





submitted photo

# Casey Tait Memorial Klik Cup held at FWFN Arena

submitted photo

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# Sports

## Life in the fast lane for local Indigenous car racing couple

Xavier Kataquapit  
Special to Wawatay News

An Indigenous car racing couple Morgan Meaniss and Brianna Julien are taking their love of ve-hicles on the road. Meaniss is a member of Beaverhouse First Nation and Julien is a member of Matachewan First Nation in Northern Ontario. The couple have been on the northern racing circuit for a few years as Meaniss entered his first car in 2016 and Julien in 2020. Recently they participated in the Kirk-land drag racing event June 23, 24 and 25. They are looking forward to attending this year's Kirkland Lake TNT drag racing event on August 18, 19 and 20 as well as the Bonfield Fall Classic Race event near North Bay in September.

"We like to race because we get to chase the adrenaline every time we go down the track. It is like meditation for us. In the race, you don't worry about anything else for those few seconds. For us, nothing matters during race weekends except for how our cars are performing and we enjoy being together with everyone who we consider our racing family," explained Julien.

The couple take part in a type of car competition known as drag racing which is also referred to as bracket racing. They regularly take part in racing events at the annual Kirkland Lake TNT drag races at the Kirkland Lake Airport. They also travel every year to events



submitted photo

Indigenous Car Racing Couple Brianna Julien, of Matachewan First Nation and Morgan Meaniss, of Beaverhouse First Nation, are racing on the Northern Ontario event circuit. They are pictured here in front of Meaniss's 1977 Chevy Camaro Z28.

at the Bonfield Event Park drag races near North Bay and Circuit au Bosquet drag races near Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec.

"The best part about being an Indigenous racing couple is in showing our communities and First Nations a sport that not a lot of people are aware of. It's exciting every time we see a familiar face in the crowd cheering us on. When you get to share your love for the sport

with your best friend, there is no better feeling," said Meaniss.

The young couple met during middle school in Kirkland Lake and the annual Wabun Tribal Council Youth Gathering and they have been racing together for years. Both of their First Nations are part of the Wabun Tribal Council.

Meaniss, who works full time as a mechanic, maintains and services both their cars includ-

ing his 1977 Chevy Camaro Z28 and her 1985 Chevy Camaro Z28. The 1985 car which Meaniss purchased when he was only 13 years of age, was rebuilt by him for Julien when she decided to race.

They were both introduced to the world of automotive mechanics and car racing through Julien's stepfather the late Chris Lambert. He worked as an entrepreneur shop owner

in the Kirkland Lake area for many years. At one point Meaniss was mentored by Lambert when he was still in high school.

"Chris was a wonderful father to our family and he was an excellent mentor to Morgan as he passed on so much knowledge and his love of automobiles to both of us. He gave us this passion for cars that we both enjoy on the racing circuit today," commented Julien.

Her car now includes a window decal in memory of her late stepfather. Meaniss receives sponsorship from Kirkland Lake Towing and Julien's car is sponsored by FXR Racing.

Meaniss's grandfather, the legendary late Chief Roy Meaniss was a long time advocate and representative of their First Nation community of Beaverhouse FN. The First Nation struggled for over a century on their lands near Kirkland Lake as their people had First Nation heritage but no official First Nation status. They had been overlooked and ignored in the treaties that were created in this part of northern Ontario in the early 1900s. Chief Meaniss was instrumental in keeping his community represented and in working towards gaining official recognition for his people for many years. Although he was not able to see it, his tireless work and dedication to his community culminated with Beaverhouse FN gaining recognition from the government of Canada in April 2022 under Chief Wayne Wabie.

"I am so happy to know that my grandfather as Chief had done so much for our people and I know that he would be very proud of the path we are on with racing in our traditional territory today," commented Morgan Meaniss.

To follow their racing career, just search for their names on Facebook to see their latest racing events and photos.



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# Commentary

## They Told Us The Fires Were Coming



Xavier  
Kataquapit

UNDER THE  
NORTHERN SKY

Well how about that? We have been through a deadly pandemic for more than 3 years that caused a lot of panic, much division, economic disaster, many people died and many more were affected by a runaway virus. We are still recovering from all of the pandemic reality and I have something called long Covid that has to do with inflammation resulting in all kinds of symptoms and the worst being arthritis. Covid is still around and killing people and making many sick. You would think that the experience with this pandemic would be enough for us to deal with yet here we are with our precious summer in northern Ontario hav-ing to stay inside our homes because of forest fire smoke. At one point the toxic smoke was blowing in from out of control forest fires burning in Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes and out west. What's next ... an all out nuclear war?

We have known for a long time that climate change was real and that all of the pollution we hu-mans have been creating for more than a hundred years was going to cause tragic results for Mother Earth. Many Elders I have talked to over the years have been warning about how we have lost respect for our Mother Earth and that we have been polluting lakes, rivers, oceans and the land for the sake of mak-ing money. Many of our scientists have been warning us that if we did not cut back on the use of fossil fuels and pollut-ing our planet that we would be paying the consequences.

A decade ago I remember chatting with people who argued that the problem with our climate change had to do with how things happen in cycles and that it was natural that our world was heating up, that air and water was being polluted and that the world would recover from this. They pointed out that there were some scientists putting forth these ideas. However on closer scrutiny it became obvious that these scientists and experts were working for the big oil and fossil fuel corporations. They had even hired public relations companies to push back on climate change that had been utilized by the tobacco industry in the past to argue that cigarettes and tobacco did not cause cancer. I am still angry about that as I have had family pass away due

to illness brought on by smoking cigarettes.

The argument that this is a natural cycle of change and that the world will correct itself is also a misleading idea. Yes, the world will recover from all the pollution, poisons and contamination we have caused but what many advocates of this argument fail to leave out is that it will happen over the course of hundreds of thousands and millions of years. The more we pollute, the longer the world will take to heal itself and it will not happen any time soon.

How is it that we are so gull-ible to accept all the baloney big corporate interest and right wing governments push on us when it comes to our well being? Why is it that we accept without question the very wealthy billionaires and their government lap dogs who are willing to pollute our Mother Earth and turn our planet into a dangerous reality for future generations?

We are seeing in real time developing disasters in huge storms killing people and turn-ing commu-nities into waste-lands. We are witnessing terrible flooding in many parts of the world that are changing coast lines and destroying towns and cities. In our own country we are watching historic wildfires burn-ing huge tracts of our northern forests and endanger-ing our lives with toxic smoke. The smoke this sum-mer has been the worst I have ever seen in my life and the Elders I talk to say they have never seen such huge fires and smoke.

What will it take for us to really make the changes we have to do to stop our polluting ways and give our Mother Earth the chance to recover from our abuse and disrespect? The fires have been right here at our doorstep, people have had to be evacuated from their homes and communities and our Elders and children are dealing with breathing toxic smoke this summer. We need to get serious about fighting climate change and we can only do that by getting together and pushing back on all those industries that make money with businesses that pollute our air, our waters and are threatening our Mother Earth. We need to get serious about electing parties that can push back on the very wealthy, the industry polluters, resource developers and war mongers.

Somchow the left wing and middle of the road parties in this world have moved steps to the right on a wave of hate and misinformation and we have to be smart enough not to fall for their distractions. Future generations are counting on us.

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## Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief welcomes decision on First Nation policing



submitted photo

Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Reg Niganobe is relieved with the recent Federal Court ruling on a motion filed by First Nation Police Chiefs of Ontario regarding their funding agreements. The Federal Court has ordered funds to flow to the First Nation police services that were without funding since March 31, 2023, and were on the verge of ceasing operations.

## A troublesome fire season reinforces the need for policy



Graham  
Saunders

WEATHER

Last month's Weather column was about how quickly we got from actual flood situations (with some evacuations) to high or even extreme fire danger across the region. This was only part of the story because air quality problems with long-range transport of smoke from wildfires in Alberta and British Columbia began in April.

Local and regional forest fires and resulting smoke in later May compounded the poor air quality problems from western fires across the Northern Ontario region. How many times can the word "com-pounded" be used in the same paragraph? More numerous and some very large fires in Quebec produced smoke that fed west into Ontario, as well as far into the United States and across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe.

There were several occasions in June that during a single day, the source of smoke in Northern Ontario would change from western Canada fires, to fires within this region and then from Quebec. Other days, with different wind directions the order of source areas for smoke were different.

Historically, as most readers know, wildfires in spring are

relatively common in Canada and, given certain weather conditions, can burn into the summer season. This year is an exceptional situation. The wild-fire season began unusually early in Alberta and British Colum-bia. It is unprecedented to have wildfires burning in almost all provinces and territories simultaneously in June and July. The adjective "unprecedented" gets a lot of use these days to describe extreme weather events.

Average June temperatures were well above normal in Northern Ontario. This was most pronounced in the North-west and near Hudson Bay and James Bay. All areas in the region had a very warm start that continued from the end of May and prevailed, generally throughout June.

From June 18 to 21 North-ern Ontario was a special place on the planet. Temperatures were the most different from the normal or expected tem-peratures. Most of these four days featured 30°C and warmer across the entire region. Yes, there were a few exceptions – islands in Lake Nipigon and in Lake Superior and towns on Lake Superior's north shore – where afternoon maximum temperatures only reached 25°C to 28°C.

The most remarkable departure from normal was in Moosonee and other communi-ties next to James Bay (in spite of proximity to water of 3°C). All of Moosonee's daily high temperatures were 30°C or more with the highest at 35°C. This is about 20°C warmer than

normal. Incidentally, the 35°C recorded in Moosonee quali-fied as the highest temperature recorded in Ontario in June.

Just to be clear there were warmer places on the planet in India for example but the warmth was not so drasti-cally different from what was expected.

This heat wave was followed by near-normal temperatures in most areas until later June when warmer temperatures and higher humidity prompted heat warnings to be issued by Environment Canada. In early July, near-normal temperatures established across the region and persisted until mid-July.

The beginning of June was particularly dry with almost no precipitation across the entire region. Drought condi-tions were most pronounced in the Northwest and a zone from Thunder Bay to around Moosonee. A few locations received less than 10% of the normal monthly average rainfall. Rain in the third week in the Thunder Bay area alleviated drought conditions and reduced wildfire risk for a few days.

Some of the weather sys-tems that brought rainfall to the Thunder Bay area became reinforced with moist air from the United States and delivered substantial rainfalls in a cor-ridor from Sault Saint Marie to Sudbury and North Bay. Lesser amounts of rain took place in the Timmins area.

be near-average in mid-July and then above-normal for much of the following weeks. Drier-than-normal conditions are expected for the Far North and north of Lake Superior.

### A Climate Emergency?

There are many warnings that climate change is out of control. These range from record rain-falls, severe storms, persistent smoke in the air we breath and so on.

Recent news is that the aver-age global temperature has been routinely exceeding 17°C since July 1. A new record was being set on a nearly daily basis. This happens to be much warmer the pre-industrial global tem-perature of 13.7°C, the average global temperature in the 1800s and until about 1920. In 2015, the global Paris Agreement goal was to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees above pre-industrial and to try to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

Crossing climate thresholds should flag the need for policy change. Another threshold also crossed in the last couple of weeks is the area burned in Canada from forest fires. The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre reports that nine million hectares (20.6 million acres) of forest have already burned, This is remarkable and scary, given that the season is only about half over. The previ-ous record of 7.8 million hect-ares was set in 1989.

### Outlook for July and early August

Temperatures are forecast to

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# Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Mattagami Elder Gerry Martin shares some of his knowledge about traditional medicines and plants during his July 12 presentation at Fort William Historical Park's Great Rendezvous Celebration.

# Fort William Historical Park's Great Rendezvous Celebration

**Rick Garrick**  
Wawatay News

Fort William Historical Park's Great Rendezvous Celebration featured presentations by Mattagami Elder Gerry Martin, Fort William Elder Sheila DeCorte and Grand Portage Anishinaabe Nation photographer Travis Novitsky on July 12.

Martin says he spoke about some of the different kinds of medicines that were used for tea, food or staining materials.

"But mostly about food and how to preserve it, make teas," Martin says, noting that people enjoyed smelling the sweetgrass he had picked earlier that morning. "That's aromatherapy and I try to teach it's not just physical medicines, but there's spiritual medicines — aromatherapy

helps with that and makes you feel good. It can snap you out of your funk ... when you smell that sweetgrass. It changes your mindset very quickly.”

Martin says he continues to gather and teach about the traditional medicines to keep the knowledge current and fresh in the minds of people.

“If they had to go out there and get themselves (some medicine) and make a tea for a headache, acetylsalicylic acid, they wouldn’t know where to start,” Martin says. “Well, try the willow (or) birch tree.”

Martin says he finds that the tourists are very curious about the traditional medicines.

“I think a lot of them are glad the knowledge is still out here, embedded in some of us,” Martin says. “There’s still some

of us who know some of it, not all of it. Forts like this, they were the place you could come and bring your stuff and trade for European goods, clothing, blankets. The metals were good, but they were heavy, if you tipped your canoe you'd lose it unless you tied it to something. And if a part broke off you'd have to bring it to the fort, which might be a long ways away to get a part."

Martin says he shared some of his traditional knowledge with Indigenous staff at Fort William Historical Park about 20 years ago.

"They didn't have this in the fort, and then they started," Martin says. "I was really pleased that they did their own research, and they made bags of herb tea that they sell up at the

DeCorte spoke about some of her teachings about water and the For the Love of the Rivers Water Walks she does along four rivers in Thunder Bay during her Keepers of the Water presentation.

“(I was) talking a little bit about the importance of protecting and care for the water and water ceremonies, and what they can do, even if they’re not a Water Walker, to bring healing to the water,” DeCorte says. “So I shared tips on what they can do and that is just talking to the water. Any time they are near a body of water, they could just speak to the water, tell the water that they love her and respect her and give thanks.”

DeCorte plans to do a two-day Water Walk along the

Kaministiquia River, which flows past Fort William Historical Park, on July 29 and 30 after doing Water Walks along McVicar Creek on May 7, McIntyre River on June 4 and Neebing River on July 2.

Novitsky, who delivered a presentation on night sky photography, says he began doing photography in high school after seeing his father taking images of lightning, the Northern Lights and the Milky Way with his film camera.

"I would tag along with him even when I was eight, nine years old," Novitsky says. "I think just going with him and sitting out there and waiting for him and getting at a young age this appreciation of just sitting there for a while and looking at the stars is what did it."

Novitsky, who usually uses a full frame digital camera with a 14 mm lens for his night sky photography, says the personal fulfilment from creating images of the night sky is what keeps him going.

"It's become the number one thing that I like to do that kind of takes the stress of everything else away," Novitsky says. "And this too, sharing it with people, and especially since doing the (PBS documentary *Northern Nights, Starry Skies*) and working with Carl (Gowboy), getting to know more of the Indigenous (star knowledge). He's in his 80s now and doesn't travel a whole lot but he and I have done a couple of programs together."



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Fort William Historical Park (FWHP) general manager Patrick Morash highlighted free admission for Indigenous people during the launch of FWHP's Great Rendezvous Celebration and new branding featuring a birch bark canoe on June 29.



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

A group of Fort William Historical Park (FWHP) staff participated in the launch of FWHP's Great Rendezvous Celebration and new branding featuring a birch bark canoe on June 29.

FWHP offers free admission to Indigenous people

**Rick Garrick**  
Wawatay News

Fort William Historical Park (FWHP) general manager Patrick Morash announced free admission for Indigenous people during the launch of FWHP's Great Rendezvous Celebration and new branding featuring a birch bark canoe on June 29.

"In recognition of the significant contribution of Indigenous culture and heritage to the work we do here, admission throughout the year will be free to Indigenous people, not only to Rendezvous but to the fort throughout the year," Morash says. "Also to encourage return visits this year, because we want to see people coming back not

just for one day at Rendezvous but two or three or four or five days or all nine days, we're offering a \$50 individual pass for people so they come back throughout the year, not just for Rendezvous but throughout the year at the fort, and a \$90 (annual) family pass. We wanted to make it affordable for people from Thunder Bay and the region to come and experience the fort if they haven't seen it for a while."

More than 200 re-enactors from across North America were scheduled to recreate the annual summer gathering held at Fort William over 200 years ago when it was the inland headquarters of the North West Company during the Great Rendezvous Re-enactment from

July 13-16.  
 “We are delighted to present the Great Rendezvous as part of our 50th anniversary,” Morash says. “We are grateful to the numerous partners, alumni and volunteers, who are helping to support this amazing event. We look forward to seeing the community enjoy this great opportunity to learn more about fur trade history and the many different cultures represented at Fort William.”  
 Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, was also scheduled to present the James Bartleman Indigenous Youth Creative Writing Awards, on July 15 during the Rendezvous.  
 “She will spend the day with us for Rendezvous,” Morash

says. “We will have more than 200 re-enactors camped around the site portraying what life was like during the heyday of Rendezvous at Fort William.”

Morash says the birch bark canoe featured in FWHP’s new branding and logo is central to everything about the fur trade.

“The birch bark canoe was the central vehicle to the fur trade, without the canoe the fur trade really couldn’t exist,” Morash says. “The canoe is an Indigenous creation, the support of Indigenous people throughout the fur trade was absolutely critical whether it was transportation in the way of the canoe or shelter in the way of wigwams or food in the way of bannock and dried fruits and meat, the support and partner-

ship with Indigenous people was really important. The other thing we like with the canoe and water is it implies a sense of action and motion and adventure, and those are things that are really important historically but they're also important today."

Morash says FWHP will also be hosting Anishinaabe Keeshigun on Aug. 19-20.

"Keeshigun is for us a celebration of First Nation culture and heritage," Morash says. "The (Anishinabe) were absolutely critical to the fur trade at the time, they're critical to us today and we feel that it is important to have a weekend that focuses on First Nation culture and heritage, and that will include a powwow, it will

include dancing, drumming, no shortage of food, lots of colour, lots of regalia. It's an opportunity for us to emphasize just how important First Nations culture is to the park today and historically."

The Lieutenant Governor was also scheduled to participate in the Great Rendezvous Celebration's Grand Arrival on July 15 and to unveil a plaque gifted to FWHP by the National History Committee of the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering recognizing David Thompson's surveying and mapping of northwestern North America (1790-1814).

# Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
A group of Indigenous Action Council members, Sheridan College furniture students and Thunder Bay Public Library staff celebrated the new custom made shelves and tables during the unveiling ceremony in the Waverley Library's Indigenous Knowledge Centre.



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
Perry Perreault, a member of the Indigenous Action Council, speaks about how the collaborative design process for the new custom made shelves and tables in the Waverley Library's Indigenous Knowledge Centre inspired him to enrol into a carpentry program during the unveiling ceremony.



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
Beverly Sabourin, a member of the Indigenous Action Council, speaks about how she sees herself in every little part of the new custom made shelves and tables during their unveiling ceremony in the Waverley Library's Indigenous Knowledge Centre.

## Waverley Library upgrades Indigenous Knowledge Centre

Rick Garrick  
Wawatay News

The Thunder Bay Public Library's recently unveiled custom made shelves and tables in the Waverley Library's Indigenous Knowledge Centre were created through a collaborative process between the library's Indigenous Action Council and a group of Sheridan College furniture students.

"Lots of people have to work together to make things like this happen, but the real magic starts when everybody gets out of the way of the students and the community members and lets them do their thing," says Connie Chisholm, a furniture maker, teacher at Sheridan Col-

lege and leader at Codesign. "And that's at the heart of community co-design projects is bringing students and community together and letting them share, letting them listen, letting them learn, and the work that comes out of that you can't get it any other way, it's the most amazing work."

Perry Perreault, a member of the Indigenous Action Council, says the students incorporated some of the important aspects developed during the collaborative process to complete the project.

"I'm an artist myself, I've just got into a carpentry program, thank you very much for inspiring me," Perreault says. "The creative aspects with the

book shelves in the back were unique, they would only fit here, that street kind of cut off the building so it wasn't entirely rectangular anymore — it was a unique kind of angle and it had to be custom built."

Perreault says the tables had some of the design aspects he suggested incorporated in them.

"I mentioned the Smithsonian, the (National Museum of the American Indian) in Washington, D.C., how things are gradual curves and not everything is rectangular any more," Perreault says. "All the curvature lines, the split circle (tables) in the back, the children's table, the inlays are beautiful. We talked about the history about people who were metallur-

gists, they used to mine copper here hundreds of years ago, the (Anishinabe) people, and they would lay (the copper) in their pipes and they would adorn them in jewellery and other things."

Fort William Elder Sheila DeCorte, a member of the Indigenous Action Council who did the opening ceremony for the unveiling, says it was an honour to be part of the project and to work with the students and share knowledge and teachings as they went out on the land to get ideas.

"They heard the teachings that were shared and they incorporated it into this beautiful furniture," DeCorte says. "I'm honoured that they listened,

they heard and they put it to work."

DeCorte says the students were so interested in learning about the Indigenous culture during the project.

"It really demonstrated to me that you are serious about reconciliation," DeCorte says. "You demonstrated that by coming and listening and following through on what we were asking you to create."

Simon Ford, acting head of the furniture studio at Sheridan College's Craft and Design program, says the project enabled the students to develop their collaboration skills.

"And it enables them to consider design that serves others and asks them to put aside the

ego that usually comes along with working in the design industry," Ford says. "It also asks them to critically question issues of social injustices, that's a really valuable thing for students to do in the third year of the program."

Beverly Sabourin, a member of the Indigenous Action Council, says they all did an amazing job on the project.

"When I walk in here now, I see me in every little part of those furniture and I think all of us see ourselves in the furniture and I think the Indigenous community who come into this library will also see themselves in the library," Sabourin says.



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# Community

# Pikangikum mourns another loss due to a house fire

**Rick Garrick**  
Wawatay News

Pikangikum lost another citizen to a house fire on July 4 after three citizens were lost in a house fire on Feb. 22 in the community of about 2,300. One adult was confirmed deceased and 11 others, including children, were safe after the July 4 house fire.

"This is another tragedy — the fast-action response from all of those involved saved many lives, but sadly, we have lost another community (citizen)," says Pikangikum Chief Shirley Lynne Keeper. "This continues to affect us greatly, impacting every one of us. We appreciate the support of us IFNA (Independent First Nations Alliance) who has arrived in community and been working with government agencies to pursue sustainable funding for our community responders and to ensure supports are in place so we can prevent experiencing such loss."

The July 4 house fire was reported to police at about 7:30 a.m. and Ontario Provincial Police were on the scene within minutes. They used fire extinguishers from the exterior to buy time for the fire response, with the Pikangikum Peacekeepers and firefighters arriving

and containing the fire within 30 minutes with the structure remaining fully intact. The house fire was extinguished by 9:30 a.m.

“Since the last fatal house fire, we have continued to work in partnership with the community, Indigenous Services Canada, the Ontario Office of the Fire Marshal, the Indigenous Fire Marshal Service and the OPP to improve fire safety and response including ongoing smoke alarm installations,” says Nick Rhone, IFNA integrated emergency services director and regional fire rescue chief.

The investigation into the July 4 house fire was ongoing as of press time, with more information to be released as it becomes available.

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum had previously called for action from the federal and provincial governments after the three citizens died in the Feb. 22 house fire.

"It is outrageous that we must plead with our treaty partners every time an innocent life is lost," Achneepineskum said after the Feb. 22 house fire. "Nice words are said, but very little is done. We do not need condolences or sympathy from the governments of Ontario and Canada. We need action. Imme-

diately. Before any more lives are lost."

Pikangikum previously lost a family of nine in a house fire in March 2016.

“Our community is devastated to have yet another loss due to a horrific house fire,” Keeper said after the Feb. 22 house fire. “It was almost seven years ago that we lost a family to a fire in our community. We should not be experiencing this again. We have never felt so hopeless. Our ability to fight structural fires has not improved since 2016. Our fire trucks were frozen because we don’t have an adequate building to keep them warm.”

Achneepineskum said after the Feb. 22 house fire that the number of individuals who have perished in house fires across Nishnawbe Aski Nation in the last decade is “very disturbing.” A total of 11 children and seven adults have lost their lives in house fires in Pikangikum in 2016, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug in 2019, Sandy Lake in 2022 and Peawanuck in 2023.

"Many of them are children — it's time now that we assess the services or the lack of fire prevention and also fire responses that we have within our First Nations," Achneep-



creenshot

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum, pictured at a Chiefs Special Assembly in 2021, called for action from the provincial and federal governments following the loss of three Pikangikum citizens in a house fire on Feb. 22.

ineskum said after the Feb. 22 house fire. "We're lacking the resources and infrastructure to

protect ourselves from house fires and also to fight a fire when it does occur.”

Achneepineskum said after the Feb. 22 house fire that the government needs to work with

First Nations to ensure they have a fire truck and a fire station that is up to standard.



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We are well into the new fiscal year and we hope that everyone has been able to spend some time participating in activities that feed your mind, spirit and soul all of the things that make you smile.

We would like to share for those who may not be aware, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Choose Life Program began in April 2017. Choose Life is intended for youth, 18 and under, at risk of suicide by providing funding to access mental health professionals or services, as well as address well-being through land-based programing and cultural activities. The funding streams from Indigenous Services Canada (FNIHB) through the Jordan's Principle Child First Initiative.

NAN annually submits a Choose Life Application for funding with ISC to carry out the necessary tasks to support NAN communities and organizations with their Choose Life funding requests, to navigate the choose life specialized processes and to promote mental health training and networking opportunities for Choose Life workers and youth. The Annual Report for this funding is due 120 days after March 31st.

Choose Life responds to the Seven Youth Inquest Jury Recommendations #36 (suicide prevention) and #81 (harm reduction) directed at improving accountability, safety, and education outcomes for all NAN students.



Community Visit for Application and Reporting Support in Sachigo Lake

Two evaluations have been completed to review the program and its affects on NAN youth. Copies of these evaluations were distributed in 2021 and can be found on the NAN webpage: [nan.ca/resources/choose-life/](http://nan.ca/resources/choose-life/). Findings suggest that there is an ongoing support and need for Choose Life programing to continue.

Choose Life is also a part of the AIP with the Government of Canada on compensation and long-term reform of First Nation Child and Family services. These discussions have led to include a provision for the long-term sustainability of the Choose Life program. A Terms of Reference had been developed and were officially signed at the first Annual General Meeting in Ottawa on September 30, 2022. The terms of reference are to prepare and guide the important and necessary work to continue to address unmet mental health needs of children and youth in First Nation communities.

Over the past year, the Choose Life Program was thankful to be able to return to supporting Community Choose Life Coordinators in person with training on ISC's expectations that involve Community specific annual reporting and the application of funding requests from individual Communities within our 49 NAN Territories. The team is prepared and willing to return once again to traveling into Communities to deliver this support upon request.

We are looking forward to hosting our 2nd Annual General Meeting on August 29-31st 2023. The NAN Choose Life Team will be hosting the AGM at the Best Western Nor'Wester Hotel and Conference Centre. We are looking forward to coming together with our NAN Choose Life Community Coordinators along with our youth and special guests. We are excited to share space during this time to acknowledge and empower the youth, celebrate Community successes, bring confidence, and provide tools and tips for the Youth to take with them as we come to a close on August 31.

Please stay tuned for our SAVE THE DATE that will be sent to our Community Choose Life Coordinators and their youth guest.

I would like to recognize the Choose Life Program Team that works so hard to ensure that the NAN Community Children, Youth and Families are receiving the supports they are requiring to continue to have this essential program available and accessible for youth at risk in each Community.

Our Choose Life Program here at NAN holds monthly Networking calls on a virtual platform. These meetings have been very well attended and we welcome all Choose Life Coordinators to join. Each call is specific to a theme and all are welcome to provide updates, share successes, challenges or to say hello to peers and friendships that have been made through our Choose Life Coordinator's contact information to be included in these calls is Bibianne Charles: [bcharles@nan.ca](mailto:bcharles@nan.ca).

Our NAN Choose Life team is available, through meetings in Thunder Bay and community visits, to provide training for the Choose Life application and reporting process and offer support for backlogged reporting. If this is something that your Community Coordinators would benefit from support with, please contact our Choose Life Allan Turtle : [aturtle@nan.ca](mailto:aturtle@nan.ca).

Wishing everyone a safe and healthy summer season! We look forward to continuing to build our relationships with Community Members, providing support and visiting in person.

Please reach out to me at anytime.  
Take care and Miigwetch,

**Marla Murray**  
Choose Life Program Manager  
[mmurray@nan.ca](mailto:mmurray@nan.ca)

Eligibility is under 18 years of age and one of the following;

- 1 The child is registered or eligible to be registered under the Indian Act, as amended from time to time;
- 2 The child has one parent/guardian who is registered or eligible to be registered under the Indian Act;
- 3 The child is recognized by their Nation for the purposes of Jordan's Principle; or
- 4 The child is ordinarily a resident on reserve.

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VISIT [canada.ca/jordans-principle](http://canada.ca/jordans-principle) .  
NEED HELP? Contact your Community Worker or Tribal Council Coordinator for assistance or call the number above.



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NAN has a contact list and can assist communities and Tribal Councils to apply for their own workers. Email [jordansprinciple@nan.ca](mailto:jordansprinciple@nan.ca)



JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

Jordan River Anderson was a member of Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba and was born with complex medical needs.

Jordan was able to leave the hospital when he was 2. However, the federal and provincial governments could not agree on who should pay for his home-based care.

Jordan stayed in the hospital until he passed at the age of 5.

The House of Commons passed Jordan's Principle in his memory and it is now a legal obligation so First Nations children living in Canada can access the products, services and supports they need, when they need them. Funding can help with a wide range of health, social and educational needs, including the unique needs that First Nations children and youth have.









Culture

Lyons Dance Troupe honoured at FWFN Powwow

Rick Garrick  
Wawatay News

The Lyons Dance Troupe was honoured with a special ceremony on July 1 at the Fort William First Nation Annual Summer Powwow 2023, held June 30-July 2 on Anemki Wajiw (Mt. McKay).

“The special was to honour all the people that participated in the Lyons Dance Troupe,” says Kathy Lyons, one of the dancers with the Lyons Dance Troupe and daughter of the late Elder Richard Lyons. “Many of them are here, many of them have passed on to the spirit world but they’ve influenced a lot of people who got into dancing and cultural ways.”

Lyons says the special ceremony, which was held on the evening of July 1, included the different categories of dancers.

“We wanted to include everybody, all categories, just to recognize all the different styles,” Lyons says.

Lyons says the Lyons Dance Troupe included her brother and nieces and nephews as well as people from the surrounding area.

“They would gather a group of dancers, take them to the schools and do demonstrations and teachings and activities with the children,” Lyons says. “It was part of cross-cultural education and promoting more understanding about First Nations and culture. It’s really gratifying to see so many dancers and so many drums nowa-



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
Emcee James Mishquart speaks during the special ceremony to honour the Lyons Dance Troupe.

days because when I was a kid when we started going around with the Dance Troupe there was really nothing happening in this area. Now there’s that resurgence that’s going on and that resurgence just keeps getting stronger and stronger as the years go along.”

Dave Simard, one of the dancers with the Lyons Dance Troupe, says he was fortunate that culture was part of his education when he was growing up.

“It was really easy for me to put that together with my education with dancing, singing,” Simard says. “That’s how I

learned to become a singer and a dancer and a storyteller.”

Simard says many of the schools and organizations the Lyons Dance Troupe visited were not familiar with First Nations culture or stories.

“When we walked into a lot of these places they’d never heard of a drum group before, they’d never seen dancers before,” Simard says. “So for a lot of them this was a very first experience and it was a really great moment to be involved with a dance group like that. What we were doing was showcasing the best of the dancers,



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
The Lyons Dance Troupe was honoured with a special ceremony on July 1 at the Fort William First Nation Annual Summer Pow Wow 2023 on Anemki Wajiw (Mt. McKay).

demonstrating how to be a good role model, how to be a good person. I’m always grateful for the opportunity to teach, I’m always grateful for the opportunity to learn and that’s exactly what the Lyons Dance Troupe did for many of the First Nations throughout the country.”

James Mishquart, emcee at the Fort William First Nation Annual Summer Pow Wow 2023, says he is the last remaining member of the original Thunder Bay Singers.

“I was just a young man at the time and I met so many

wonderful people in my travels and expanded my knowledge in terms of powwow protocol and traditions,” Mishquart says, noting that he began emceeing powwows after an emcee did not show up at a powwow. “Because I had some experience, I started announcing about 40 years ago. It’s been quite the journey.”

Mishquart says a lot of the singers he grew up with have passed on to the spirit world.

“It was a different crowd, things were a little bit different, there weren’t too many bustle dancers up here at the

time, there were a lot of floral and velvet beadwork outfits, jingle dresses, a lot of traditional drums,” Mishquart says. “At the time there was only the one eagle staff, there weren’t many people blowing whistles at the time, if anybody was it was usually older men and they were veterans. It’s been quite the journey but a good one — it’s nice to see it alive and that was the vision Richard Lyons had. It has flourished along the North Shore (of Lake Superior) and it’s even gone inland to the northern remote communities.”



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# Arts & Entertainment

## Artists discuss their inspirations at NAN conference



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
Ginoogaming's Peter Wesley displays one of his artworks at a recent Nishnawbe Aski Nation conference in Thunder Bay.

Rick Garrick  
Wawatay News

First Nation artists Peter Wesley and Joseph Lane recently spoke about their artwork at their artist tables during a Nishnawbe Aski Nation conference in Thunder Bay.

Wesley, a Ginoogaming citizen who creates artwork for his parents' business, Wolf Tracks, says he started doing his own artwork on sweaters and t-shirts in late 2022.

"It's just basically animals and powwow dancers and flowers," Wesley says, noting that he usually sketches his designs for the sweaters and t-shirts. "I've been doing art all my life but

basically just started putting them on sweaters late last year. I was doing what (my parents) wanted me to do and I just decided to do the stuff I wanted to do."

Wesley says his parents, who are artists as well, were role models for him.

"I just started doing art when I saw them doing it," Wesley says. "I started as a little kid and just did it basically all my life."

Wesley says his own line of artwork is "picking up pretty fast."

"I'm always coming up with new designs, trying out new different things," Wesley says. "We're going to have maybe 40 or 50 different designs. We do



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News  
Couchiching's Joseph Lane displays one of his artworks.

a design that will fit the sweater first and just go from there, figure out the colours and all that."

Wesley says he sells his artwork from his parents business as well as at conferences and powwows.

"It's going pretty good," Wesley says. "They're pretty encouraging so that's also a plus."

Lane, a Couchiching citizen, says he does prints of his artwork as well as t-shirts.

"My art is inspired by Woodland but has a more modern twist on it," Lane says. "I was never traditionally taught because I was an urban youth, so as I went on my art journey I started looking at other peoples work, like Darryl Big George, Norval Morrisseau — I just took a lot of inspiration from their work."

Lane says he started doing his artwork about a year ago.

"It was really through COVID-19, and it was a way

for me to bring out a lot of both the positive and negative emotions that I was having and put it into my artwork and make something beautiful out of it instead of holding it in," Lane says.

Lane says he uses a computer program to create his artwork and then he uses a Cricut machine to print his artwork on the t-shirts.

"I love it, it's very user friendly," Lane says. "I can use it from my iPad so I don't have to get another computer. It's kind of difficult to get used to using it but once you do a couple of them they're pretty fast."

Lane says his current goal is to pursue postsecondary studies to be a teacher, noting that he would love to be an art teacher in the future.

"I've always doodled throughout childhood," Lane says. "I went to school for art as


well (at) the Visual College of Art (and Design) in Vancouver. I majored in Rigging for 3D (Modelling) Animation — it is very different than the art style I do now but it gave me a lot of the knowledge to jump straight into digital work."

Lane says his equipment allows him to change his artwork.

"So if somebody likes one of my pieces like the moose there and I need to change the colour, I can go back in and easily change the colour without changing the image," Lane says.


Lane says he currently sells his artwork on his Sabe Studios Facebook page, but he is doing an art program where he's learning how to make his own website.

"So hopefully by the end of the month I'll have my own website up," Lane says. "And I try to get out as much as I can to the local markets."



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SCAN ME

Commentary



**Xavier  
Kataquapit**  
  
UNDER THE  
NORTHERN SKY

It is always difficult to figure out what is happening with major issues in government, politics and how people are affected. A recent issue I have been watching develop really makes me wonder how bright our leaders in government are. The federal government, which has actually been doing a fairly good job in dealing with Indigenous people in this country, really went off the rails when they decided it was a good idea to push through legislation

regarding the Metis Government Recognition and Self Government Agreement. The only thing the government did with this move was to create division and conflict between people. More importantly the government also made this move without any consultation or participation of Indigenous leaders, organizations and peoples. The Chiefs of Wabun Tribal Council dealt with this negative effort by the government by taking them to court as their only means to stop this questionable and non inclusive legislation. The tribal council is supported in their arguments with other First Nations and Tribal Councils including Robinson-Huron Waawiindamaagewin, Grand Council Treaty #3, Temagami First Nation, Nish-

nawbe Aski Nation and the Association of Manitoba Chiefs. During their recent Chiefs Assembly session, the Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Assembly which represents 39 First Nations in the Ontario Great Lakes region passed a resolution that also rejected the Metis Self Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement between the Metis Nation of Ontario and Canada in its current form. What on earth is the federal government thinking? After all the terror of colonization, residential schools, the Sixties scoop and keeping my people marginalized and poverty stricken for hundreds of years, the government decides to pass legislation that affects Indigenous treaties without any consultation with us and without our participa-

tion. It seems that perhaps saner heads might be prevailing as this issue of this draconian legislation is brewing but as far as I know there has not been a meeting of minds in terms yet of pausing legislation and satisfying First Nation leaders, Chiefs, Councils and peoples so that their voice is heard and concerns met. As I have pointed out, this government has in my experience done well on many levels in dealing with Indigenous peoples, treaties and our rights although there are still many issues that must be dealt with in terms of treaty negotiations and righting the wrongs of a few hundred years of colonization. This is not a conservative government that has stomped on our rights and created con-

flict. We also have the benefit of a minority government on the federal level which helps in making sure that the Indigenous friendly New Democratic Party can hold the federal government to task. On a more positive view point it has been announced that a ten billion dollar settlement agreed to by the federal and Ontario provincial government is planned to meet the claim by the Chiefs of the Robinson Huron Treaty Litigation Fund. This is to meet the claims of 21 Robinson Huron First Nations concerning unpaid annuities for using Indigenous lands historically. For more than a hundred years as set out in an historical treaty with Robinson Huron First Nations, their members were paid annual amounts per

person of only four dollars. Incredibly that amount has not increased in so many years although governments, resource extraction corporations and other business have seen billions in wealth attained though initiatives on Indigenous lands. Here is an example of a fair meeting of minds and meaningful compensation to right past wrongs. I and many more Indigenous people across the country salute the federal and provincial government for settling this injustice in a good way. The last thing we need in this country is more division and more conflict. On the other hand consulting with Indigenous leadership and peoples will create an environment of trust and lead to financial growth.

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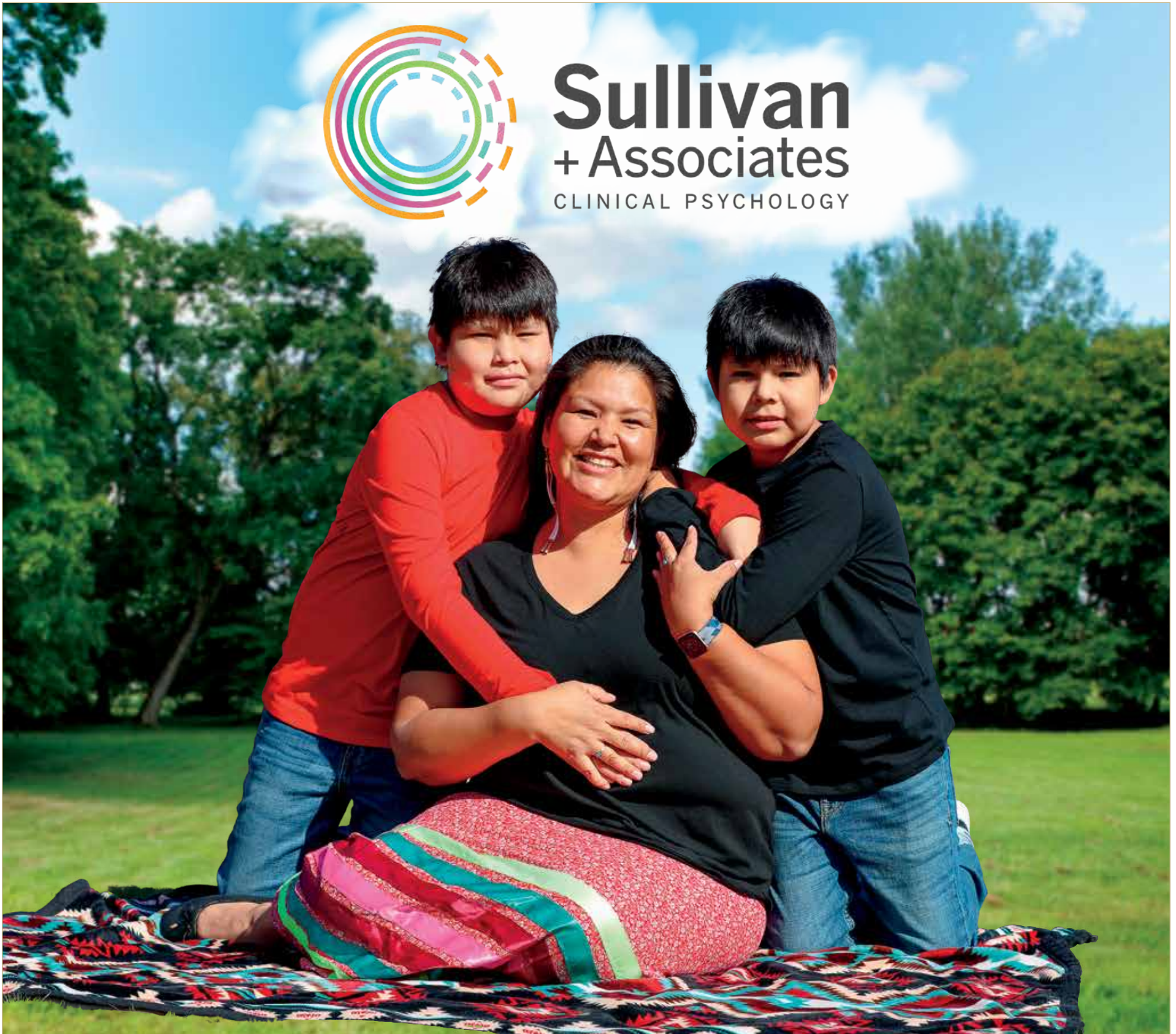
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**Fax: (807) 683-7167**

**Outcast**  
IM EXCITED. YOU WENT OUT AND TRADED MY OLD CAR FOR SOMETHING MORE AFFORDABLE

WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE, GO OUT AND CHECK IT OUT

**Old Guys**  
© Lindsay Cote 2021  
GYM  
walk on it! I am trying. But It keeps bucking me off

**Old Guys**  
© Lindsay Cote 2021  
Hate it when my knee goes out

**Old Guys**  
© Lindsay Cote 2021  
You've finally got to the point in your life where you need head to toe sunblock block

**Outcast**  
OK. I THINK I GOT THIS FAN MODIFIED

WHIRRRRR!

YEAH, MAYBE I'LL TURN IT BACK A NOTCH OR TWO

**Outcast**  
I WISH I WAS MORE LIKE YOU

YOU MEAN SMART AND GOOD LOOKING

NO. I MEAN SOMEONE WHO'S TOTALLY OBVIOUS TO WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND ME

No, a Hawaiian hoola skirt doesn't qualify you as a grass dancer

ok already, I'll buy a flippin air conditioner

Think you're going to need a bigger can of bug dope

# DEEPLY VALUED RELATIONSHIPS

We want every resident of Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan and Moosonee/Moose Factory to know:

- we understand our duties as visitors where we work;
- we remain committed to being responsible and respectful, honouring our hosts; and,
- we will always work to ensure no harm comes to your lands and waters.

As we look ahead to two decades of post-closure monitoring, rest assured that our top priorities will continue to be the health and safety of the community, our personnel, and the environment.