

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Chance Paavola, Paavola's son, says he escaped the fire in a boat along with his dog, but about three-quarters

"We're aware that community members were forced to carry out an emergency evacuation without the support of emergency services, and based on information currently available, all community members known to have been in the community at the time have been accounted for," Debassige says. "In the spirit of Ngo Dwe Waan-



“Communities across northern Ontario are in crisis as close to 200 wildfires rage, threatening to take away their homes,” Mamakwa says. “For the people living in Namaygoosisagun First Nation, this is no longer just a threat, but a lived reality as all the houses in the community have burnt to the ground. Today, it’s not about what

"It took the province nearly two weeks to act during the flooding in Ottawa," Bourgouin says. "We cannot afford that kind of delay while one northern community, Collins First

"In the last few days, the number of water bombers and helicopters deployed and operating has risen to over 80, and an additional 39 aircraft are ready to be deployed to the highest needs area," Ford says. "I want to acknowledge the incredible support we're already receiving from the governments of Alberta and the Yukon, who have crews on the ground right now supporting our efforts. On Wednesday, we also requested that the federal government, including the Canadian Armed Forces, be prepared to rapidly deploy federal resources to support the evacuations taking place now and any that may become necessary. Yesterday we received confirmation from the federal minister of emergency management that the federal government is ready to support as necessary."

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Community

Elder Louis Bird passes

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The late Peawanuck Elder Louis Bird (Pennishish), who passed on June 11, was recognized for his prolific storytelling and connection to the land by the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) executive council.

“Louis Pennishish was a prolific storyteller, and his deep connection to the land was reflected in the profound experiences of traditional life in the James Bay lowlands that he freely shared,” states the NAN executive council in a June 11 press release. “He called his stories ‘textbooks’ that cover everything needed to live on the land that has always sustained us, including spirituality and a system of ethics.”

NAN states that Bird, who was born in 1934, served as the chief of Weenusk First Nation in the 1970s, authored several books about the life and culture of the Omushkego people and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Manitoba.

NAN adds that Bird is well known for his 2007 book *The Spirit Lives in the Mind: Omushkego Stories, Lives and Dreams*, which contained the oral tradition of sharing teachings and stories of the people of the western lowlands of

Hudson and James Bay. He also contributed recordings to the Omushkigo Oral History Project, which has preserved Omushkigo history in the language to preserve their heritage for future generations.

“He is fondly remembered as a respected and approachable leader who dedicated his life to preserving and sharing the history, culture, language and treaty knowledge of our people,” the NAN executive council states. “He was deeply committed to protecting Indigenous traditions and spent much of his life gathering teachings and learning from the Elders.”

The Manitoba Museum also expressed their sincere condolences to Bird's family, and all who knew him, in a posting on its website.

"As a highly respected Ininiwi (Omushkego Cree) Elder, knowledge holder, educator and storyteller, Louis Bird was often called upon by institutions like ours to help with developing content for exhibits and programming," the posting states. "Thanks to a longstanding friendship with former curator of cultural anthropology, Dr. Maureen Matthews, he was willing to share stories of the first ships to arrive in Hudson Bay as part of our Nonsuch Gallery renewal in 2018. We are so honoured that his words



The late Peawanuck Elder Louis Bird shares a story with a group of children at the Toronto Storytelling Festival in 2016.

continue to reach our visitors through this exhibit and educational programming, as part of his lasting legacy at the Manitoba Museum. His voice and words remind us to pause, listen and reflect on the stories of our shared history on this land. It was a privilege to know and work with Elder Bird – he will

be deeply missed.”

Bird, who had shared his stories over the years at the Toronto Storytelling Festival, spoke about how he remembered sitting on his grandmother's lap while listening to her tell legends and other stories during an interview with Wawatay News in 2013 at the Toronto

Storytelling Festival.

“Those were good stories that I heard when I was young,” Bird said in 2013. “All these (stories), I memorized them because I heard them many times. I didn’t know what they were — I thought they were good for a laugh, but these things were teachings. It’s just

like reading a different text each night, a different subject, a different book.”

Bird also shared how he had eventually become interested in learning more about the legends and stories his grandmother told him.

“She told me that if I (want to) tell the legend, I have to train myself to listen good just to be able to memorize the stories,” Bird said in 2013. “She said that’s how you’re going to learn how to tell the story — you could carry on if you want. So I began.”

Bird also shared how he had visited other Elders in his community to memorize and gather their stories as well as those told by his grandmother.

"I trained myself to be a good memorizer," Bird said in 2013. "The idea is to save those stories, not to let them die with the Elders. That was my interest."

Two Wawatay News stories about Bird sharing his stories at the Toronto Storytelling Festival are posted online at: wawataynews.ca/environment/peawanuk-elder-looking-share-more-omushkego-stories and www.wawataynews.ca/arts-entertainment/peawanuk's-louis-bird-shares-stories-toronto-festival.

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Thank You, Airlines!

**Your fast, courteous delivery of Wawatay News
to our northern communities is appreciated.**



Community



Xavier Kataquapit/Special to Wawatay News

TOP: M&B Racing were one of many racing teams that took part in the Kirkland Lake TNT Drag Races which was held July 17 to 19. From left to right there is Alexa Summers, Matt Summers (and their Ben) Lukas Ireland, Alain Siebert, Morgan Meaniss, Brianna Julien, Gail Aitchison and Aaron Murney.

ABOVE: Morgan Meaniss, a member of Beaverhouse First Nation, drove his 1977 Chevrolet Camaro Z28. RIGHT: Volunteer organizers worked hard to put together the Kirkland Lake TNT Drag Races which was held July 17 to 19 at the Kirkland Lake airport. Pictured are organizers Blair Preston and Brandi Tessier in front of the race track.



Indigenous car racing couple happy to be in Kirkland Lake

Xavier Kataquapit
Special to Wawatay News

Indigenous car racing couple Brianna Julien, of Matachewan First Nation and Morgan Meaniss of Bea-verhouse First Nation are back at the race track in northern Ontario. They took part in the Kirkland Lake Team Northern Throttle (TNT) Northern Drag Races which were held at the Kirkland Lake airport from July 17 to 19, 2026. The 28th annual racing event saw a participation of 117 competitors despite rain that caused cancellations and delays.

"This is our happy place because we've always enjoyed being around our vehicles and our friends. Even when it's raining out, we're still happy because our whole crew is here and we're having fun," said Julien.

They took part in the event in the Semi-Pro class under their team, M&B Racing, which includes their 1977 Chevy Camaro and 1986 Chevy Camaro.

They have taken part in several racing events this summer in Bonfield and previous race events in Kirkland Lake. Their team also includes their friend Alain Siebert, driving his 1964 Chevy Nova. Their pit crew and supporters include: Alexa Summers, Matt Summers, Lukas Ireland, Gail Aitchison and Aaron Murney. Their team sponsors include KL Towing, Matco Tools, Beaverhouse FN, MGI Collision, Lakeshore Motors and Sandra's Bookkeeping.

The couple, who have been



Xavier Kataquapit/Special to Wawatay News

Brianna Julien, a member of Metchewick First Nation, is an Indigenous female race car driver that regular participates in the annual Kirkland Lake TNT Drag Races.

together since middle school, 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 and mentored Meaniss as a mechanic.

"I've always enjoyed working on cars and racing just became part of that. It all started with just wanting to fix engines and then it became wanting to build something that could go as fast as possible. I'm grateful to our team and to our sponsors for helping us and we are thankful to the organizers for putting on this event," said Meaniss.

The Kirkland Lake TNT Northern Drag Races is hosted by a non-profit group of volunteers from Kirkland Lake.

"Our car count was down a little from our previous June event because there are so many other racing events happen-

ing in the summer. Our biggest class is always the juniors which is exciting for us because these youngsters will become the upcoming racers for future events," said Brandi Tessier, volunteer organizer.

Her group of organizers is happy to host these events, as they bring together automotive enthusiasts for a weekend of racing. This is a family event for everyone, as the weekend features cookouts, barbecues, and food and merchandise vendors.

"Other than the weather, it was a good event. I enjoy watching our grandkids taking on the track. It was good to see our children over the years taking to the sport and it feels even better to watch the grandkids taking part too," said Blair Preston, volunteer organizer.

The weekend event held daily monetary prize events for the categories of Super Pro, Semi Pro, Sports-man, Street, Sleds & Bikes and Junior.

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Commentary

Hot Summer Days In Attawapiskat



**Xavier
Kataquapit**

UNDER THE
NORTHERN SKY

Hot summer days have finally arrived and we are all enjoying the warm weather. These hot days remind me of growing up in my home community of Attawapiskat on the James Bay coast in the 1980s.

There was never much to do in our home, so our activity was always about running around the neighbourhood to be with our friends and cousins. We had a TV in the house but it only supplied CBC, TVO and a church channel that broadcast either a live church service or non-stop reruns of ‘Ben-Hur’, ‘Moses’ or ‘The Greatest Story Ever Told’.

Since there was no entertainment at home, we wandered off into the neighbourhood in search of our cousins. Our relatives were only a few houses away and our play areas were the small gravel parking lots near our homes or the muddy wet muskeg patches that dotted our neighbourhood. When I think of it now, much of our community wasn’t the prettiest or healthiest place for children to play. Active ditches filled with wastewater were everywhere and we all knew how to navigate past every outhouse near our homes.

Our great adventures always started with games we made up ourselves. Usually, we started our play at the very centre of the Kataquapit street, right in the middle of town. Four of my Kataquapit uncles, including Leo, Gabriel, Alex and George, lived on this street and their children lived next to them. There were so many excited children and grandchildren living on this street who didn’t have anything to do at home that it often turned into a huge chaotic organization of kids playing games. We didn’t have any toys or equipment, so our games were creative and turned into events of tag, kick the can, hide and seek and games of ‘war’, which would more commonly be known in the rest of Canada as ‘cowboys and indians’.

It was exciting to roam free across dusty gravel streets, run behind a relative’s house, know where to hide in the tall grass and high weeds and remember to avoid the dirtiest places in between. There were a few cut lawns in the neighbourhood and we played on them until we were directed to disturb the community elsewhere.

Elders and older people kept an eye on our activity and we always knew they were not far away. Elders sat outside their

homes to bask in the sunlight and adults roamed around, either doing laundry or moving clean water into their homes or wastewater out of their houses. Whenever an argument broke out in our group or someone cried because they got hurt, there was always someone older nearby to help with the situation or send us home to our parents.

During the hottest part of the day, everyone migrated towards the cooler breeze that blew in from the mighty Attawapiskat River. Elders always lined the shore to keep an eye on the tides as they rose and fell at different times of the day. Often, they sat huddled together around a game of checkers or chess among the tall grass overlooking the water.

We only heard and used Inineemoon, our Cree language, as children. We shouted and teased each other in creative ways and argued with one another, using insults we were careful not to utter near our parents. English was so foreign to us that anyone who tried to speak it was immediately made fun of for trying to.

As children, our parents always warned us never to venture into the water but on the hottest days, we would secretly go down to our underwear and wander into the cold, refreshing river. It was never a secret when we arrived home because mom and dad would immediately see our wet clothes and scold us for not listening to their warnings.

When the weather became overbearing and there seemed to be no relief from the heat, dad would organize everyone for a boat ride onto the great James Bay. My dad, Marius, always maintained a 24-foot freighter canoe and it was more than enough space for all of us. My mom, Susan and the nine of us children would fill the boat with a day’s supply of fresh food, goose, and ingredients for fresh bannock. Mom and dad were always ready for any situation. They knew the land, the water and the weather so well that they never worried about where we were going. If the water on the bay was calm, we headed to Akamiski Island or towards a smaller set of islands in between known as Manwinan (Twin Islands). If the weather changed and James Bay was too rough, dad turned the boat and we headed up the river instead, exploring the many rapids along the way.

These days, when the weather turns hot and muggy, I head out on my BMW motorcycle and ride down the highway. The feeling of sitting in the wind as it cools me off reminds me of moving on the river with my family. It’s a feeling of freedom and peace I will always keep close to my heart.

www.underthenorthernsky.com

Forest Fire Smoke Visible Across Ontario’s Cities



Thunder Bay was covered with heavy smoke overhead, pictured at about 5:45 p.m., on July 14.

Unmodified photo submitted by Rick Garrick

First Nation Youth Are Making The World Listen



**Xavier
Kataquapit**

UNDER THE
NORTHERN SKY

First Nation youth representatives are letting the world know that Indigenous people are ready to stand up and protect the land. Keira Spence, Kohen Mattinas and Ryan Fleming are attending the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Switzerland. This special gathering is holding its 19th session from 13 to 17 July 2026 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

The UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) was established to assist member UN states and indigenous communities in implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It carries out this mission through research studies, country engagements and through annual forums every July. The annual July event provides a platform for Indigenous representatives, advocates and state governments to meet, debate and voice human rights concerns directly to the United Nations.

Although EMRIP has no authoritative power, its studies and advice are widely regarded as authoritative interpretations of UNDRIP. Canada is one of many countries that follow EMRIP guidance to draft local

laws and stay informed by its reports.

This is the second international UN forum for these First Nation youth representatives. They previously attended the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), held at the United Nations headquarters in New York this past spring, in April. Kohen Mattinas and Ryan Fleming attended that event with Jeronimo Kataquapit and Ramon Kataquapit as part of a First Nation youth delegation.

This time in Geneva, Kohen, Ryan and Keira were able to attend as independent First Nation youth representatives through the support of Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN). Although they received some financial support, they had to fund much of their own travel expenses in order to attend the event.

At 25 years of age, Kohen, of Lac Seul FN/Constance Lake FN, had always taken an interest in First Nation youth issues but it was the summer of 2025 during the introduction of Ontario’s Bill 5 and Canada’s Bill C5 that made them take on a more prominent and active role in advocating for environmental protection and Indigenous rights. Ontario’s Bill 5 and Canada’s Bill C5 have galvanized Indigenous land defenders due to their displeasure with these legislations that aim to fast track mining development and directly affect the lives and futures of First Nations.

Kohen believes it is important for them to attend these international forums, especially one from which Canada directly seeks advice and guidance. As

Kohen explained, “the most important thing for me is in strengthening Indigenous jurisdiction so that we can have more control of our lives and our future. We need to find our own power and regain our Indigenous jurisdiction because if we don’t, Canada and its levels of government will always have the underlying authority over everything we do”

Ryan Fleming, of Attawapiskat FN, a doctoral student at the University of Toronto, brings a wealth of knowledge and training in political science studies as well as experience in federal government research and policy roles. At 34 years of age, he explained that his background has provided a perspective on Canadian institutions and politics that has greatly assisted their youth delegation at these international events.

I had a chance to speak to Ryan and he was happy to be taking part in this forum, where they could mix with other Indigenous groups from around the world facing similar situations. He reminded me that historically First Nation leaders often worked cooperatively to achieve their goals and that is how they are working together to share ideas and offer unique perspectives as academics, youth leaders and grassroots organizers, drawing on their backgrounds of living on reserve, off reserve or in urban environments.

Keira Spence, of Moose Cree FN, is the youngest member of their group at 20 years of age and she was happy to take part in the delegation. She is an artist and land defender who is also a cofounder of Okiniwak, a First

Nation youth movement also founded by Kohen Mattinas and Ramon Kataquapit. She comes from a family of leaders, including her great aunt Chief Theresa Spence, of Attawapiskat FN.

She delivered an intervention at the UN EMRIP forum, which was a short presentation delivered to the gathered international audience. She was excited and proud to be taking part in this event. She explained that she wanted to empower youth and felt a great need to represent her community, her territory and especially Indigenous youth on matters as important as the future of the land they call home.

I was greatly impressed by these young representatives, as their advocacy and bravery reminded me of the work of First Nations leaders in northern Ontario in the 1970s and 1980s. Their grassroots initiative and drive to make First Nations heard reminded me of people like Andrew Rickard, who helped found the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, or people from my home community of Attawapiskat like Fred Wesley or Elder Emile Nakogee, who took it upon themselves to represent, advocate and speak for our people.

Kohen, Ryan, Keira, Jeronimo and Ramon are a new generation of grassroots Indigenous leaders and it makes me proud to know that they are working hard to represent our people as best they can. They are doing an amazing job because they are making the world listen.

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Community



Mishkeegogamang's Maxine Baer scrapes a hide.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News



Marten Falls' Catherine McGuire showed a group of students how to make bannock dogs at Fort William's Culture Camp.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Fort William Anishinabemowin program holds language camp

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Fort William held an Anishinabemowin immersion program and a variety of hide tanning and other activities during its Culture Camp, held June 17-21 at Chippewa Park on the shores of Lake Superior.

"I'm here helping out with the moose hide tanning tent as well as just being a helper at the Culture Camp this year — I just wrung out a hide that's been soaking in brain," says Shelby Gagnon, an Aroland citizen. "We have Tammy Cote and her husband Derek here from Kitigan Zibi also helping out with the moose hide tanning. Because we have so much going on, there's language and drumming and teachings and food and smoking and cooking on the fire, we decided to call it a Culture Camp this year just to embody what it is and who we are as Anishinabe people on this land. It's been lovely, a lot of laughs, a lot of stories, a lot of learning."

AJ Esquega, a Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek citizen, says he was smoking moose meat and fish every day at the camp.

"It's what I love to do, I was taught it from my grandfathers and grandmother, and my grandmother is still teaching me some new tricks each time," Esquega says. "It's a staple food, it lasts, it tastes good, it's from the land, it keeps us connected to pass on those teachings from our ancestors and relatives so that we can carry it on for the next generation."

Grace Esquega, a Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek citizen and AJ's mother, says she made molasses bannock at the camp. "People like it so that's why I made it," Grace says.

Grace adds that she was proud of AJ for making the smoked moose meat and fish. "He wants to learn more and more," Grace says. "We have to correct him once in a while to make sure he does the right thing, the proper way how we used to do it a long time ago."

Catherine McGuire, a Marten Falls citizen, says they were making bannock dogs for a group of students on the third day of the camp. "They get to learn the names of all the (ingredients) we use," McGuire says, noting that this was her fourth year at the camp.



A group of participants had fun stretching a hide at Fort William's Culture Camp.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

"I like doing this. There's a lot of things to see and learn." McGuire also cooked moose heart on the last day of the camp. "It's been cooking on the open fire, I chopped it up fine with the potato and onions,"

McGuire says. "That was our staple food in the bush, moose meat. I did most of stuff here that they're doing when I was growing up." Betty Carpick, an artist, environmentalist and educator with Cree and European ancestry,

says this was the second year that she brought the Ancestor Project to the camp. "I was donated all kinds of hide scraps, hide skirts, so smoked canvas from the hide smoking, bead soup, so multiple beads all mixed up together,

and I wanted to find a way that could connect with all the activities going on at the hide camp so people would have another context for what happens to the hide after it's gone through the whole process of being tanned and ready for people to use to stitch," Carpick says.

Brenda Beady, a Muskrat Dam citizen who did open fire cooking at the camp along with her mother and daughter, says she enjoyed the feedback from the participants. "They loved my mom's fried bannock, they keep coming back for more," Beady says. "We (also) cooked moose meat, moose meat stew and these cheese smokies, and we cooked bannock dogs."

Bethany Koostachin, a Fort Severn citizen, says she enjoyed playing lacrosse at the camp. "It was my first time with traditional tools, it was a lot easier to pick up than expected," Koostachin says. "I really enjoyed that all ages, all skill levels were able to collaborate and connect and have fun and laugh about some of our wins and losses."



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Family Well-Being Week
July 6 - 10, 2026

Boozhoo, Aaniin, Wacheya,

Nishnawbe Aski Nation was pleased to announce Family Well-Being Week, held July 6–10, 2026, to honour families and celebrate all people and creation. Communities came together to strengthen family bonds, nurture healthy relationships, and support pathways to well-being. It was a time to connect with the land, listen to Elders pass on traditions and language, and honour our ancestors. Together, participants fostered a sense of belonging, peace, and harmony while inspiring hope throughout our communities.

As we gathered, we reconnected with one another, shared stories, reflected, visited with family and friends, nurtured fellowship, and created new memories.

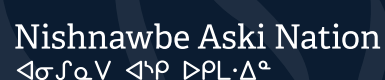
Nishnawbe Aski Nation acknowledged and commended the Family Well-Being community Coordinators and partners for their dedication and passion in supporting families and individuals. They went above and beyond to assist families by providing essential resources and food. The Coordinators played a vital role in promoting well-being, bringing people together, and working toward healthier communities.

May God and the Creator continue to watch over our families and communities.

Miigwech & God Bless

Sheila Marcinyshyn

Family Well-Being Program Manager





Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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For more information please contact Sheila Marcinyshyn
Email: smarcinyshyn@nan.ca
Direct Line: 807-625-4694 or 807-707-1840

Community

Regional Multicultural Youth Council hosts summer camp



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Kyle Arnold speaks about his experience with addictions at the Nishnawbe Aski Nation camp during the Regional Multicultural Youth Council and NAN Youth Leadership Camp, held July 6-17 in Thunder Bay.

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) held a Youth Leadership Camp from July 6-17 at the NAN office, NAN camp and RMYC Multicultural Youth Centre in Thunder Bay. The Youth Leadership Camp kicked off with Peer to Peer Mentorship presentations and a Roundtable Discussion: Addictions, Grief and Loss and its Impact on NAN Youth during the first week, which was held at the NAN office and NAN camp.

"When we were at the NAN building last week, it was actually really fun and we got to learn and experience so much

from NAN," says Sakora Oskineegish, a Choose Life youth worker at Wunnumin Lake. "For the addiction (discussion), it was really heartbreaking to see how you could end up in that from just one wrong decision."

Oskineegish says they learned about leadership during the second week, which was held at the RMYC Multicultural Youth Centre.

"I got to talk about my experience how I was living on reserve and in my community and how we've got to talk about the addictions stuff too, to make it more aware to people in RMYC who have not been able to (learn about) it," Oskineegish says. "It was very nice to be able to share my experiences so others could be aware of how it is a

very strong issue for the Indigenous youth."

Admire Nkargbo, vice president at RMYC, says they focused on leadership building during the Youth Leadership Camp.

"We learned about our leadership styles, we learned about teamwork and how that kind of creates a group," Nkargbo says. "We did a lot of land-based learning as well."

Nkargbo says they also discussed the Choose Life program and Jordan's Principle.

"We also discussed some harm reduction strategies and had a sharing circle amongst the youth to kind of talk about their own struggles and how we can help," Nkargbo says.

Roman Sakakeep, a peer

mentor at RMYC, says the RMYC is a powerful group.

"I choose this group specifically out of the other things I was offered because of how there's so much bright minds here, and how everyone here has their own talents and it's just a matter of giving the youth a voice to show what we can do," Sakakeep says. "People will say it's time to put the youth in charge, that the youth know what we want but there's not many places or people that are willing to give us a voice but RMYC does that for us."

Jennifer Wells, owner/facilitator at Growth Restore, a division of Right Now, delivered the Peer to Peer Mentorship presentations.

"The vision was to empower young adults to become confident leaders, positive role models and future mentors, hoping they can contribute to the growth, wellness and success

of the community," Wells says. "At the end of our workshops, we were hoping that they would identify their personal leadership strengths, they would increase their confidence and self awareness, improve communication and relationship building, they'd have some mentoring fundamentals."

Wells says they also talked about conflict resolution and problem solving and servant leadership and community leadership.

"We were building cultural pride and community connection," Wells says. "At the end of it they were putting together a leadership action plan for themselves and they were writing a letter to their future selves from a year from now of what they'd like to accomplish."

Kyle Arnold, programs manager at Salvation Army, spoke about his experience with addictions during the Roundtable

Discussion: Addictions, Grief and Loss and its Impact on NAN Youth.

"I was talking to the youth about the changes I made in my life and what it's like today," Arnold says. "We gave it to them raw and real and to the point and really wanted to let them know what it looked like without sugar coating it. It was super impactful to have the youth share about what they have been through — it brought tears to my eyes because they were very vulnerable and they showed courage."

Presentations on the Choose Life, Family Wellbeing, Youth Initiatives, Jordan's Principle and RMYC programs and Filling Our Cup — Positive Programming and Goal Setting were also scheduled on the fifth day of the Youth Leadership Camp.



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Business

TKG Group holds Northern Showcase to connect First Nations

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The ThawiKayhiGan Group (TKG Group) held its inaugural TKG Group Northern Showcase featuring a day of connections, collaboration and opportunity on July 9 at the Valhalla Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.

“We wanted to show the public and also our communities and our First Nations, First Nation organizations of the various work that we do and the partnerships that we do,” says Jonathon Mamakwa, president and CEO at TKG Group. “We’re primarily focused on the goods and services that our remote communities need, like providing solutions anywhere from ... groceries to housing, fuel and construction. But we dive into other areas such as mining now, mining contracts, any contracts that are to be had there.”

Mamakwa says they have also been looking into housing solutions for First Nation communities.

“I’m excited about the housing solution, because the communities are really struggling with the shortage of housing and affordable and quality housing,” Mamakwa says. “I think we now have found solutions for them and I’m excited about the prospect of bringing that forward. I just got back from out west and took some of our leadership from the communities to go tour a (housing production) facility and they were impressed.”

Nathanial Anderson, chief operating officer at Oshtugon Computers, says they are 100



Jonathon Mamakwa, president and CEO at ThawiKayhiGan Group (TKG Group), speaks during the inaugural TKG Group Northern Showcase, held July 9 at the Valhalla Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.

per cent owned by TKG Group.

“We’re just here to support the communities in any we can regarding products and services that we offer,” Anderson says. “Within their housing departments, if they want to build the whole set up for beds, appliances like fridges and stoves and everything, we offer the communities a discounted price so that anything fits within their budget.”

Anderson says they have two

locations in Sioux Lookout, one for computer and electronics and the other for furniture and appliances, and one in Dryden.

“Dryden offers the computer and electronics plus other accessories like music, and the IT services,” Anderson says.

Bob Frade, warehouse manager in Thunder Bay for Pratts Food Service, says they attended the showcase to inform the communities about what Pratts has to offer.

“If there’s something that the community needs, there’s services that they need, I’m sure we can work together and provide that type of service,” Frade says. “As far as delivering or getting product to them, we do quite a bit up north as well.”

John Trumpy, business development manager at Northern Resource Trucking, says they attended the showcase to meet with community members and touch base with TKG Group

partners.

“Primarily in the north, we haul bulk commodities to mine sites and northern communities, so for TKG, we haul fuel over the winter roads,” Trumpy says. “It’s challenging, it’s different and not a lot of people do it so you’re always learning and doing something every day in trying to get better.”

Clement Adeniran, human resources associate at Synterra Security Solutions, a major-

ity First Nation owned company in partnership with Canadian Security Management, Naicatchewenin Development Corporation, Wunnumin Lake and Kingfisher Lake, says they provide security solutions to the mining industry but also to local airlines.

“We have a contract with Wasaya and North Star — we provide security for the Thunder Bay airport and Sioux Lookout airport as well,” Adeniran says.

Ryan Polson, regional manager at Centrefire Energy Group, says they are a heavy civil construction company, adding that TKG Group is one of their partners.

“We support them in a lot of the development of their communities, whether it’s power line construction, road construction, site development,” Polson says.

Jaret McMillan, director of fuels and lubricants at Polar Oils, says they have been partners with TKG Group for about two years.

“I thought it was a great opportunity to get to meet some of the community members that we’ve dealt with before and that we’ve had opportunities to work with remotely,” McMillan says.

Baylee Horner, sales assistant at Dominion Motors, says they do a lot of business with the First Nations across northern Ontario for fleet vehicles.

“We do have a big incentive for these (First Nations) as well,” Horner says. “We try to help out the communities as much as we can with our vehicles.”

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