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News

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[www.wawataynews.ca](http://www.wawataynews.ca)

Eli Baxter wins Governor General's Award

Rick Garrick  
Wawatay News

Marten Falls' Eli Baxter was recognized with a 2022 Governor General's Literary Award for English-Language Non-fiction for his book Aki-Wayn-Zih: A Person as Worthy as the Earth.

"It was my first book actually, and it was almost like writing it in a storytelling fashion," Baxter says. "Some of my book reviews were commenting on the fact that this has never been done before. I made it sound as if I'm telling a story to somebody right in front of me."

Baxter says the book is about the land, living off the land and a term used for Elders who are held in high esteem.

"They're given that term because they know the secrets of the Earth, the plants and the animals, learnings that they've had just living with the land," Baxter says.

Baxter says he wrote the book after initially translating some poems from the early 1900s into Anishinabemowin for a museum curator.

"This was the first time that he'd ever heard anybody speak (Anishnabemowin) and he was really interested in it, so I started talking to him about my experiences of being born into a hunting and gathering society and only learning the language out on our ancestral lands up north," Baxter says. "He was really interested in the stories, so I said I'll write them down and that's how it began. I wrote the stories down and then we found a publisher."

Baxter says the book includes stories on what life was like on Turtle Island before European contact.

"I talked about me growing up way out in the wilder-

ness with my parents and all my siblings for the first seven years up north, and then I talk about going to residential school," Baxter says. "One of the reasons I wrote this was the fact that there really aren't that many books out there in Canadian literature about stories like ours when we were growing up before residential school."

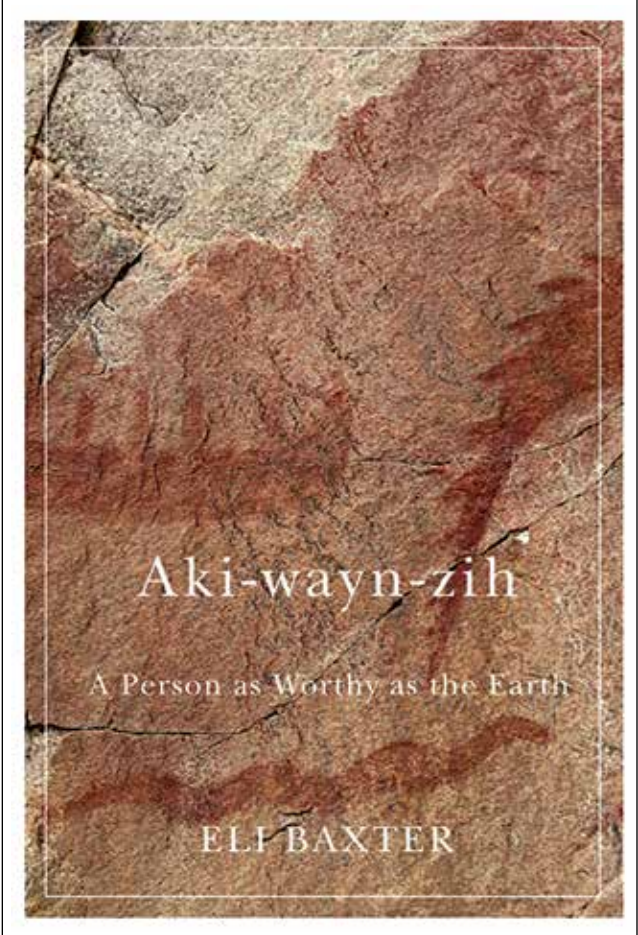
Baxter says the book goes up until he finished residential school at Grade 10.

"I tell the story about me leaving Shingwauk in Sault Ste. Marie and then going back to my mom and dad up north," Baxter says. "I went and lived with them up north for a couple of years, so that's where this story ends."

Book reviews by David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO at Matawa First Nations Management, and Isaac Murdoch, storyteller and traditional knowledge keeper at the Onaman Collective and Serpent River citizen, are featured on the McGill-Queen's University Press website, located at [www.mqup.ca](http://www.mqup.ca), which published Baxter's book in 2021.

"Aki-wayn-zih will educate not only Canadians but the world as to what my people went through during this tragic part of history," Achneepineskum says in his review. "I recommend this book wholeheartedly, and I hope that it inspires our young people and the public to learn more about Indigenous peoples, our history and why we remain strong in our culture, our languages, our lands and our nations."

"Eli Baxter eloquently weaves us through his life on the land," Murdoch says in his review. "This is not just a book, but also a record of (Anishinabe) customs and beliefs. What also makes this an incredible treasure



screenshot

Marten Falls teacher and knowledge keeper Eli Baxter was recognized with a 2022 Governor General's Literary Award for English-Language Non-fiction for his book Aki-Wayn-Zih: A Person as Worthy as the Earth.

is the fact that it is expressed in the language. No doubt a language resource for many generations to come, the information in this book is sacred and will transform lives."

Baxter says he has had a great response to his book, noting that one friend in London, where he lives, ordered 10 books for him to sign.

"She's going to give those books to her family and friends," Baxter says. "She said one of the books went to Sweden, so I've had a good response regionally, nationally and internationally."

Baxter adds that he is currently writing a second book about what happened after residential school.

Thank You, Airlines!

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# Poetry helps healing



**Red River Indian Band singer Sara Kae sings one of her songs.**

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

**from page 5**

“I hope (the Poetry Night) continues to grow and just give more space for Indigenous poets and artists. My songs that I shared today are pieces I’ve written in the past, they’ve helped me heal. I especially love my one song Rise that I wrote which is about the empowerment of Indigenous youth and people, and every time I sing it I just feel like I’m healing for myself but also hopefully sending those healing vibes out to everybody else as well.”

Cora McGuire-Cyrette,  
executive director at ONWA,

says the Poetry Night was fabulous, inspirational, healing and empowering.

“Women (were) speaking about their trauma, speaking about their empowerment, their journey and being in that collective community healing space,” McGuire-Cyrette says. “We really wanted to look at how we can ensure that we are incorporating and being inclusive of all First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures and artists and also bringing in role models who have been leading their healing journey to help inspire the youth and part of their jour-

ney in the arts world.”

McGuire-Cyrette says they provided a virtual stream for people to watch and join in with their own poetry over the Zoom platform.

“We really want to look at how we can have as many people join in as possible,” McGuire Cyrette says. “It’s not a perfect system as we continue to keep working on it but at least it’s a more inclusive system so that people who may not be able to join in person or who can’t travel in for events are still able to participate from their home and in their communities.”

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# Arts and Entertainment

## John Ferris creates cultural objects for the Smithsonian

Rick Garrick  
Wawatay News

Constance Lake artist John Ferris is looking forward to the upcoming exhibition of three cultural objects he made for the Smithsonian Institution's Knowing Nature: Stories of the Boreal Forest travelling exhibition. Ferris, owner of Ed-Digenous Traditions and organizer of the Annual Christmas Aboriginal Fine Arts and Crafts Gift Show and Sale in Thunder Bay, created a pair of snowshoes, a three-foot birch bark canoe and a birch bark basket for the exhibition, which opens at the Michigan State University Museum from April 15-July 30, 2023. The exhibition focuses on the biodiversity and global importance of Turtle Island's northern-most forests through first-person stories, commissioned objects, interactive experiences and photography from leading nature photographers.

"They said they were exquisite," Ferris says about the Smithsonian's response to his cultural objects. "I'll be sending them images of my process of building the artifacts."

Ferris says it was a great opportunity to be involved with the Knowing Nature: Stories of the Boreal Forest exhibition.

"It's informative about our culture up here in the north, for people to really understand how the Anishinabe lived and survived up in this area," Ferris says.

Ferris says the people at the Smithsonian contacted him

about creating the cultural objects after discovering his website, [www.ed-digenoustraditions.ca/](http://www.ed-digenoustraditions.ca/).

"They're going to have a link to my website in return as well," Ferris says. "They said they were fascinated with my business — they thought it was a good idea to connect with me."

Ferris says he followed the design of a Cree-style snowshoe that his mother had to create the snowshoes.

"I used to watch people put them together, and my grandfather, I used to watch him put them together," Ferris says. "I studied the snowshoes I had in my shop and I started drawing out the pattern of the laces, and I did that about 10-12 times until I was familiar with the weaving."

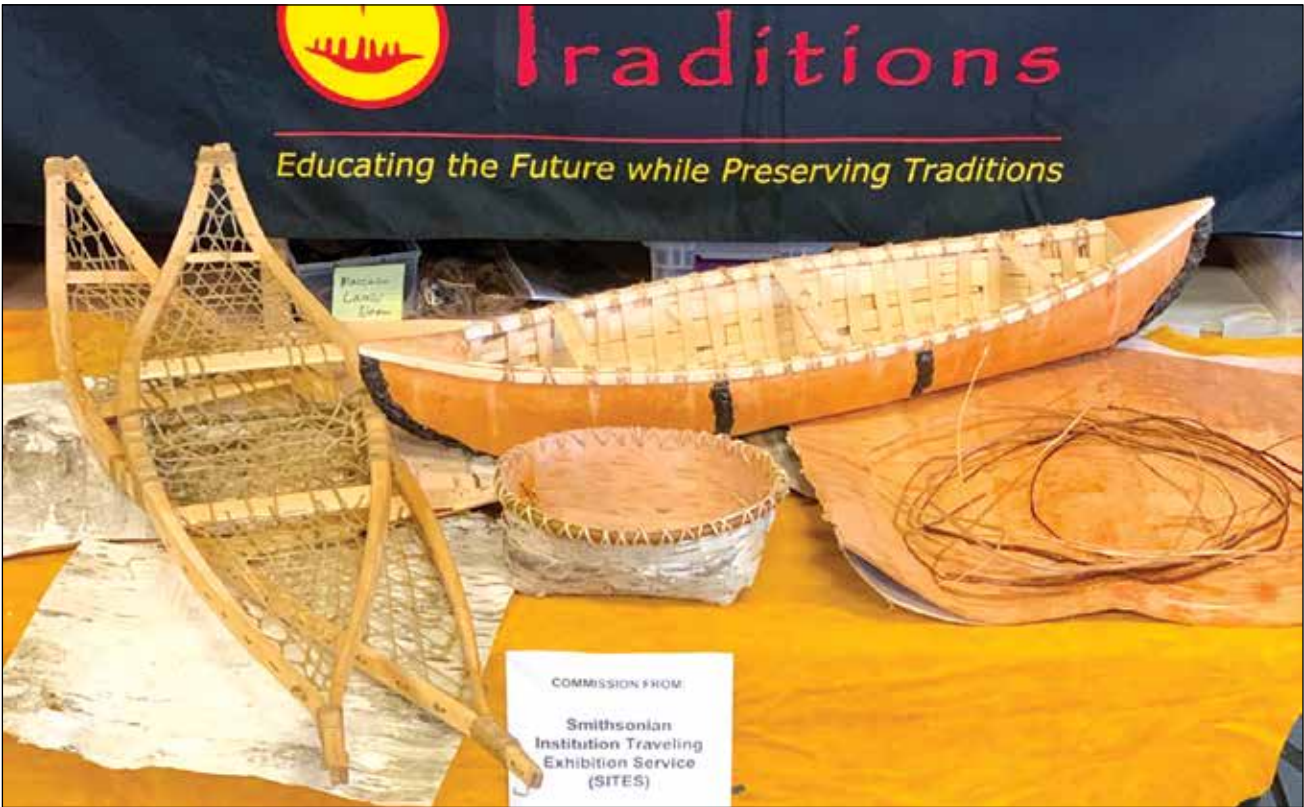
Ferris says he made the snowshoe frame pieces from a tree that he had harvested in the forest.

"I split them and I cut them and I steam heated them and I bent them to their shapes," Ferris says. "I had to leave them for 15-20 days so they would keep their curvature."

Ferris says he carved out notches for the two cross pieces to fit and then tied the frame together with the cross pieces in place.

"Once they were tied together, I spread the tips of them so they would curve out," Ferris says.

Ferris says he cut the laces with his lace cutting equipment and soaked them in water before weaving them into place on the snowshoes.



submitted photo

Ed-Digenous Traditions owner John Ferris created three cultural objects for the Smithsonian Institution's Knowing Nature: Stories of the Boreal Forest travelling exhibition, which opens at the Michigan State University Museum from April 15-July 30, 2023.

"I let it sit and dry for about a week," Ferris says. "Everything tightened up, everything pulled together."

Ferris says he harvested the birch bark for the canoe and basket in early July.

"We had a late spring, so what I had to do was wait until the first or second week of July," Ferris says. "That's when it really started sapping, so that's

when I did the harvesting, and it worked out well."

Ferris says he previously made birch bark canoes while working with youth at the Kairo Community Resource Centre in Thunder Bay.

"We did a lot of canoes and working with raw materials, so we would go and harvest together," Ferris says. "We would collect all the raw mate-

rials and even split our (black spruce) roots that we picked out. They were really engaged with the process of building these little canoes, so that's how I knew how to work with the materials and build a larger canoe."

Ferris says he used split pieces of red willow for the frame on the birch bark basket.

"A lot of my inspiration came from my grandparents that I

learned as a young boy," Ferris says. "I trapped with my grandfather at a young age off and on until I was 15, and was fortunate to be the last one to go with him to check his traps. I also used to help my grandmother with the process of tanning hide, and still have her tools that she used such as the leg bones for scraping the hair off the hides."

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We value our employees' education, skills and most importantly their cultural awareness and respect for our service model, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin. Employment opportunities at Tikinagan are vast. There are opportunities to work directly with children and families, in what we call frontline work, or to work "behind the scenes" in areas such as management, administrative support, information technology, data entry, finance or human resources. Our opportunities are full-time or casual and often are great stepping stones to a very fulfilling career.

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TIKINAGAN.ORG

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Tikinagan Child & Family Services Hiring Committee  
PO Box 627  
Sioux Lookout, ON P8T 1B1

**Fax**  
Faxing your resume and cover letter to (807) 737-4550.

**In Person**  
You can drop by any Tikinagan community office/unit and bring your resume/cover letter to the receptionist. Let them know you are applying for a job and ask them to fax it to Human Resources.



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# Arts and Entertainment



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
Moose Cree artist/rapper Shibastik performs one of his songs at Fort William’s first annual Fall Festival at the Fort William First Nation Community Centre.

## Shibastik releases new album ‘The Braid Remains’

Rick Garrick  
Wawatay News

Fort William featured Moose Cree artist/rapper Shibastik sharing his connections to the land during his performance at the Fort William First Nation Community Centre.

“I was so blessed to have a father who took me out on the land and friends who I would always be out on the land hunting with and fishing with,” says Shibastik, who grew up in Moosonee before leaving at 18-years-old. “I was very connected to the land and that’s

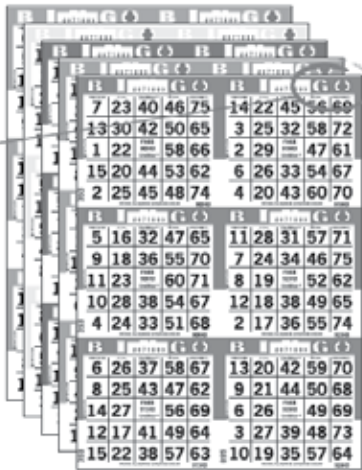
what I share with my music.”  
Shibastik also shared some of his artwork, including a painting of a camp where he goes fishing and goose hunting on the land but with a city background.

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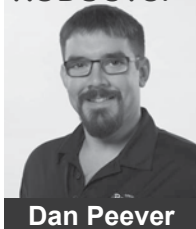
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# Arts and Entertainment



Marten Falls' Denise Baxter helped with the moose hide preparation.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News



Science North displayed a variety of natural items and held a variety of activities.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

## New album shares a connection with the land

from page 8

"This painting is called River Road and you see the city in the distance and it's like the river is turning into a highway and all these cars are coming," Shibastik says. "I just feel that the cities are spreading, how much longer are we going to have pristine wilderness like we have up in the north. We have to appreciate it, we have to protect it."

Shibastik says his father had very strict rules when they were out on the land hunting.

"We had to leave it how it was when we got there," Shi-

bastik says. "We didn't want to leave a single piece of garbage, a little sign that we were there. He was very strict about that."

Shibastik also highlighted his new album The Braid Remains, which was released on Oct. 26, and his song Flow ft. Bradley A.J. and Deanne Rose Moore from his Land Bass album, which is up for the Native American Music Awards on Nov. 19 at the Seneca Niagara Hotel and Casino in Niagara Falls, NY during his performance.

"At 19 songs, it's a whole

hour of music," Shibastik says about The Braid Remains. "Ninety per cent of it has been totally unreleased — usually I would release my songs one at a time and then finally put them on an album so by the time the albums came out people would have heard it already, but for this one no one has heard it yet so I'm really excited about dropping it."

The festival also featured traditional crafts and teachings, live demonstrations, including hide preparation, and bouncy castles and activities for children.

"I'm here visiting and helping Jean (Marshall) with this moose hide demo, so right now I'm just fleshing a moose hide," says Amber Sandy, a Chippewas of Nawash citizen. "We flesh it and then we'll flip it over and cut all the hair off. Then it'll be ready to go when we want to string it up and scrape it. We just got started today but typically people are really excited to see moose hides being tanned because it's been a long time since we've had people doing this. It's just a really beautiful way to continue building a rela-

tionship with the moose and to honour them because they give so much to us."

Emily Kerton, project lead for the Northwest Expansion Project at Science North, says they had a variety of natural items, including bones, skulls and antlers, and "different activities to get people excited about the natural world and the science in nature."

"Everybody loves it, they think it is so fun and there's lots of people who learn something new," Kerton says. "There's also a few pieces here for younger

kids to build with and a musical instrument set up over there for people to play music with."

Other activities included gillnet making by Fort William Historical Park, which is part of a program they developed for Maitava First Nations Management; a canoe building kit for children by Coast Salish wood carver George Price; and bannock, fried bread and moose stew preparation by Mishkeegogamang Elder Maxine Baer and Muskrat Dam citizens Isabel Beady and Brenda Beady.

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# Education

# Mastercard Foundation invests in Indigenous youth

**Rick Garrick**  
Wawatay News

The Mastercard Foundation plans to invest \$500 million and to collaborate with 45 partners to support 100,000 Indigenous youth through its EleV program, which has already enabled 10,700 Indigenous youth to pursue educational and career goals.

"The Mastercard Foundation seeks a world where everyone has the opportunity to learn and prosper," says Reeta Roy, president and CEO at the Mastercard Foundation. "Through EleV, we are partnering and co-creating with Indigenous young people and communities to transform education and employment systems based on their visions and values, in ways that revitalize their languages

and cultures.”

The EleV program's vision, which was co-created and confirmed by Indigenous youth and communities, was for Indigenous young people to be living Mino Bimaadiziwin, a good life. The V in program name, which was co-created with youth and Elders, refers to a flock of migratory geese flying a long distance and how different members of the flock take a turn in the lead position.

"One of the things that we've been trying to do with this initiative as well is really find flexible ways in which education meets where young people are at," says Jennifer Brennan, director of Canada Programs at the Mastercard Foundation. "We're seeing communities right across the country come forward and talk about the

need to create a learning hub or some kind of community centre where young people can learn and study in a culturally supported way where there's Elders and then also tutors and other supports that can address some of the areas where young people may need a little bit more support."

Brennan says these types of community centres or learning hubs can provide an opportunity for people to begin their post-secondary education journey without having to leave their community and family supports.

"We've got a responsibility and an opportunity to demonstrate some of the innovative things that work and are really inspiring change," Brennan says. "We've heard that these community learning hubs now

become a place where young people are like: 'I can see myself going through there' and 'I need help in this one course, I now know where to go, it's straight forward, it's clear and I can now chart my own path.'"

“I now know where to go... and I can now chart my own path...”

– Jennifer Brennan

The Mastercard Foundation has partnered with the Seven Generations Education Institute on a five-year commitment to help augment and expand opportunities in communities and support the transition

to meaningful employment, including teachers and health care workers. The partnership includes an overall goal of supporting 3,000 Indigenous young people through post-secondary education and on to meaningful work.

“What Mastercard (Foundation) did was fund an idea and the idea was taking our fluent speakers and pairing them with other fluent speakers who have experience teaching,” says Shannon King, Gaa-niigaanishkang Anishinaabemodaa Anokiwiw at Seven Generations Education Institute. “So they built this relationship between the ones who come from experience of passing on their language and teaching their language in many different settings and engaging the other fluent speakers who are interested in passing on their

language, so it gives them tools, methods.”

King says the fluent speakers who took the six-month program now have a basic foundation on how they want to teach their language.

“They had the ability to take the methods that spoke to them, the things that they liked and they can then utilize those tools to pass their language on, which really helps in our programming because we needed speakers to get involved,” King says. “We needed speakers to work alongside with in our early years programs, in our mentor learning program which is a program that incentivizes our high school students to learn language after school.”

Information about the EleV program is posted at: [mastercardfdn.org/elev/](http://mastercardfdn.org/elev/).

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# SLMHC welcomes first baby of 2023




## Wawatay News

Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre (SLMHC) welcomed its first newborn of 2023.

Frenchman's Head residents  
Kasha Kakekagumick and Alex

Southwind welcomed the arrival of their son Kreeo Southwind-Kakekagumick on Jan. 5 at 2:52 p.m.

Kreco weighs 2.89 kilograms (six pounds, six ounces) and is 49 centimetres long (19.3 inches).



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Health



submitted photos

The Canadian-made Possibilities by Baycrest memory care model was launched by Baycrest in Toronto to improve the care of people living with dementia.

Baycrest launches Canadian-made memory model to fight dementia



Rick Garrick  
Wawatay News

A Canadian-made memory care model was launched by Baycrest in Toronto to improve the care of people living with dementia. The Possibilities by Baycrest memory care model was first introduced last spring at Baycrest Terraces. Baycrest has a 104-year history of caring for older adults across a full continuum of dementia care services and programs.

“Baycrest recognized a number of years ago that the care that is being provided to older adults in residential settings is inadequate and that we really need to move away from a task based approach to daily living to one that is more reflective of the values we all have as we age, which includes things like having choices, being as autonomous as we can be, continuing to have purpose and to have connections to the communities and the people around us,” says Faith Malach, executive director, care innovations and transformation at Baycrest. “So what we did is embark on a strategic project to develop a new model of care, one that would be delivered in residential settings, whether it’s long-term care settings, retirement home settings, even possibly community settings.”

The Possibilities by Baycrest model is based on a core philosophy of maximizing the potential of each person while revealing new, inspiring and fulfilling interests and abilities.

“We really wanted to shift the focus away from that traditional task-based (model) and instead commit to a new philosophy that recognizes there are more than 600,000 people living with dementia and that those people do face losses and some of their abilities absolutely do change but that they still have potential,” Malach says. “We see dementia care as more than just a place to live, we see it as a place where you can thrive and where we can still help people

to achieve their abilities and achieve possibilities and start to change some of the misconceptions around living with dementia.”

Malach says there has been a “very positive” reaction to the Possibilities by Baycrest program by the families.

“We have had families who have of course come into this new residential community very concerned about leaving their loved ones in a new community setting and living environment,” Malach says. “But we’ve seen remarkable changes and transitions in a very short period of time — this new community has only been open for about eight months now but we have had residents who have come in and have been very withdrawn, very isolated, lacking social connection, who now join their neighbours and friends for breakfast every morning at a shared dining room table.”

Malach says they also provide opportunities for people living with dementia to revisit old skills and hobbies.

“We have people who used to do art who gave up on that after many years and are now painting and drawing again,” Malach says. “We have a gentleman who came in and loved photography but hadn’t done it in years — he now is responsible for taking pictures and does so. Families have reacted quite positively recognizing that with dementia comes fear and loss, but this program Possibilities by Baycrest is offering hope because we don’t see their loved ones as a diagnosis or a person with a label, we see their loved one as a person first.”

Debbie Kapp, whose mother-in-law was diagnosed with dementia in 2020, says her mother-in-law has been doing activities she used to do since moving into Baycrest Terraces earlier this year.

“The program is individualized at the Possibilities by Baycrest so before she came into the program they interviewed my husband and I at length

about her and her life and her activities, things she was interested in, things she did before she got dementia so they could create activities for her that were

reminiscent of the things she used to do,” Kapp says. “They created card games that she can play now because she used to play bridge a lot and poker. She

used to love to bake so they create opportunities for her to bake once a week in the kitchen. She loves music so they take her to concerts.”

Information about the Possibilities by Baycrest program is posted online at: possibilities.baycrest.org and www.baycrest.org.

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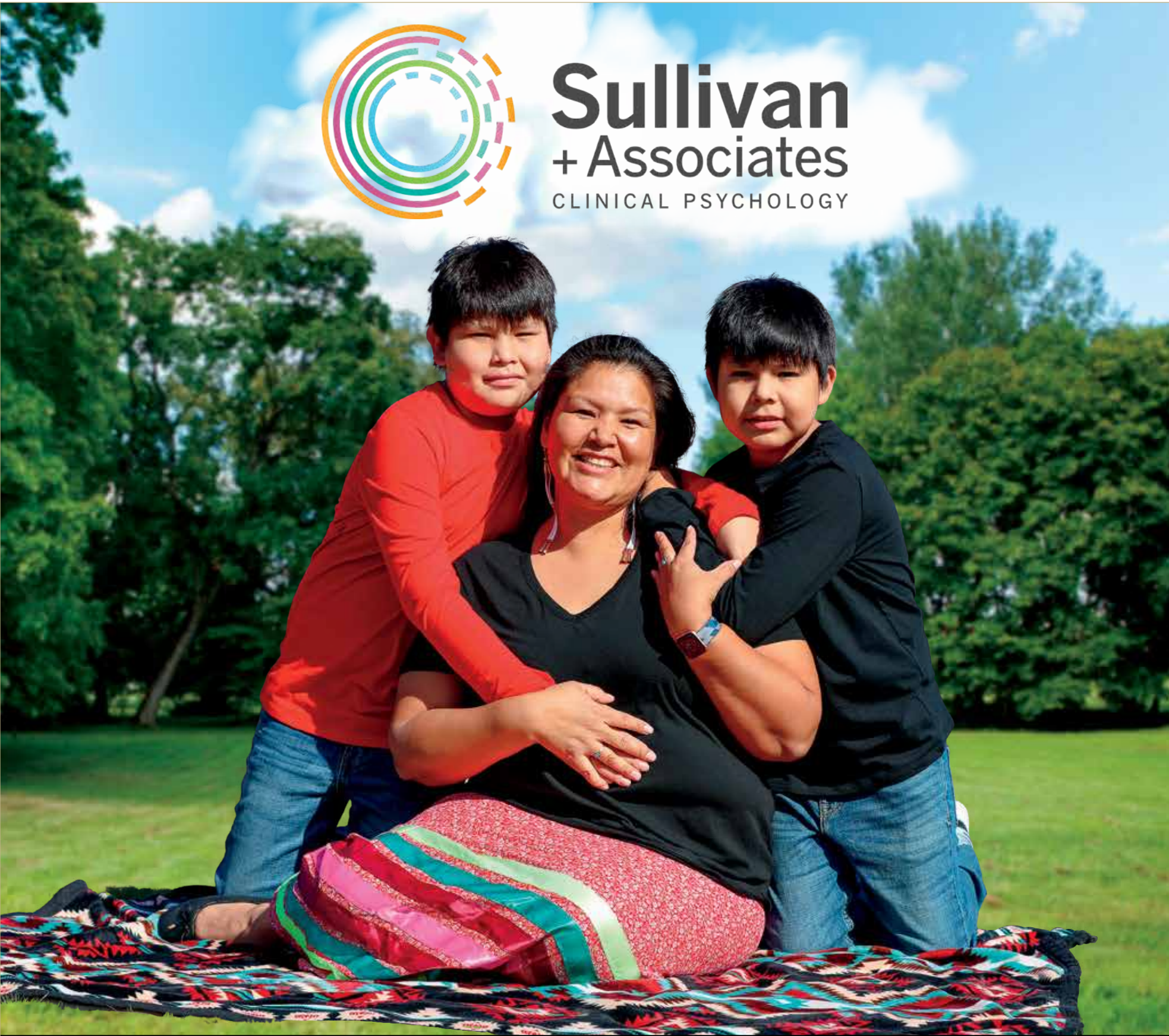
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# Business

# TKG Group acquires Oshtugon Computers



The ThawikayhiGan Group (TKG Group) held a signing ceremony on Jan. 6 to celebrate the acquisition of Oshtugon Computers Inc. from owner Frank Head.

**Rick Garrick**  
Wawatay News

The ThawiKayhiGan Group (TKG Group) held a signing ceremony on Jan. 6 to celebrate the acquisition of Osh-tugon Computers Inc., which has stores in Sioux Lookout and Dryden, from owner Frank Head. TKG Group, which has a head office in Thunder Bay, is owned by Kingfisher Lake, Kasabonika Lake, Kitchenuh-maykoosib Inninuwig, Wape-keka, Wawakapewin and Wun-numin Lake.

“This is our first business

acquisition that will directly service our First Nations,” says Jonathon Mamakwa, president at TKG Group. “This is key in our overall plan in contributing to the development of healthy First Nation communities with vibrant economies that support future generations.”

Mamakwa says the ownership communities have a vision to acquire businesses through the benefits they received from the Wataynikaneyap Power project that is being constructed to connect 17 remote First Nations to the provincial electrical power grid during a web-

stream of the signing ceremony.

"(Oshtugon) is a key acquisition for them because it allows them to get their goods and services that Oshtugon supplies," Mamakwa says. "Oshtugon will operate now as Oshtugon Computers LP."

Mamakwa adds that the acquisition of Oshtugon is what reconciliation looks like.

see ACQUISITION page 14

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NNEC is non-profit educational organization. Under the direction of the Sioux Lookout District Chiefs, NNEC delivers secondary and post secondary education programs and services for First Nations people. NNEC operates Pelican Falls First Nations High School and Centre, Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School, Wahsa Distance Education Centre, and has offices in Lac Seul (head office), Sioux Lookout, and Thunder Bay. NNEC welcome applications for the following positions:

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**SIOUX LOOKOUT ON**

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 On-Call Staff  
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 Elders

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Business

Acquisition will directly service First Nations communities

from page 13

“This is what it looks like, non-Native businesses helping out First Nations (to) get on their feet and to reinvest in themselves,” Mamakwa says. “I think our communities are well on their way in doing that, and it is my hope that they continue to do that and it is also my hope that other communities follow in our path too.”

Archie Wabasse, chair of the TKG Group, says the TKG Group was formed about four years ago.

“The vision of our First Nations is to look into what business opportunities we can take as a group,” Wabasse says. “So that vision, the first step has been realized, which is the acquisition of Oshtugon. We are closing off this deal (with) the owner of Oshtugon and then we are going to be taking over this business. One of the expectations from our chiefs and the communities is to pursue these opportunities that will benefit our communities and our business operation as well. We are not going to be stopping here,

“...we’re going to be continuing on looking at other business opportunities where our communities can benefit from...”

– Archie Wabasse

we’re going to be continuing on looking at other business opportunities where our communities can benefit from. We’ll look into business opportunities

everywhere in the region, wherever we can find that would kind of meet our mandate and our expectations to benefit our First Nations.”

Wabasse says they do not foresee any immediate changes with how Oshtugon operates after the acquisition.

“We’re going to continue operating the way Oshtugon is,” Wabasse says. “We look forward to doing business to the region and to other First Nations.”

Head says he is thankful that some of his best customers have bought the business from him.

“We’re very happy with this and we feel it fits in well with the aspirations of TKG Group,” Head says. “I think it’s going to do very well within that group as a buying partner for the group and for the communities. I think this is a wonderful purchase by them and as long as I’m here we’re going to be striving to make everything work together as it should.”

Oshtugon Computers Inc. was originally incorporated in 1997 as a computer store located in Sioux Lookout that served the region. In partner-

ship with Superior Wireless and tbaytel, Oshtugon became the number one provider of cell phones and accessories and now has three stores, including the Appliance Solutions and Furniture store in Sioux Lookout and a retail store in Dryden. Oshtugon is located online at: [www.oshtugon.com](http://www.oshtugon.com).

The TKG Group’s future plans are to open a distribution centre in Pickle lake and create jobs in each ownership community for procurement of goods and services.

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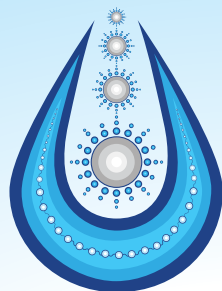
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## Outcast

A cartoon by Lindsay Cote from 2021. It depicts two men in a room. On the left, a man with a large nose and a mustache, wearing a tank top and pants, holds a small rectangular card. On the right, another man with a large nose and a mustache, also in a tank top and pants, looks at the card. The room is filled with many small, floating rectangular cards or papers, some of which have letters and symbols on them. The artist's signature 'LINDSAY COTE' is in the bottom right corner.

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QA#: CO-OP TEM 010 Department: Matawa Health Co-Op Issue Date: June 12, 2019 Revision Date: Oct/4, 2019 Approved by: Frances Wesley

