen says. "We played a lot of the older hits like Chosen Words, Brother Run, and then we had new songs that we just recorded yesterday, one was called Breaking the Dawn, we started off with Kids Like to Rock and we also did a song called What Might Be, and those will be on the new record."

Merilainen says the new record will be released in the fall.

"It's very eclectic, we have some rock songs, we've got some quiet acoustic songs, but the message is always the same," Merilainen says. "It's all about bringing people together and kind of trying to solve the problems through non-violence so we can progress to that society that we all want."

The Live on the Waterfront performance series will conclude with two Summer Send-Off performances featuring Country Night on Aug. 27 and Pop Night on Aug. 28 as well as a drone light show on both evenings.

Education

Teach for Canada prepares teachers for upcoming school year

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Gakino'amaage's (Teach for Canada) Summer Enrichment Program for teachers began with a land-based learning presentation on Lac Seul's curriculum at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. The Summer Enrichment Program, which was held to prepare teachers for their upcoming positions in First Nation communities across northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, also included a blanket exercise and presentations on trauma-informed classrooms, realities in the north, curriculum planning, SafeTALK training, classroom management, language lessons, land-based learning with hide tanning, collaborating with EAs, culturally competent teachers and learning integration.

"We were talking about land-based learning and the curriculum that Lac Seul has created that's really connecting all of the language, science, social studies curriculums together on the land," says Kristin Ward, assistant director of education at Lac Seul. "We wanted to make sure teachers didn't have to teach an extra subject, so we wanted it to all connect together — the land-based curriculum is the basis for what they teach out of the Ontario curriculum rather than the other way around."

Ward says it is important to provide land-based learning as part of truth and reconciliation and getting back to the land and the skills that are necessary to live on the land.

"Over the years things have disappeared and families are not necessarily getting out there themselves," Ward says. "So getting the kids doing it is getting back kind of the traditions and what's so important for our kids."

Laura Maracle, an educator from Kenhtè:ke, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, delivered the blanket exercise for the teachers on July 14.

"It's a way to teach Indigenous history — it's about the relationship between non-Indigenous people and Indigenous people, pre-contact, at contact and then up until the current time today and some of the issues that we're dealing with," Maracle says. "Instead of making them sit down for a three-hour slideshow, it's an interactive exercise with role playing based upon blankets. We go through about 500 years of history in an hour-and-a-half. Their blankets get stolen, they get relocated and segregated and isolated, there's residential schools, there's jail, there's homelessness, we talk about the TB (tuberculosis) sanatoriums, everything. It's hard stuff, but by them actually experiencing it, they feel it, instead of where as if they read it, they might retain maybe up to 10 per cent, if that."

Danny Peters, one of Gakino'amaage's language instructors from Pikangikum, says this was the second year that he did a language lessons presentation at the Summer Enrichment Program.

"It's been interesting, very educational for me as well to be opening up and teaching others our language," Peters says. "Our languages are beautiful."

Charlotte Marten, one of Gakino'amaage's language instructors from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, says she shared a lot of simple, basic words with the teachers during the Summer Enrichment Program.

"I think it's really good for the community (and) good for the teachers not to have a culture shock when they go into the communities," Marten says. "And I think it's great for our people to know that the teachers that come into their communities have had a crash course already on a lot of cultural things."

Lyn Blackburde, a member of Gakino'amaage's board of directors from Rainy River First Nations and director of education at the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, says she first met with the Gakino'amaage team in 2015 when she was the principal in Big Grassy River.

"I was involved with the first cohort for Teach for Canada and I got five teachers," Blackbird says. "Some of (the teachers) are still there. I was there for three years and it worked out really well."

Blackburde says she began a new strategic leadership advisor role with Gakino'amaage on July 14.

"I got involved 10 years ago and I absolutely believe it's imperative because we have teachers that need to know what to be expected and what it could potentially be like and to learn really about the beauty of our people," Blackburde says. "I just asked one of the teachers if they feel like they're prepared, and he said, 'Yes,' he feels like he is prepared and ready to go up north."

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

A group of teachers participate in a hide tanning presentation by Jean Marshall, Shelby Gagnon and Charlotte Marten.

Fiona McKenna, one of the Gakino'amaage teachers who has families ties to Shoal Lake #39 and will be teaching K-8 health and physical education in Big Grassy River, looks forward to teaching in her home territory.

"I wanted the experience to come back into my home territories to teach youth and show them that there's something for them out there, that they can do anything they put their minds to," McKenna says. "(I've learned here) that there's a lot of land-based learning that you can do with physical education but there's also a lot of great opportunities to involve language within physical education and health as well."

Rachel Iserhoff, one of the Gakino'amaage teachers whose family is originally from Fort Albany and now part of Taykwa Tagamou who will be teaching in Eabametoong, says she previously did a five-week practicum in Eabametoong this past spring through her studies at Trent University.

"I really loved it so I ended up accepting a job up there when it was offered," Iserhoff says. "A big thing (we've been learning) is just integrating Indigenous knowledge into our teaching and we're being informed about the realities of living in the north, so stuff like being trauma informed and doing land-based learning because that's so important in revitalizing Indigenous culture and tradition."

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Job Posting

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

Wawatay Communications Society is currently looking for a dynamic and results-driven Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who brings management expertise and embodies the mandate and mission in service of Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities.

Wawatay Communications Society serves the communication needs of First Nations people and the communities of Nishnawbe Aski Nation. It does this through the distribution of a monthly newspaper, daily radio programming, other communication services and a multimedia website that seeks to preserve and enhance indigenous languages and cultures of Indigenous people in northern Ontario.

Mandate

"Wawatay Communications Society is a self-governing, independent community-driven entrepreneurial Indigenous organization dedicated to using appropriate technologies to meet the communication needs of people of Indigenous ancestry in Northern Ontario, wherever they live. In doing so, its founders intended that Wawatay would serve their communities by preserving, maintaining and enhancing Indigenous languages and culture."

Mission

"To provide media capabilities and content that address the unique needs of the Nishnawbe people."

The membership of the Society – 49 First Nation communities within the territory of Nishnawbe Aski Nation– formally adopted the above mandate and mission statement at an Annual General Membership Meeting on May 5-6, 2004.

Location: Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Timmins

Position Summary:

The CEO serves as the chief executive of Wawatay Communications Society and in partnership with the Board, is responsible for the success of the Wawatay Communications Society. Reporting directly to the Board of Directors, the CEO is responsible for creating and implementing a clear sense of direction for the Wawatay Communications Society and its related businesses by defining, communicating, and overseeing the Corporation's mission, goals, operating principles, and strategic actions.

This position is the senior management position in Wawatay Communications Society, with responsibility for:

- The overall management of the business including its overall strategic direction, preparation of agendas and background information for Board meeting and Executive Committee meetings.
- Keeps the Board fully informed of the conditions of Wawatay Communications Society and on all important factors influencing it.
- The development of annual works plans and related capital and operating budgets.
- Development of operational policies and procedures.
- The day-to-day operations management, human resources recruitment and management and budget and financial oversight and monitoring.
- Overall planning, design and implementation of projects and programs within the mandate; and
- Communications and marketing for the purpose of business development

Governance, Strategy Development, Planning and Reporting

- Formulates and updates annual business plan and strategies, policies and procedures for Wawatay Communications Society and brings these to the Board for input, and decision as to ratification.
- Ensures strong strategic and annual planning processes and procedures are undertaken and effective budget and plans are prepared for Board approval.
- Seeks out and develops business opportunities and presents such opportunities to the Board for consideration and decision.
- Oversees fiscal activities, ensuring that all financial and non-financial reporting requirements are met on a timely and accurate basis, and
- Ensures that reports to the Board are always transparent and timely basis.

Community and Relationship Management

- Initiates, develops, and maintains effective strategic relationships and networks with key stakeholders including the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, government agencies, business owners, contractors, customers, potential customers, partners, suppliers, residents, and the business community in relation to their interests in the Corporation.
- Examines and recommends partnerships with private and public entities in support of projects that will assist the Corporation in fulfilling its mission and objectives; and
- Promotes and advocates the profile of the Wawatay Communications Society.

Operational Management

- Schedules Board meetings, prepares agendas, information and reports for consideration and decision by the Board, and ensures the completion of minutes of all Board meetings.
- Ensures the operation of Wawatay Communications Society follows all appropriate legal, regulatory and internal policies as approved by the Board, and are not contrary to policies, bylaws, and relevant government legislation and regulation.
- Prepares an annual performance management plan for approval by the Board.
- Analyzes, prepares reports, presents information and recommendations, and ensures timely completion of all activities.
- Implements the decisions of the Board in an efficient and effective manner,
- Ensures the day-to-day operations of Wawatay Communications Society are effectively and efficiently coordinated, implemented, and conducted within the policy and procedure framework approved by the Board.
- Implements stringent project management processes to ensure the timely, cost effective and profitable development and completion of projects.
- Determines limitations of authority for employees of Wawatay Communications Society covering expenditures, contracts personnel actions, etc.; and
- Establishes policies and procedures for Board approval in relation to consultants and contractors being retained by Wawatay Communications Society and exercises appropriate controls to ensure their use is managed cost effectively.

Staff and Contractor Management and Leadership

- Builds and maintains a high-performance culture through effective performance management, communication and coaching of staff,
- Recruits appropriately skilled staff to all positions and establish appropriate remuneration levels and performance-based conditions for each employee.
- Establishes performance management plans with employee and undertakes performance reviews, recommends salary and benefit changes, promotions and dismissals as appropriate within the authority of the position; and
- Recruits and appoints with the approval of the Board, where necessary.

Financial Management

- Prepares and presents an annual budget to the Board for approval complete with all supporting background information and documentation; and
- Establishes financial controls in relation to undertaking and monitoring the activities of Wawatay Communications Society against the approved budget and provides monthly (or more frequently, as necessary) reports to the Board on the performance of Wawatay Communications Society against the approved budget.

Job Knowledge:

The work requires the following knowledge, skill and/or abilities:

- Significant and proven leadership skills developed through at least five (5) years in a senior management role and experience related to media, communications and business.
- Substantial knowledge of business operations, asset management, marketing, finance, and business processes related to economic and business development activities.
- Proven ability to build effective relationships with external stakeholders and collaboration, inspire and motivate high performance and effectively resolve conflict.
- Knowledge and experience with the First Nations of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory.
- Ability to speak and understand one of the languages of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities;
- Excellent communication and presentation skills.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Post Secondary MBA in Business Management, Commerce or Finance.
- 5 – 10 years of experience in Business Development and Senior Management.
- The ability to communicate in English and Ojibway, Cree or Oji-Cree is an asset.
- Ability to work with both Macintosh and Windows computer platforms.
- A valid Ontario driver's license and cell phone.
- A combination of education and/or experience will be considered.

The Position will be Posted until Filled Start Date: ASAP

Applicants can send their resume, cover letter and contact information for references (in confidence) to:

Board Chair Nick Day **nickday@sandylakefn.com**

Board Vice Chair Vivian Waswa **vivianw@wunnumin.ca**

Note: Only applicants considered for an Interview will be contacted.

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- Anger
- Addictions

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CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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