

Health

First ever Indigenous organ health summit held in Thunder Bay

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Centre for Living Organ Donation at UHN held its first Indigenous Organ Health Summit on June 9 at the Valhalla Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.

“Our goal is to bring together community, patients who might be waiting for a liver or kidney, health care providers, care givers, family members to really talk about the journey that patients go through as they’re waiting for an organ, to provide them some information and support to know that they’re not alone through this journey and to also bring together some community organizations to share what resources they have to support patients and families through this pathway,” says Candice Coghlan, education and outreach coordinator at the UHN Centre for Living Organ Donation. “In Ontario, there’s about 1,200 people who are waiting for an organ, in Canada sometimes it can go up to about 3,200 people waiting. The largest group of people waiting for an organ are waiting for a kidney.”

Coghlan says patients can have a transplant in about six months with a living kidney donor.

“There’s a lot of benefits to a living organ donation, a shorter wait, it’s also generally a better recovery, better outcomes for us patients to have a living organ donor,” Coghlan says. “So there’s a lot of ways if people’s direct networks are not matches for them or maybe somebody doesn’t step forward. We often will support patients in creating a story that they can share with their community, either through e-mail, through social media, maybe contacting their local news rooms as well to really get the word out because we do find that there are a lot of amazing people out there willing to donate, even to strangers. By



Keewaywin’s Leona Kakepetum shares her presentation during the Centre for Living Organ Donation at UHN’s first Indigenous Organ Health Summit, held June 9 at the Valhalla Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

sharing their story, they can find that living donor, and we also always say not everybody can be our living donor, but everybody can be our champion in spreading that word and sharing that story to try to get somebody that living organ donor.”

Coghlan says she had gone through dialysis and was a transplant recipient.

“It’s not an easy journey but I want people to know that they’re not alone,” Coghlan says. “There are so many people in this community that can support them and help them. I do the work I do now because

I wanted to give back to that community who helped me. They can always reach out to us at the Centre for Living Organ Donation at: livingorgandonation@uhn.ca. They can ask whatever questions they want to us and we can also connect them with peers, so people who are going through something similar that they can talk to.”

Leona Kakepetum, director of Indigenous Collaboration, Equity and Inclusion at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and a Keewaywin citizen, shared her story as a transplant recipient during the

summit.

“I want Indigenous patients to know that they are not alone, there are support systems out there whether it be within the transplant clinics, the hospitals or even in their own communities,” Kakepetum says. “There are people that have that pathway, that have that experience and are open to share, so making sure that everyone is not afraid to ask questions ... and that there are people willing to help no matter where they are.”

Kakepetum says she started dialysis in 2010 and received the phone call for her transplant in

2016.

“It’s been about 10 years now since I had my transplant, and it’s been going well so far,” Kakepetum says. “I have an amazing team here that helps support me.”

Kakepetum says she was surprised when she received the call for her transplant.

“I was in total shock,” Kakepetum says. “So I didn’t take that in until I actually got another phone call confirming that it was time for me to go — so it was a very happy moment for me as well with my family. The news did spread pretty fast,

I had family meeting me at the airport, picking me up and making sure I had a good support team when I was on my way.”

Kakepetum says she received the kidney from an anonymous donor.

“I did go through the process of family getting tested for me as well as friends,” Kakepetum says. “A lot of them weren’t a match or compatible with myself or had underlying issues as well.”

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Health

NAN calls for health rally during special Chiefs Assembly

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Nishnawbe Aski Nation's chiefs called for a rally in Sioux Lookout over a health crisis during their Special Chiefs Assembly on Health, held June 2-3 at the Whitewater Golf Club in Rosslyn, near Thunder Bay.

"I plan to be in Sioux Lookout on Monday (June 8)," says Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler on June 3. "I think it's important for especially our community members to know that while we are committed to the long-term process of health transformation, we know that there's some very serious and urgent issues right now that our community members deal with every day — a good example is medical transportation Non-Insured. So we need create a plan, a strategy where we can begin to address those urgent concerns, and I believe the sit-in that's being planned for Monday will play a big part in that."

Neskantaga Chief Gary Quisess says his community was doing the sit-in on June 8 over the health crisis they are in.

"We experience a lot of challenges — and it came from our young people in the community, having concerns with missing appointments and travel," Quisess says on June 3. "In our community, we get travel within one hour or half an hour before the plane lands ... and we have 12 kilometres to travel to the airport. There's a lot of cutbacks, and some patients are experiencing to pay their own luggage."

Wunnumin Lake Chief Archie Wabasse says patients from the remote isolated First Nations are impacted by the program service delivery handled by the Non-Insured Health Benefits program.

"It's really impacting our First Nations right now that want to go out for their medical appointments," Wabasse says on June 3. "(There's) all kind of logistic nightmares happening right now — people that have an appointment with a doctor or to see a specialist in Sioux Lookout or Winnipeg or Thunder Bay, they have to wait for their travel to be made by the Non-Insured Health Benefits office. That service is very important and it's very essential, if we don't get the travel for our medical appointment in Thunder Bay or Sioux Lookout or wherever, if we don't get there we're going to be seen as, 'You missed the appointment, and no show.' And they keep that in the record."

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum says it has reached a crisis.

"People's health care is being impacted — we have to take all various measures to address this," Achneepineskum says on June 3. "We're having a demonstration on Monday, it's just a small part of this, there's going to have to be other action taken, so let's see what happens after Monday. The federal government keeps coming back to say that they're building capacity, they're getting more people to address this, but we don't see it. If you're being notified half an hour before a flight, and said, 'Oh yeah, here's your travel warrant,' people who have a job, who have a family, they can't just drop everything. Why are people expected to be able to comply with those conditions, that is a violation of a per-



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum speaks during Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Special Chiefs Assembly on Health, held June 2-3 at the Whitewater Golf Club in Rosslyn, near Thunder Bay.

son's rights." Kiiwetinoong MPP Sol Mamakwa says it was important for the communities to come together for the June 8 rally in Sioux Lookout.

"But I think the system that is there is not broken, it's working exactly the way it's designed to, which is to take away the rights of the people that live on these territories, on these homelands," Mamakwa says on June 3. "I've always learned that, it's a very colonial system."

Mamakwa says they need to

start looking at the whole health system.

"We need proper access to public health, nurses, physician services, and some of the mental health and some of the specialists that need to come to our communities," Mamakwa says. "And there's some communities such as Sandy Lake or even Pikangikum, bigger communities like KI (Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug) or even Eabametoong, we need to be able to have satellite hospitals in there."

A spokesperson for Indig-

enous Services Canada (ISC), Eric Head, states in a June 11 e-mail reply that ISC acknowledges that medical transportation is a critical service for remote and fly-in communities.

"Through the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program, the department provides coverage for transportation, accommodations and meals for clients who must travel to access medically necessary health services that are not available in the community," Head states.

"We recognize the very seri-

ous impacts that any gaps in service can have on clients and acknowledge the concerns raised by First Nations leadership and partners in Ontario. We take these matters seriously."

Head states that ISC has been working diligently to improve service levels in the Ontario Region medical transportation call centre.

"To improve service efficiency, we have increased staffing and training, and simplified internal processes as well as travel request documentation,"

Head states. "These changes aim to improve travel request processing times, reduce delays and decrease phone wait times. Following feedback from clients, First Nation communities and health partners, we are taking further actions toward continuous improvement. We will continually re-assess call centre performance and service levels, and further streamline our processes to improve client-focused service."

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Education

KOBE graduates record numbers during virtual graduation

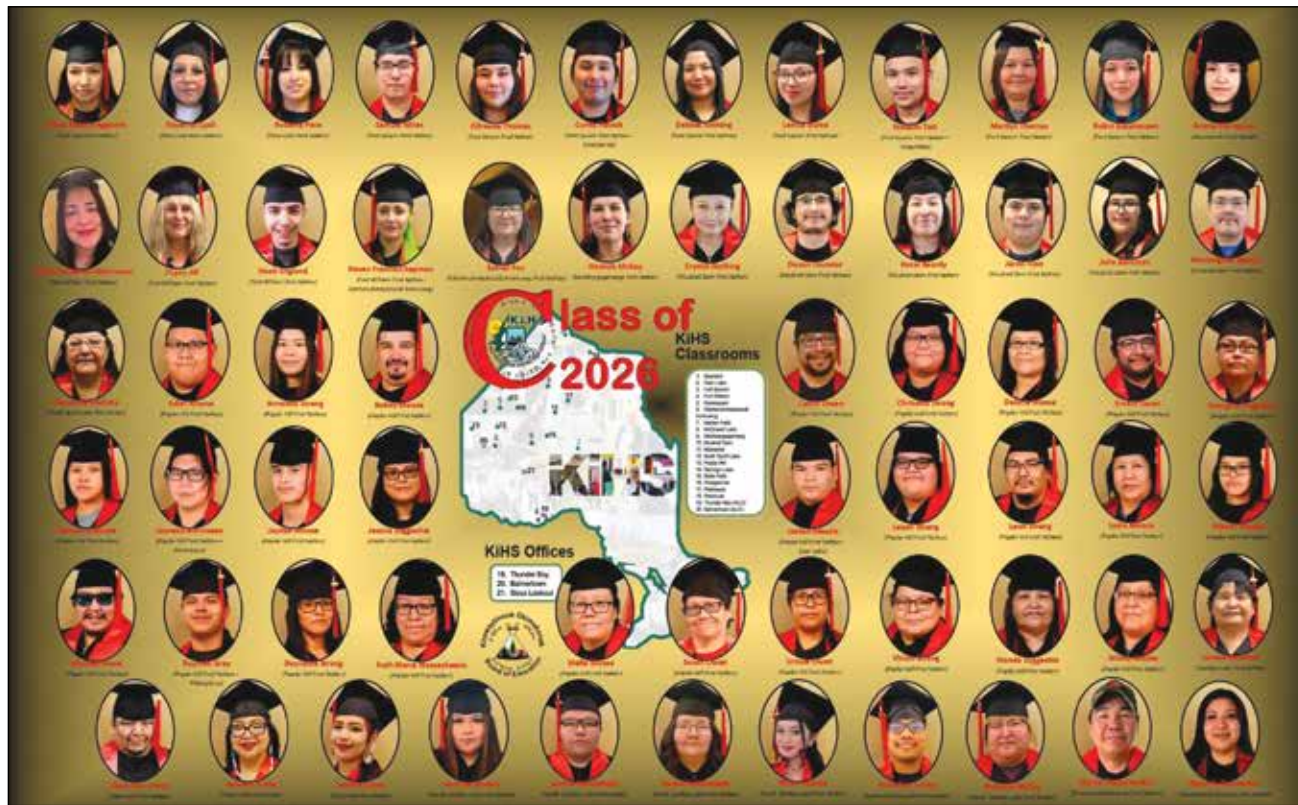
Rick Garrick
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The Keewatinook Oki-makanak Board of Education (KOBE) celebrated a record number of graduates from the Keewatinook Internet High School (KiHS) this year with 64 graduates, including 19 adult education graduates. The KiHS virtual graduation ceremony was held on May 21, which included a live stream from each community so guests could watch the graduates cross the stage to receive their diploma and participate in the cap toss. The ceremony also included community feasts in each of the participating communities.

“KOBE is proud of every student who has continued their educational journey and reached this important milestone,” says Patrick Stoddart, director of education at KOBE. “These graduates represent perseverance, commitment and the strength of community support. Every student’s pathway is unique, and we are honoured to celebrate their success.”

Aaron Kakapetum, executive director at Keewatinook Oki-makanak Tribal Council, delivered a “heartfelt congratulations” to the graduates.

“You’ve faced and conquered many challenges over the past few years, you have all grown academically, personally and emotionally,” Kakapetum says. “We wish you the best as you continue to pursue your life’s journey, some of you will continue your studies while some of you will enter the work world. Regardless of the path you take, please know that we are here to



continue to support you. I truly wish you the best in your future endeavours and remember to never accept the status quo — always ask questions, be critical in your thinking and always bring your true authentic self in every room and every situation. Finally, know that each and every one of you can change the world, but never let the world change you. Congratulations and best of luck.”

Deb McDougall, principal at KiHS, also congratulated the graduates, encouraged them to keep following their dreams and reminded them that they are

not on their journey alone.

“I want you to think about everyone, whether it’s teachers, family members, friends, siblings, I want you to think about everyone who’s been with you on your journey and reflect on how they became a part of your story,” McDougall says. “Today we are celebrating you, but we are also celebrating community and all of the support that you’ve had along the way. So KiHS graduates, I wish you all the best in the future, we look forward to seeing what pathways you follow and encourage you to continue always doing

the best for yourself.”

North Caribou Lake’s Jasmine Winters, this year’s valedictorian at KiHS, stressed how she was able to stay connected to her roots while completing her studies at KiHS.

“I stand before you today not as a perfect student but as a proud Anishinabe woman who learned that true strength isn’t about carrying everything alone, it’s about having the courage to reach out,” Winters says. “I entered high school with a stubborn mind, I thought being smart meant I wouldn’t have hardships, I

thought I had to put on a performance, to have top-notch grades and to become valedictorian like my big sister. I thought I had to be a perfect person for everyone else while keeping my own struggles hidden in the dark, but life happened.”

Winters says every once in a while the world felt too heavy and she found herself grieving, anxious and unmotivated.

“But our ancestors didn’t survive so that we could just pass, they survived so we could lead,” Winters says. “I realized that my side quests, the sports tournaments, the camping trips on the

land and the time spent with my community, they weren’t distractions, they were my medicine. Through KiHS I was able to be everywhere, talking to everyone, staying connected to my roots while doing work on my laptop between games on the bench.”

Fort Severn’s Debbie Nothing, one of the KiHS graduates, says KiHS was great, noting that she attended class at the KOBE building in Thunder Bay.

“Being a single mother of two, it was hard especially with my daughter in day care and the other one in school too, but I still managed to go,” Nothing says. “I just needed three credits. They were very friendly and very supportive over there, I really liked being around that environment.”

Nothing, who has been accepted into the Indigenous Community Advocacy program at Confederation College, encourages other people to pursue their education journeys.

“They should go for it, complete their education because education is very important,” Nothing says. “The graduation ceremony was awesome, it was great. I had my two kids there, my mother. I was very determined to graduate so I did.”

KOBE also hosted graduation banquets for students from Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School and Pelican Falls First Nations High School as part of the graduation celebrations in May, which were attended by chief and council members, board members, KOBE staff, families and community supporters.

Honouring the past. Building the future

National Indigenous History Month is a time to celebrate and learn from the powerful stories, remarkable achievements, and enduring resilience of Indigenous Peoples.

We recognize and acknowledge that Orla's Musselwhite Mine stands on the traditional lands of North Caribou Lake First Nation.

Musselwhite Mine is proud of the important relationships it has with North Caribou Lake First Nation, Wunnumin Lake First Nation, Kingfisher Lake First Nation, Cat Lake First Nation, Mishkeegogamang First Nation, Windigo First Nations Council, and Shibogama First Nations Council.





Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Mishkeegogamang's Ashley Bach and Webequie's Neebin Scanlon-Wabasse recently graduated from the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law on May 15 in Thunder Bay.

Bora Laskin celebrates new graduates

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Mishkeegogamang's Ashley Bach, Webequie's Neebin Scanlon-Wabasse and Curve Lake's Raina McCue are looking forward to practising law after graduating from the Lakehead University Bora Laskin Faculty of Law on May 15 in Thunder Bay.

"I have a couple of things lined up, I'll be in Ottawa for a year and then I think I'll be in Toronto working," Bach says, noting that she will be clerking next year at the Federal Court. "After that, I'm not really sure, I'm hoping to be back in Thunder Bay. I definitely want to work for First Nations and for Indigenous peoples and Indigenous clients."

Bach says her immediate goals are to pass the barrister and solicitor exams that are being held this summer.

"We have about six to eight weeks for studying, so it's crunch time," Bach says.

Bach says her role as a representative plaintiff in the child welfare class action lawsuit gave her a bit of a perspective with some of the things she was learning in law school.

"I'm kind of seeing how they're playing out in real life and then thinking about the law and how I understand it, how other people understand it, how it's being applied," Bach says. "I think it was really useful and I'm hoping it had a positive impact on other people too."

Bach says she loved the Indigenous Law course, a mandatory semester course, and the law camp in the first year and the Aboriginal Law course, a mandatory full-year course, in the second year.

"I think that, at least for me because that's the area of law I'm looking at going into, I think it was really important that it was a full-year course and really in-depth," Bach says. "And then this past year, I was on placement for one semester which was an incredible experience."

Scanlon-Wabasse says he has been providing services to those who can't afford a lawyer and

need representation in housing and social assistance matters at a legal clinic.

"It's definitely an interest of mine in the future and I'd be happy to work in the areas of housing and social assistance going forward," Scanlon-Wabasse says.

Scanlon-Wabasse says there were lots of good programs at the law school, especially the special topics in Aboriginal and Indigenous law.

"They offer specialty courses such as Aboriginal law in the north, which take a different approach to understanding the law in northern and remote places," Scanlon-Wabasse says.

Scanlon-Wabasse encourages people who are thinking about studying law to apply, noting that he applied because he saw the need in his community, with a lack of professionals such as lawyers, doctors and accountants.

"I would say to apply and trust your instinct," Scanlon-Wabasse says.

McCue says it was an honour to graduate, noting that she chose to study law at the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law because of the Indigenous aspect.

"I was able to get my specialization in Aboriginal and Indigenous law because there were so many course offerings about Indigenous and Aboriginal law," McCue says. "It really never ended with the possibilities."

Webequie Chief Lorraine Whitehead says she was proud of Scanlon-Wabasse and the rest of the graduates.

"I look forward to working with him in the future," Whitehead says. "And hopefully there will be more in the future."

Leona Scanlon and Gordon Wabasse, Scanlon-Wabasse's parents, were proud to see him and his classmates graduating from law school.

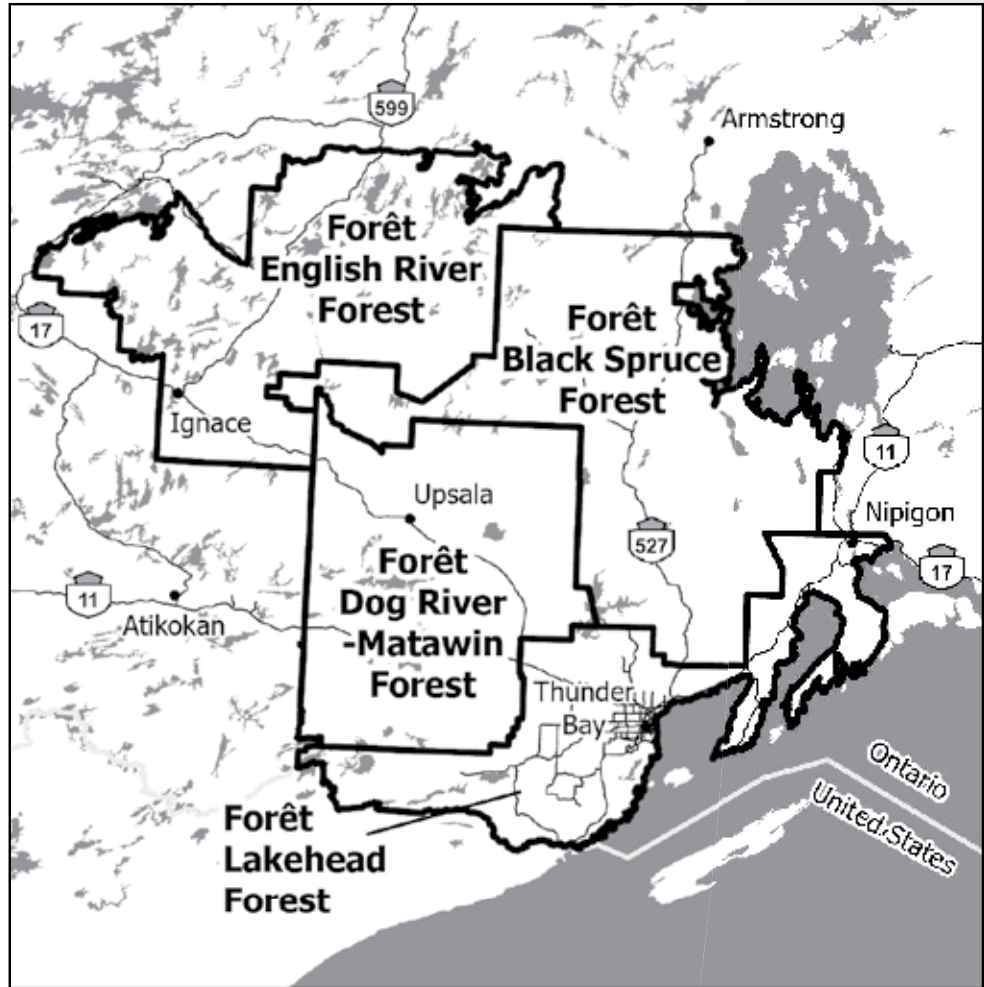
"I thought the ceremony was beautiful," Scanlon says. "We also attended the blanket ceremony yesterday and it was beautiful — well done to the Bora Laskin (Faculty of Law)."

"I feel very proud and happy," Wabasse says. "It's a good accomplishment — it's very emotional."

Inspection

Inspection of Herbicide Projects for Black Spruce Forest, Dog River-Matawin Forest, English River Forest and Lakehead Forest

The Ontario **Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)** invites you to inspect the planned herbicide projects for the 2026 season. As part of ongoing efforts to regenerate and protect Ontario's forests, selected stands on the **Black Spruce Forest, Dog River-Matawin Forest, English River Forest, and Lakehead Forest** (see map) will be sprayed with herbicide to control competing vegetation, starting on or about: **August 1, 2026** for the Dog-River Matawin and Black Spruce Forests, **August 10, 2026** for the Lakehead and the English River Forests.



The project descriptions and project plans for the herbicide project are available electronically for inspection by contacting **Domtar** or **Greenmantle Forest Inc.** during normal business hours and on the Natural Resources Information Portal at ontario.ca/ForestPlans beginning **June 30, 2026 until March 31, 2027** when the Annual Work Schedule expires. Please note, the **aerial herbicide operation** will be occurring in specific areas of the **Black Spruce, Dog River-Matawin, English River and Lakehead Forests**, and not the entire management unit. More detailed information on the locations of the activities within the **Black Spruce, Dog River-Matawin, English River and Lakehead Forests** can be viewed on the Natural Resources Information Portal at:

Black Spruce Forest: ontario.ca/a120d **English River Forest:** ontario.ca/98684
Dog River-Matawin Forest: ontario.ca/0687c **Lakehead Forest:** ontario.ca/669ac

First Nation and Métis communities and interested and affected persons and organizations can arrange a virtual or in-person meeting with MNR staff to discuss the herbicide projects. For more information, please contact:

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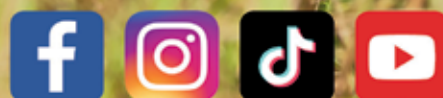
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Family Well-Being Week July 6 - 10, 2026



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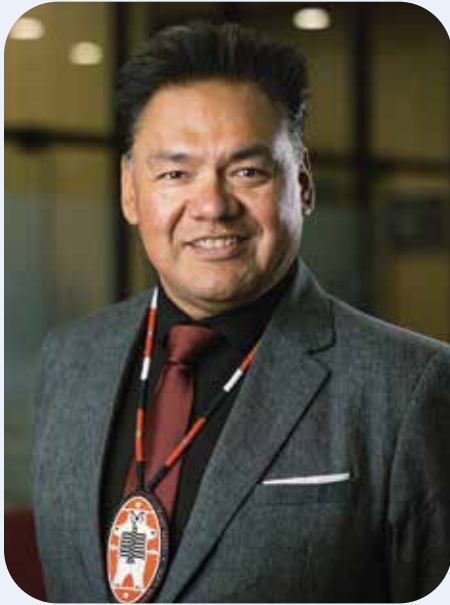
Nishnawbe Aski Nation is pleased to announce July 6-10th, 2026 Family Well-Being Week to honour families, celebrate all people and creation. Communities will come together strengthening family bonds, nurture healthy relationships, and support pathways to wellbeing. Connect to the land, culture and traditions encouraging peace and harmony within communities. As we gather, we can reconnect with one another, share stories, visit with family and friends, and create new memories.

NAN acknowledges and commends the Family Well-Being community Coordinators and partners for their dedication and passion helping families and individuals. Going above and beyond supporting families, providing essential resources and food. Coordinator's play a vital role in supporting wellbeing approaches, bringing people together and working towards healthy communities.

Contact the Family Well-Being Coordinator in your community to learn more about programs and activities.



A Message From Deputy Grand Chief Bobby Narcisse



I am honoured to recognize Family Well-Being Week and to celebrate the strength, resilience, and spirit of families across Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

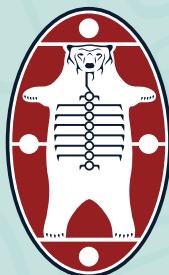
In our communities, family is at the heart of who we are. It is where our languages, teachings, and traditions live on, and where our children learn their identity and strength.

The Family Well-Being Program reflects our shared responsibility to care for one another. Grounded in our cultures, it supports healing, strengthens families, and helps build safer, healthier communities.

I want to recognize the Family Well-Being workers, community leaders, and partners who walk alongside our families every day. Your dedication and compassion are making a meaningful difference for our people and for future generations.

As leadership, we remain committed to standing with our communities and ensuring every family has the support they need to thrive.

*In unity and strength,
Deputy Grand Chief Bobby Narcisse*



**Nishnawbe
Aski Nation**
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Community

Lakehead University delivers community report



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News
Gillian Siddall, president and vice-chancellor at Lakehead University, delivers her report to the community on June 11 in the Faculty Lounge on the Thunder Bay campus.

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Lakehead University president and vice-chancellor Gillian Siddall and Confederation College president Michelle Salo recently delivered reports to the community on June 11 and May 20 in Thunder Bay.

Siddall's report, delivered on June 11, stressed that expanding access to university education has always been central to Lakehead University's mission, particularly for students in northern, rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

"Over 47 per cent of Lakehead's undergraduate students on the Thunder Bay campus come from across northwestern Ontario and 48 per cent on the Orillia campus come from across Simcoe County," Siddall says. "From our earliest faculties to the opening of the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law in 2013, welcoming the first cohort of the collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program in 2025 and announcing the new Barrie Stem Hub in 2024, Lakehead's growth has been guided by the changing needs of the communities we serve. The impact of that commitment can be seen in new graduates like Cassandra Spade, who became the first person at a Canadian law school to deliver a valedictorian address in Anishinabemowin — today she is advancing Indigenous law and helping increase access to justice throughout northwestern Ontario."

Siddall's report featured some Indigenous components, including that one of her core commitments as president of Lakehead University is to foster truth and reconciliation.

"And this commitment is shared by many in our university community — this is why truth and reconciliation is embedded directly into our strategic plan," Siddall says. "It is a commitment that recognizes reconciliation isn't a single action or project but a continuous journey grounded in respect, accountability and shared leadership. The path to reconciliation involves more than just intention, it requires listening, it requires learning, it requires sustained action. Lakehead has taken action and a leadership role on reconciliation for many years, we work collaboratively and inclusively with local Indigenous peoples and communities to advance the truth and reconciliation process through real action and investment."

Siddall says Lakehead University introduced an Indigenous content requirement in 2016 that ensures every student engages with Indigenous-focused learning as part of their degree.

"This helps students better understand the historical and ongoing impacts of injustices faced by Indigenous peoples," Siddall says. "We've also worked very hard to expand Indigenous-focused academic programming, increased support for Indigenous learners

and built stronger relationships with Indigenous communities and partners."

Siddall says they have recently expanded the Keewatinase Indigenous Teacher Education Program to the Orillia campus.

"This will support the reclamation and celebration of Indigenous identities, languages and traditions by preparing educators to inspire future generations with love, care, respect and humility," Siddall says. "We are fortunate to have leaders like Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquiaux who are helping Lakehead realize these commitments and achieve transformative change. Cynthia has been an influential advocate in the fight for justice for Indigenous peoples for 40 years, and in 2016 she became the first truth and reconciliation chair in Canada right here at Lakehead University. She leads truth and reconciliation efforts on Lakehead's campuses as well as nationally and internationally. She is in great demand right around the world for her expertise — her leadership helps move these commitments from principle into practice."

Siddall says they are also building a standalone dedicated space for Indigenous students, faculty and staff on the Thunder Bay campus.

"We are looking to break ground on that next year," Siddall says. "We're still raising money for that one. I'm so excited about that, that's a project that Lakehead has been trying to get going for many years and we're getting very close."

Salo's report to the community, delivered on May 20, introduced Confederation College's new 2026–2031 strategic plan, Mino-Wijiwiidowinan – Good Relationships, which was developed through engagement with employees, students, Indigenous communities and regional partners. The plan focuses on five strategic pillars: Indigenous Leadership and Reconciliation; Learner Access, Success, and Belonging; Regional and System Partnerships; Organizational Sustainability and Agility; and Future-Ready Learning and Innovation.

"Confederation College continues to evolve alongside the communities and industries we serve," Salo says. "This year's Report to Community reflects the strength of our partnerships, the resilience of our students and employees and our continued commitment to creating opportunities across northwestern Ontario. As we launch our new strategic plan, we are building on a strong foundation while positioning the college to respond to future workforce, community and learner needs."

Some of the highlights from Salo's report were a \$12 million increase to the College's provincial operating grant; new workforce and training partnerships with organizations, including Seven Generations Education Institute, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the City of Thunder Bay; a \$3.2 million Grid Innovation Fund investment; growth in skilled trades supports through the launch of a \$500,000 Canerector Foundation Scholars Program; and ongoing advancement of Indigenous learning and reconciliation initiatives, including a new Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan and expanded Indigenous Learning Outcomes implementation across programs.

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Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Shawn Bell, a lawyer who represented Kingfisher Lake at the Kevin Mamakwa inquest, speaks with news media on June 11 at the Ontario Government Building in Thunder Bay.



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Meaghan Daniel, a lawyer who represented the Mamakwa family at the Kevin Mamakwa inquest, speaks with news media.

Mamakwa family calls for the closing of Thunder Bay jail

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The family of the late Kevin Mamakwa, who died in the Thunder Bay District Jail in 2020, called for the closing of the jail on June 11 at the Ontario Government Building in Thunder Bay. The family expressed their concerns along with Deputy Grand Chief Bobby Narcisse, Wunnumin Lake Chief Archie Wabasse and lawyers representing the family and Kingfisher Lake during a meeting with news media before the Verdict of Inquest Jury for the Kevin Mamakwa inquest was released, which included 22 recommendations, later in the day.

The jury's first recommendation was: the Ministry will implement a plan to transition individuals housed at the Thunder Bay District Jail to the new Thunder Bay Correctional Complex, prioritizing individuals requiring enhanced health care, mental health services, addictions treatment, programming, Indigenous cultural services and other supports unavailable or limited at the Thunder Bay District Jail, taking into account security rating and behaviour considerations, as soon as the new correctional complex is fully operational.

The jury's final two recommendations were: the Ministry will develop and publicly release a plan for the obligatory phased decommissioning and repurposing of the Thunder Bay District Jail with decommissioning to occur no later than five years following the commencement of operations at the new Thunder Bay Correctional Centre; and the Ministry will never repurpose the Thunder Bay District Jail for the purposes of incarceration of individuals.

"We learned in January that the Thunder Bay jail is going to remain open and it is very disheartening to the Indigenous community — that institution has seen the deaths of a number of Indigenous people who were just like Kevin, young, male, under 30, on remand, suffering from mental health and addiction, and to make meaning from this loss we have to stop it," says Meaghan Daniel, a lawyer who represented Kevin Mamakwa's family at the inquest. "And with the evidence we heard from this inquest, it is never going to stop."

Daniel says the new Thunder Bay Correctional Complex, which cost over \$1 billion, was built too small.

"So what they're going to do now is keep this out-dated, poorly designed, archaic nightmarish institution open," Daniel says. "And the family can't let that stand."

Shawn Bell, a lawyer with Edwards Bell Jewitt LLP who represented Kingfisher Lake at the inquest, read a statement by Kingfisher Lake Chief Eddie Mamakwa during the meeting with news media.

"The inquest has shown very clearly that the Thunder Bay District Jail where Kevin Mamakwa passed away is not a safe place for our people, the physical building of the Thunder Bay District Jail does not allow for many of the programs and services that people require while they are in jail," Bell says, reading Chief Eddie Mamakwa's statement. "Kingfisher Lake First Nation is very concerned to learn that the Thunder Bay District Jail will remain open at least five years after the new correctional centre is open. The conditions that Kevin Mamakwa had to deal with in 2020 at the Thunder Bay District Jail have not improved and now we know that people will continue to endure these conditions in the district jail even after this new modern jail opens in Thunder Bay. Kingfisher Lake First Nation and the family of Kevin Mamakwa have asked the jury to make a recommendation that the Thunder Bay District Jail be shut down, the Thunder Bay District Jail should be shut down as soon as possible so that no other families or communities have to go through what the family of Kevin Mamakwa has suffered."

Narcisse says the population of the jail consists of a majority of First Nations people.

"We really acknowledge and really support the plight of the Mamakwa family at this time," Narcisse says. "This inquest

has been quite the journey for them, and they want answers and we want action. This jail has been around for 100 years, I know it was designated as a historical site but where are our priorities, do we keep it going just because it's a historical site or do we actually take into the human factor."

Narcisse says they don't want to see any more deaths in the Thunder Bay District Jail.

"NAN supports the Mamakwa family and also the chief of Kingfisher to see that this site is closed," Narcisse says.

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler says in a press release that he supports the calls by the Mamakwa family to permanently close the Thunder Bay District Jail.

"When I visited the jail six years ago, alongside the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner, I was so disturbed by what I saw that I called it a hell-hole that must be shut down immediately," Fiddler says. "Up to four inmates crammed into a tiny cell, forced to sleep on the floor, fearing for their safety without access to spiritual and mental health supports."

Fiddler adds that evidence was heard throughout the inquest that revealed the Thunder Bay District Jail had been declared an Ontario heritage site.

"It is reprehensible to think that a building with such an ugly past, and a history of gross human rights violations is being regarded as a site that should be celebrated," Fiddler says.

"We know there must be spaces for people to serve their sentences with dignity, and we have long called for more

humane correctional facilities, but we are concerned that Ontario continues to invest in a system that does more harm to our people instead of heal-

ing them. Instead of focusing on more beds, no matter what deplorable conditions they are in, Ontario should be making sustained investments where

(it's) needed most including mental health services, treatment centres and affordable housing."



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Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Anna Fern Kakegamic and a group of Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education staff delivered the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education, Indigenous Education Language, Culture and Land Based Program presentation on the first day of Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Land-Based Learning Gathering.



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Candace Manitopyes delivers her keynote presentation on the first day of Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Land-Based Learning Gathering, held May 26-27 at the Best Western Plus Nor'Wester Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.

NAN holds Land-Based Learning Gathering

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Land-Based Learning Gathering, held May 26-27 at the Best Western Plus Nor'Wester Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay, began with presentations by Candace Manitopyes and the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education (KOBE).

Manitopyes says her presentation was about the importance of land-based education in a world of disconnection.

"We're very tech heavy right now in this world and I know that we have an advantage as Indigenous people for having that land-based education because it can help our brains, our minds, our spirits during a time where we are chronically disconnected to each other and to the land," Manitopyes says. "So because we have these land-based teachings and land-based education, we're going to be doing good, we're going to be doing well and even more empowered than ever."

Manitopyes also stressed the need for people to be mindful

and balanced in their phone time.

"Don't let it take away from your connection with others and the land and to yourself," Manitopyes says.

Manitopyes says land-based education is something that has helped ground her in her life and her academic journey.

"I wouldn't be who I am without the land and I want the educators to know that what they are doing will reach beyond the children's lives so when they're older they'll always have that remembering of being out on the land and what that felt like, so kids can always feel safe to go back on the land," Manitopyes says.

"Land-based education is just ultimately remembering that we are human, it is the honouring of our humanity, the good parts, the difficult parts, and that land is always there for us through it all."

A group of KOBE staff delivered the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education, Indigenous Education Language, Culture and Land Based Program presentation.

"Part of our program is

doing land-based, culture, language and also keeping in mind too the mental health of the students that we work with," says Anna Fern Kakegamic, Indigenous lead at KOBE, noting that they work with Kindergarten to Grade 8 students in the KO communities as well as the high school students that leave their communities to pursue their high school education in Sioux Lookout, Dryden and Thunder Bay and the KHS students. "When we're talking about Indigenous education, it's just something that some of us here have always practiced our whole teaching careers — how do we do that and still teach the Ontario curriculum, how do those two knowledge systems work together, were there barriers, as teachers we have to ask ourselves that."

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum says they have held the gathering for the past three years because they see the value of connecting to the land.

"It's not only a form of education, but it's a way of healing too for our people — we have to go back to it," Achneepines-

kum says. "I know many of us, we've been doing that for many years, connecting to the land, but we need to ensure that our children value the connection to the land."

Achneepineskum says many First Nations people who live in cities do not have those opportunities to connect to the land.

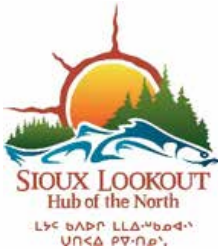
"We have to ensure that we're teaching our people about the value of connecting to the land," Achneepineskum says.

The gathering also featured a keynote presentation on the second day by Paul Cormier

and a variety of breakout sessions that were scheduled on both days, including Reconnecting Language and Land: Anishinaabemowin Learning for Academic Credit by Mary Laur; Supporting Indigenous Foodways in First Nation households in Northern Ontario by Quinn Meawasige; Using Land-based practices to teach Language, science, geography and more by Anika Guthrie; and Tipi: More Than A Shelter by Maggi Hill and Leon Strang on the first day.

The second day's scheduled



breakout sessions were Bringing Them Home: Wahkohtowin in Action Through Youth, Land and Workforce Development by Angela Fletcher, Darcie Piche, David Flood, Daniel Speckert and Santana Vanbuskirk; Natural Law - Innenew Pimatisiwin by Michel Koostachin; Reconnecting Language and Land: Anishinaabemowin Learning for Academic Credit by Jean Marshall, Shelby Gagnon and Charlotte Head; and Land and Lake: K-8 Land-based Learning in Iskatewizaagegan, Anishinaabe-Aki by Rayne Wapioke.



National Indigenous Peoples Day, 2026

Mayor, Councillors and the staff of the Municipality of Sioux Lookout extend best wishes to all aboriginal residents, stakeholders, neighbours and friends on the occasion of National Indigenous Peoples Day, June 21, 2026.


We recognize and appreciate the value of aboriginal peoples' contributions to our community, including those who visit and do business here, and wish to foster continued relationship-building opportunities and ongoing efforts to work collaboratively on joint ventures.

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Commentary

Letter to the Editor: MPs must stop C-22!

I've been very concerned to learn about the government's new surveillance bill, Bill C-22, the Lawful Access Act. I believe, like many organizations that have spoken against it, that it is one of the greatest threats to our privacy of the last two decades. Bill C-22 threatens our Charter rights by:

- Making my communications with family and loved ones less private and secure.
- Forcing companies to create backdoors to allow police and spy agencies to scoop up our personal data and communications, making online protections like encryption meaningless.
- Allowing the government to order companies to hold on to our personal information for up to a year, creating a treasure trove of data to be targeted by hackers
- Risking more of our information being shared with US intelligence and law enforcement agencies - we are NOT US citizens, why would our info be shared?
- Increasing the powers and reach of Canadian police and intelligence agencies, who have a long history of spying on and undermining activists, organizers and marginalized communities.

Can you imagine? Eco-climate activists, land/water defenders that are civilians want a better future for our children and grandchildren will be subjected to spying by OUR government?

On top of all this, the government is again rushing a dangerous bill through Parliament that risks our privacy as well as our security online.

Several MPs, cybersecurity experts, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Apple, Meta, Signal, NordVPN and even US Congressional leaders have warned against this bill. It's time for the government to listen and protect the rights of people in Canada.

Sincerely,
Cathy Carpenter

Celebrating Graduates In Attawapiskat



Xavier
Kataquapit

UNDER THE
NORTHERN SKY

My home community of Attawapiskat First Nation is celebrating the annual graduations of students from Kattawapiskak Elementary School and Vezina Secondary School. These are proud moments for our community as families get to celebrate their children.

These moments are especially important for our First Nation communities, as education in my parents' time was a traumatic event that affected the lives of young people. My parents, Marius and Susan Kataquapit, both attended residential school as children and it was terrible for them and their families. Their parents were forced to give up their young ones for the entire year in order to go to school and the children were separated from their families and communities. For the government, it was a form of assimilation that was designed to remove the indigenous culture from a child's life and force them to integrate into European Canadian society. Unfortunately, that kind of education only produced fear, hopelessness and trauma. It is also a matter of public record now that these residential schools were havens of abuse of all kinds that deeply and negatively traumatized an entire generation of Indigenous people.

To add to the hurt and anxiety that my parents must have lived with when they thought of the education system, their children were taken into the Boarding Home school system. My parents had to give up their children so that they could attend secondary school in the south. Before 1990, Attawapiskat and the coastal communities on the James Bay coast had no way to provide secondary school education. The solution was to send young teenagers

from their northern homes to be housed in boarding homes in cities to the south to complete their schooling.

"I was 13 years old when I had to leave our community to attend secondary school in the south..."

I was 13 years old when I had to leave our community to attend secondary school in the south, in Timmins and North Bay. I had a good education and was a good student but throughout that time, I deeply missed my home and my family. It was also a great culture shock for us because we only spoke Cree at the time, and English was our second language, which we used only at school. It was a deeply troubled time for all of us as we were away from our families, our culture and our language.

So when I heard the news that my home community was celebrating its graduates this year, I was happy to know that these young people had completed their schooling while living at home with their parents, families and friends. This is especially true for the secondary school graduates. During those years of high school, they were home, and they had the chance to be on the land, to hunt and fish, or to just wander into the wilderness with their families, Elders and traditional people. They were exposed to the language and the culture and they were made to feel proud of who they are and where they come from.

My nephew, Landyn Kataquapit, and my grandnephew, Adam John Shisheesh, along with eight other local students, are part of the Vezina Secondary School graduating class of 2026. Landyn said he was happy to have completed his schooling at home and that he was looking forward to attending postsecondary studies in Sudbury in the fall. I talked

to my grandnephew Adam John a few months ago in the spring and he was just as excited to plan out his future after high school.

Their Principal, Shoukat Ali, who has been with the school system in Attawapiskat for the past 18 years, said that he was very happy to see these young people complete their schooling and to have seen their growth over the many years he has been there. Monica Shah, the school guidance counselor, also shared her praise for these new graduates.

I also spoke to Miriam Wesley, who works for the Attawapiskat First Nation Education Authority, and she added that she was proud to see this latest group of young people completing high school. I see Miriam as a cultural Elder in our community, as her family has been involved in local leadership for generations. She is fluent in our Cree language and she holds a great deal of knowledge and wisdom passed down by her family. She also witnessed the negative effects of the Residential School system and the Boarding Home School system. So it was very meaningful and special for me to hear how proud and happy she was to know that this generation of young people completed their education at home.

In addition to these high school graduates, my family is celebrating Grade 8 graduates, including my grandniece Raylee Shisheesh and Kindergarten graduates, including my nieces Autumn and Susannah Kataquapit. Families in Attawapiskat, as well as all the northern coastal communities in James Bay, are celebrating their graduates again this year and it is a cause of great celebration for everyone.

After generations of traumatic experiences with the education system, we now get to celebrate our young people the way we are supposed to. Congratulations to all our northern graduates!

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Business

Waawoono hosts virtual Lunch and Learn on sovereign wealth

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Waawoono Consultancy held a virtual Lunch and Learn to unpack the findings of their recently released report: Beyond the IBA Volume II: Architecting Indigenous Sovereign Wealth on May 27. Beyond the IBA Volume II is posted online at: cdn.prod.website-files.com/68fbb75c1d246701bc0dbac8/6a01e5f568f1f1e9ca344a6f_COMPRESSED-Waawoono-BeyondIBA-II-May26.pdf.

“Representing Waawoono, we are here to discuss the fundamental shifts in the Canadian economic architecture — for decades, the impact benefit agreement has been the ceiling, today we are establishing it as merely the floor,” says Jason Rasevych, president at Anishnawbe Business Professional Association (ABPA) and board director at Waawoono, during his presentation at the Lunch and Learn. “The era of fixed payment impact benefit agreements is ending, during the periods of economic volatility, fixed payments are actively eroded by systemic inflation. To truly capture the full uncompromised value of resource development, nations must transition to direct equity models or other types of structures that benefit their community vision. This structural pivot is about moving from being passive revenue sharing royalty recipients to acting as powerful active partners with real leverage at the board-



Ginoogaming’s Jason Rasevych speaks about the findings of the Waawoono Consultancy’s recently released report: Beyond the IBA Volume II: Architecting Indigenous Sovereign Wealth during a Waawoono virtual Lunch and Learn on May 27.

room table.”

Rasevych says the demand for critical minerals and stable energy is driving a staggering \$106 trillion infrastructure need by 2040.

“Simultaneously, the AI infrastructure push means hyper-scale data centres require unprecedented clean base-load power,” Rasevych says. “In this environment, regional territorial control is absolute financial leverage — nations that position themselves as sovereign energy

brokers are directly capturing capital from the global tech sector.”

Rasevych says one of the areas they looked at in their research was around the restrictions of the prudent investor rule.

“When we think of capturing future wealth, we must break the legacy of certain trust paradigms that are historically utilized for First Nations settlements across Canada,” Rasevych says. “The settlement capital

that we’ve seen since the 1970s has been forced into trusts that are bound by restrictive rules which limit growth to low-yield public bonds. With traditional trusts yielding roughly 3.2 per cent, we see that their real return is actually negative against inflation in certain years.”

Rasevych says when they look at transitioning to Indigenous Sovereign Wealth Funds, they can look at opportunities where yields are closer to 9.5 per cent

moving into infrastructure and potentially private equity models.


“This would bypass some of the issues related to provincial trust laws but also allow nations to emulate tier one global asset management,” Rasevych says. “When we established these Sovereign Wealth Funds, we governed them using Santiago principles. This requires three things: operational autonomy, a strict legal separation from short-term political cycles in

the community — this ensures intergenerational stability. Second is a growth focus shifting our mandate from merely preserving capital to actively multiplying it in different markets; and third, the regional stability utilizing our wealth to act as an institutional anchor for investors that underwrite our entire regional economy.”

Rasevych says by owning enabling infrastructure like high-voltage energy backbones or fibre-optic connectivity networks and strategic transport hubs like roads and ports, they would secure highly stable revenue.

“The first case study when we consider where this has been a success (is) the Wataynikanyap Power project where we see this master class in a utility model,” Rasevych says. “This is the largest Indigenous-led infrastructure development in Canadian history, with 24 First Nations unifying their leverage to build an 1,800-kilometre high voltage system in northwestern Ontario. They secured a commanding 51 per cent majority equity stake in a \$1.9 billion capital asset — most importantly the corporate charter includes a structured path to a 100 per cent whole Indigenous ownership over time.”

The Lunch and Learn also featured panelists Landen Jourdain, Ron Marano and Maite Fink and moderator Blake Hawkins.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

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

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

Mission

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

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

Location: Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Timmins

Position Summary:

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


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Indigenous Business is an economic force that is growing, and we’re growing together.

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We develop best practices for First Nations Development projects and non-First Nations businesses regarding inclusive Procurement and Human Resources Policies.

Communications

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VIP Privileges

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