WAWATAY NEWS

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NADF celebrates 34th Annual Awards

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Savion Nakogee, Delores Wesley, Marie Burke-Lecours, Peter Collins, ThawiKayhiGan Group (TKG Group) and HT Group were celebrated at the 34th Annual NADF Awards, held Oct. 22 at Delta Hotels Thunder Bay.

Nakogee, co-founder and CEO at Wabusk Data Solutions, was recognized with the Startup Business of the Year award.

"It's just an honour to be here," Nakogee says. "I wanted to get into the IT field and explore cybersecurity and then I partnered up with my wife (Chelsea Nakogee). Originally we planned to start it in a few years but then we had a business friend that said, 'You should just start it now because there is such a need for it, it's a niche and people need it now.'"

Wabusk Data Solutions is an Indigenous-owned data governance, privacy and cybersecurity consulting business that was founded in 2025. The business works with Indigenous communities and partner organizations to support culturally respectful approaches to data, privacy, security and technology.

Wesley, owner at Wesley's Take Out, was recognized with the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award.

"We have the restaurant and the heavy equipment," Wesley says, noting that she started up the business about five years ago. "I started from home cooking and selling food, making cakes. It's been really busy. (We get orders) from the community and visitors and organizations that come into the community for meetings. (My) future goals are just to expand and build a bigger store, keep creating more opportunities for the young people."

Wesley's entrepreneurial journey includes property investment, a short-term rental and a heavy equipment business with equipment working on projects in her community.

Burke-Lecours, owner at Moosonee's Necessities, was recognized with the Small Business of the Year award.

"We're very honoured, we're very grateful for it," Burke-Lecours says. "We started Moosonee's Necessities during COVID in 2020, so we've been operating that for the last six years and kind of expanded slowly throughout the years. It's been really good, it's been really rewarding. We both have full-time jobs elsewhere, and then we also operate Moosonee's Necessities, but we have to thank our staff. (There's) some sacrifices but it comes with its own rewards."

Burke-Lecours has continued to grow her entrepreneurial work over the past year through Lil' Necessities at the local arena, where a portion of revenue supports children's programs, and by opening Bare Necessities Massage and Spa.

Collins, CEO at Chi Mino Ozhitoowin and a former chief and current councillor at Fort William, was recognized with the Excellence in Leadership award.



submitted photo

NADF's 2026 award recipients included Jonathon Mamakwa for TKG Group, Luke Reynolds for HT Group, Marie Burke-Lecours, Peter Collins, Delores Wesley and Savion Nakogee.

"I've put a lot of time and effort into creating opportunities for our communities and been involved with politics since 1986 and still around politics today," Collins says. "I've been involved as the CEO at Chi Mino Ozhitoowin for the last four years and continue to bring prosperity and opportunity to our community members and our members under our partnership structure."

As the CEO at Chi Mino Ozhitoowin, Collins guides work connected to major infrastructure development, including the Waasigan Transmission Line Project. The organization supports First Nations participation through employment, capacity training, environmental stewardship, procurement and partnerships with industry, government and educational institutions.

TKG Group was recognized with the Business Excellence award.

"It's good, the recognition that our communities are getting on their business, it's a testament to them," says Jonathon Mamakwa, president at TKG Group. "It's an honour for our group to win this award because we really do care about our people and we're very solution driven and we listen to our board and our communities and we find solutions for them."

Since its early work supporting the Wataynikaneyap Power Project, TKG Group has grown through contracting, camp services, logistics, supply, retail, health services, training and new fuel and procurement initiatives. Recent milestones include the 2023 acquisition of Oshtugon Computers Inc. and the development of the Pipestone Fuels and Supplies LP fuel depot in Pickle Lake, which is intended to support bulk fuel delivery and help reduce costs for northern communities.

HT Group was recognized with the Partnership of the Year award.

HT Group has grown through collaboration among First Nations and Indigenous partners, with businesses that support travel, logistics, real estate, hospitality and community-focused development across northwestern Ontario. Its operations include Happy Time Tours and Travel, Carrick Express, Happy Time Real Estate Holdings and the Best Western Plus Nor'Wester Hotel and Conference Centre, alongside a growing portfolio of

community-aligned ventures.

"Across northern Ontario, Indigenous entrepreneurs are turning bold ideas into lasting opportunities," says Brian Davey, CEO at NADF. "Their leadership creates jobs, strengthens communities, and opens new paths for the next generation. We are proud to recognize this year's recipients and celebrate the vision, resilience, and community commitment behind their achievements."

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Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum laid a wreath during the Remembrance Day ceremony at Waverley Park in Thunder Bay on Nov. 11.

Warriors honoured on Remembrance Day

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum honoured those warriors who served and sacrificed their lives during Remembrance Day ceremonies on Nov. 11 in Fort William and Thunder Bay.

"Our warriors answered the call when Canada needed them," says Fiddler, who participated in the ceremony at Anemki Wajiw in Fort William. "They fought for freedoms that were not always extended to them or their families back home. Today, our communities gather to honour them – to give thanks for their courage and to pray for those who have journeyed to the Spirit World. We remember them. We will continue to fight for the recognition and the rights they were promised."

NAN states that more than 12,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit people served in Canada's major 20th-century conflicts, with some communities sending nearly every eligible man aged 20-35 to serve during World War I. Cree speakers also helped to encode military communications, protecting sensitive information from enemy interception, during World War II.

"It's individuals that choose to go into the military and to serve this country, including those that serve as police officers," says Achneepineskum, who participated in the ceremony at Waverley Park in Thunder Bay. "It is a profession that we must all respect, honour and support especially with the difficulties one faces in order to fulfill that task in their role and responsibility."

Thunder Bay-Superior North MP Patty Hajdu, Thunder Bay-Superior North MPP Lise Vaugeois, Shuniah Mayor Wendy Landry and Thunder Bay Councillor Dominic Pasqualino also participated in the Remembrance Day ceremony at Waverley Park.

"This is a really important day for all Canadians to stand together and remember the many service members that fought for our country and for the values of Canada, freedom and peace," Hajdu says. "(For) so many families who have lost family members, that grieving goes on forever. It's a day for all of us to come together with gratitude and with real love in our heart for the service members that have really embodied Canadian values across the world."

Hajdu says the loss of four Canadian Forces members and the injuries to others at CFB Wainwright in Alberta was "really heavy on our hearts today."

"This is a huge blow to the military community, there are still members that are in critical condition," Hajdu says. "It's just a reminder of the danger that people put themselves in when they choose these jobs, but I think about the bravery of the other service members who went into that fire to save their colleagues and their friends."

Vaugeois says the loss of lives and injuries to others at CFB Wainwright was a very tragic loss of life.

"You can see if you look around here how many people have already gathered to pay their respects to people who have served in the Canadian military in one form or another, also people who have trained and lost their lives through that experience," Vaugeois says. "You will also see that I am wearing the Indigenous veterans pin to make sure that we also remember and show our respects to all people who have served."

Landry, a Red Rock Indian Band citizen, says the loss of lives and injuries to others at CFB Wainwright was a horrible tragedy.

"Our hearts and thoughts are with all the families and those that are still healing," Landry says. "I watched the national Silver Cross mother this morning who also lost her daughter in a training accident and it doesn't matter if you're at war, if you've served overseas or if you're at home training, serving our country is a reason for us to bring gratitude."

Pasqualino says the loss of lives and injuries to others at CFB Wainwright was a terrible tragedy.

"It is one of the things that a soldier faces in peacetime and in wartime is training and being ready for us and to secure the country," Pasqualino says. "It seems as the world is changing that the role of the soldiers can change at any time, and we have to be ready for it."



Community

Thunder Bay Museum opens Native vets exhibit

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Thunder Bay Museum opened the Anishnaabe Zhiimaagnishii Inaadiziwin/Life of Indigenous Soldiers/Vie des Soldats Autochtones exhibit with a presentation by researcher David Michael Thompson on Oct. 9. The travelling exhibition is on display from Oct. 10-Jan. 31.

"For generations, Indigenous soldiers, sailors and members of the Air Force have served with courage and distinction even when the country they served failed to extend them equal rights, recognition and opportunities," says Scott Bradley, executive director at the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society. "So tonight we honour those contributions, reflect on the injustices many Indigenous veterans experienced and celebrate the strength and resilience of communities whose stories are represented here."

Thompson, a leader and researcher with the Native Veterans Association of Northwestern Ontario and a Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek citizen, says he got involved with the Native Veterans Association of Northwestern Ontario in 1988, the same year he graduated from Lakehead University.

"I have lived experience growing up as Anishinabek on the reserve, out on the land, traplines, hunting, fishing — I still do that," Thompson says. "I still have the same family trapline that's been passed down since they established traplines, and before that we kind of just trapped in our family-related traplines and hunting grounds, fishing grounds. I still continue to do that when I'm teaching, I am a teacher at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School."



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek's David Michael Thompson delivers his presentation during the opening of the Thunder Bay Museum's Anishnaabe Zhiimaagnishii Inaadiziwin/Life of Indigenous Soldiers/Vie des Soldats Autochtones exhibit on Oct. 9.

Thompson says the founder of the Native Veterans Association of Northwestern Ontario, the late Charles "Willy" John, sought him out after he graduated from Lakehead University.

"He knew me since I was a young boy and child," Thompson says. "He said, 'Hey, we've got some stuff for you to do for us. We need the energy of the youth, the next generation, to carry out some research for us."

Thompson says John, a Red Rock Indian Band citizen, was an outreach worker for Veteran Affairs who had a vast knowledge of the area and a keen insight to where people could be found that had served in the military.

"He took me under his wing and mentored me," Thompson says. "So Willy John took me on this journey and gave me a whole different education that I did not receive in university, he took me to the roots of the people and took me into the communities that were out of sight, out of mind."

Thompson says John had already started the task by collecting photographs and stories from families and various veterans and friends.

"My job was to use this technology, recording stories and helping out with translations," Thompson says. "It was a beautiful learning experience. When I graduated I had no idea what I was going to do — but he gave me purpose, I'm ever thankful for him for taking me under his wing and taking me in that direction."

Thompson says he searched for information at the archives at Library and Archives Canada, Archives of Ontario and Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

"We amassed quite the collection of photographs and stories," Thompson says. "The next step in his vision for this organization that became the Native Veterans Association of Northwestern Ontario was to create an educational resource for use in school curriculum. He wanted to promote awareness of Anishinabe history, specifically our military heritage, which goes back to when we were allies to the Crown."

Thompson says when John and the other veterans passed, he was faced with a dilemma about what to do next.

"But I remembered everything they said, 'You've got to keep telling these stories, you've got to educate the public, you've got to bring our stories because this is all part of the healing of Truth and Reconciliation,'" Thompson says. "Reconciliation cannot happen until our truths are spoken, and the only people that can speak our truth is us."





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Commentary

Remembrance Day 2026



Xavier Kataquapit

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Remembrance Day is a time when many First Nation communities remember the veterans who took part in historic wars, as well as honor those who are still serving in the military or are actively serving in conflict zones around the world.

In many ways, remembrance for Indigenous people is difficult for us to think about. On one hand, we like to honor the memory of our veterans for their sacrifice for the greater good of the country. However, on the other hand, it is also a reminder of how Indigenous people were treated when they returned from historic wars.

In my family, my father's father, James Kataquapit and my mother's grandfather, John Chooko-molin, were two of 24 people from my home community of Attawapiskat who left the north in 1917 to take part in the First World War.

The summer of 1917 deeply affected my family and many families from my home community of Attawapiskat for generations. James returned home safely and so did most of the other young men. At a time when no one knew much about the wider world, these young men came back with fantastic stories of what they saw and experienced. They had paddled down from James Bay to the Albany River and south to the newly constructed national rail lines to a place called Pagwa, west of Hearst, Ontario. There they saw their first train, running on an iron rail line that stretched for miles. As they moved farther south, they could not believe all the towns, roads, rails, buildings, vehicles and people everywhere.

They enlisted and registered for the army in July 1917 and joined the Canadian Forestry Corps. They lived and worked in southern Ontario and in September 1917, they were sent east to the port of Halifax, Nova Scotia. There, they boarded the SS Megantic, one of the predecessor ships to the RMS Titanic, for a ten-day voyage to Liverpool, England. Our grandfather James often recounted to his grandchildren how he and his companions thought they would never see home again as they crossed the great ocean.

Our great-grandfather John Chookomolin contracted influenza during the crossing and grew terri-bly ill when he arrived and died five days after he arrived in England. He had left behind his young wife Maggie and their infant daughter, who was our grandmother Louise Paulmartin-Rose. It is no small miracle that our grandmother survived without her father. John's war grave lies just outside the city of London, England, in a small village called Englefield Green. I've had the opportunity to visit his final resting place and so have several of his great-grandchildren.

Our grandfather James Kataquapit returned home after two years and he was uncer-emoniously dropped off at the train station in Pagwa and told to make his way home. The other men in their group were separated and they arrived one by one in the north back to their families. At least four men like my great-grandfather John Chookomolin were never heard from again.

When my grandfather James returned, he was surprised to learn that the promised help he had been told about was denied to Indigenous veterans. He had learned that settlement benefits, land, farming assistance and training were provided to others but denied to returning Indigenous veterans who had taken part in the war overseas. Years after his return, he reverted to the same level of poverty as when he had when he first left the community before the war.

I lived with my partner Mike McGrath and I got to know his family over many years. His father, James McGrath, served in the infamous Black Watch regiment, which arrived days after the D-Day landings in June 1944 in France. He fought with the First Canadian Army throughout France and Belgium alongside his younger brother Patrick and they both took part in the Battle of the Scheldt. During the height of this famous Canadian army battle in October 1944, 20-year-old James was severely wounded and his younger 18-year-old brother Patrick was killed in action.

In an unbelievable coincidence, when James and Patrick first landed in France, they were near an Indigenous veteran, John Bradley, a member of the Six Nations Mohawks in southern Ontario. He was a Sergeant in the 26th Battery, 4th Field Regiment as part of the Canadian Army in the Second World War. John Bradley's son, John Bradley Jr., later married Mike's sister, Patty. In a sad memory of their family, Patty, or Patricia, was named after their fallen uncle Patrick.

After reading and researching all these histories of war over the years, it amazes me to know how all these tragic worldwide events have haunted our families for generations.

I will honour the memory of our veterans by always questioning war and encouraging our governments to work towards peaceful ends rather than kill and destroy. Lest we forget our war veterans and fallen soldiers but also let us not forget the causes and origins of every war so that we do not repeat the tragedies of the past.

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CLE Coliseum holds Indigenous Christmas Market



submitted photo

Wolf Tracks Gallery's Candace Wesley displays one of her partner Peter Wesley's paintings during the Aboriginal Artworks Group of Northern Ontario's Canada's Largest Indigenous Christmas Market, held Nov. 6-8 at the CLE's Coliseum building in Thunder Bay. Photo by Rick Garrick.

Another Flu Season Is Upon Us



Xavier Kataquapit

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

I've had a busy few months of meeting so many people I haven't seen in a long time. This year has been the first time I have been around so many people and it is a big change for me. I thoroughly enjoy it and have had lots of fun but with all the running around, I've caught several colds and flus over the past few months. In January, I caught a minor bug that I easily got over but it left me with a long-lasting cough that lingered for five months. It took plenty of treatment and doctor visits before I got over that.

This past week, I caught the worst flu yet. It came on slowly and I felt energetic and well enough to move around but I developed a bad cough. I had to get treated for the cough, and once it subsided, I developed body aches and headaches that kept me in bed. The strangest part of this flu was feeling better after a few days. I thought it wasn't that bad and that, as quickly as I caught it, it was already over after three days. Unfortunately, that was false hope, as the second wave hit me all over again, this time with a bad cough, sneezing, body aches, and a terrible headache. It took another week for those symptoms to subside.

Before the start of the pandemic, my partner Mike was diagnosed with a chronic lung disease and to help deal with this condition, we took part in a lot of precautions to keep him safe. Around the same time, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic began to take off and from then on, we took every precaution we could so Mike wouldn't get sick and I wouldn't get ill either. It meant we began completely isolating ourselves from the world. We stayed in contact with everyone and saw people as often as we could but only in carefully organized meetings outdoors, in the open air.

I don't take as many precautions as I once did but those years of doing our best to isolate taught me to be more careful in public spaces. It may not prevent me from getting ill during flu season but at the very least, I can do my part to avoid spreading illness to anyone else. I keep a supply of face masks, and when I had a cough, I did my best to stay away from others while also using my mask when I had to be around other people. The lesson of the pandemic is not so much how to completely prevent contagious disease but rather how to do certain things in public so that any new illness won't spread as far or as fast.

Health care organizations and doctors have announced that flu season arrived early this year and it is a bad one for many people. According to FluWatch+, Canada's national surveillance system for influenza, COVID-19, RSV, and other seasonal respiratory viruses, flu cases are increasing earlier now than they were at this time last year. If conditions and cases continue, it will mean flu season is starting much earlier this year.

The flu may not mean much to many people who believe the yearly cough is just something we've always had to live with. My experience with my partner's health and the knowledge we accumulated about these diseases has really changed my perspective. Lung infections from viruses and bacteria can lead to lifelong conditions if they aren't treated. Infections also have the possibility of leading to chronic conditions like a permanent cough, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and in more serious cases, can lead to Pulmonary Fibrosis or Interstitial Lung Disease (ILD).

Now that flu season has started, do your best to protect yourself from infection. Wash your hands often in public and be mindful of what and where you touch. If you end up around others who are sick, wear a mask to prevent or delay infection. If you do end up with a cough, do your best to stay away from others and if you can't, wear a mask.

The annual flu has become a serious health risk for many people, especially in the Native community where there is a higher prevalence of those with heart disease, lung disease or diabetes. Pre-existing health conditions put Elders and those with weak immune systems at risk of complications or worse. As I watch many of my northern Elders grow older, every flu season is another time I worry about people catching a bad flu that could lead to serious health conditions or emergencies.

Everyone should take every precaution they can to first prevent infection and secondly to slow the spread of these diseases. If we all do our best to protect ourselves and others, we will see far fewer of our weakened loved ones negatively affected by this year's flu.

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Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Titus Semple, CEO at Semple Enterprises, was announced as Confederation College's 2026 Premier's Awards recipient on Nov. 5 during Confederation College's 31st annual Community Partners' Evening at the Thunder Bay campus.

Titus Semple wins Premier's Award

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Kasabonika Lake's Titus Semple was announced as Confederation College's 2026 Premier's Awards recipient on Nov. 5 during Confederation College's 31st annual Community Partners' Evening at the Thunder Bay campus. The gathering also celebrated the individuals, businesses and organizations whose generosity helps create opportunities for students across northwestern Ontario.

"Each year the Premier's Awards celebrates Ontario college graduates whose achievements have made an exceptional impact in their careers and their communities — this year Confederation College's Premier's Awards recipient is Titus Semple, a graduate of our business program and the CEO of Semple Enterprises," says Michele Salo, president at Confederation College. "Titus is an entrepreneur who measures success not simply by business growth but by the positive impact he can have on the community he serves. Through Semple Enterprises he has helped create community-owned business opportunities, improved access to affordable food and housing and supported greater economic independence for First Nations across northwestern Ontario."

Salo adds that Semple is also the founder of the Tournament of Hope, which brings together hundreds of Indigenous youth through sports, arts and activities that promote connection, confidence and well-being.

"Titus is a wonderful example of what it means to use education, determination and leadership to create opportunities for others," Salo says. "On Nov. 30, we will be celebrating his achievements at the provincial Premier's Awards ceremony in Toronto. Titus, on behalf of Confederation College, we congratulate you on this well deserved recognition."

Semple says he was truly honoured and grateful to be recognized as Confederation College's 2026 Premier's Awards recipient.

"Typically I don't really accept things like this, I never have, that's just the type of person I am," Semple says. "But there is one reason why I decided to go ahead and accept this year's Premier's Award, and that is about two months ago my dad told me a story where people like him were coming up over the years through education, whether it's high school, college and so forth, where they were never recognized for their contributions and their achievements. That's why I felt it was very important for me to accept this on behalf of people like my father."

Semple says his father, Douglas Semple, has contributed a lot to northwestern Ontario, noting how he worked on the advancement and development of First Nations communities and the building of hospitals.

"For an individual to come from the remote north in the bush with no urban experience or anything of that nature and to be able to come and build a hospital in Sioux Lookout is such a huge accomplishment for our region," Semple says. "Today I accept this for him. Meegwetch."

Semple concluded his acceptance speech by announcing that he and his wife would contribute $25,000 towards Confederation College's 60-for-60 fundraising campaign, which will support student entrance bursaries ahead of Confederation College's 60th anniversary in 2027. The goal of the fundraising campaign is to raise $300,000 in support of student financial aid, which will provide bursary support to 60 students each year for five years.

"I believe that we have to give back and create opportunities for others as well," Semple says. "That's the reason why my wife and I decided to do the $25,000 donation towards those bursaries because we remember it wasn't too long ago that we were students here. It was about 15 years ago that we were actually students here and we struggled to make ends meet at times, and those opportunities of assistance when they came by really helped us get by some really tough times."

Semple says his studies at Confederation College helped him with his career by enabling him to gain practical knowledge and work with professors who had real work experience in the fields they were instructing on.

"When I came here I was already in my 30s and I didn't feel out of place, I was very welcomed and that's just the atmosphere that the college provided for me in order for me to be successful in achieving what I came here to do," Semple says. "I would say (to youth), there's opportunities out there right now for young people, and capitalize on all of them, go after them — do not let anything stop you from going after what it is that you want to achieve for yourself."

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Community

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Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Titus Semple, CEO at Semple Enterprises.

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Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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A Message From Deputy Grand Chief Bobby Narcisse



I am honoured to serve as Deputy Grand Chief for the Nishnawbe Aski Nation ("NAN") territory and to share information with you as we come together to advance the priorities of our Nations. I am pleased to see that implementation of the Ontario Final Agreement ("OFA") is underway, with communities leading the development of Multi-Year Plans and working with our First Nation Agencies to co-develop the Child and Community Well-Being Plans. This work reflects our collective direction to reclaim jurisdiction and ensure that decisions impacting our children, youth, and families are made by our own people, grounded in our laws, values, and ways of life. OFA is about more than systems; it is about restoring our responsibility to our families, strengthening our kinship networks, and ensuring our children grow up connected to who they are.

Ontario Final Agreement

What is the Ontario Final Agreement?

The Ontario Final Agreement (OFA) is a significant agreement milestone that provides First Nations in Ontario with increased funding and greater control over child, youth, and Family Services. It enables communities to design and deliver supports that reflect their culture, values, and unique local needs.

The path to this agreement began in 2007 when concerns were raised about the inequitable treatment of First Nations children and families living on reserve. In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal confirmed that Canada had discriminated against First Nations children and ordered systemic changes. Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) helped advocate for reforms that recognize the distinct priorities and remote realities of NAN communities.

In February 2025, Ontario First Nations leaders approved the OFA, and it came into effect on May 29th, 2026. The OFA provides communities with enhanced resources and decision-making authority to develop services tailored to their children, youth, and families. Its objectives are to keep families together whenever possible, prevent children from entering care, support youth as they transition into adulthood, and ensure services are equitable, culturally grounded, and community-led.

Through the OFA, First Nations are empowered to design and implement service delivery programs that are rooted in their own traditions, values, and community priorities.



What changed because of the OFA?

The OFA changes how funding works. Instead of an older, less flexible system, communities now receive funding that better matches their needs. First Nations have the funding and resources to plan and deliver prevention services, First Nations Representative Services, and supports for young adults who were in care or are aging out of care. The agreement also supports community needs like housing, household supports, and spaces to run programs. Communities can now plan supports based on their needs, instead of following a one-size-fits-all system. This is an important step toward recognizing that First Nations know best how to care for their children, youth, families, and communities.

What can OFA funding support?

Basic community services: funding for communities to be able to host and deliver services.

Prevention: supports that help families before a crisis happens.

First Nation Representative Services: help for children and families involved with, or at risk of being involved with, child welfare.

Post-Majority Support Services: financial support, where required, based on the unique needs of each youth, along with life-skills support and access to services up to age 26.

Household Supports: basic needs of the household.

Housing: funding for communities to build or repair houses in the community.

Top-up: Additional funding for information technology, reporting, and emergencies.

Remoteness: additional funding for higher service delivery costs in remote communities.

Capital: infrastructure to support the delivery of FNCFS programs.

What do communities need to do?

Communities are responsible for developing plans that clearly outline their priorities, goals, and spending plans. Two key planning documents are required:

- **A Multi-Year Plan (MYP)** that identifies priorities for prevention, First Nation Representative Services (FNRS), and Post Majority Support Services.
- **A First Nation Infrastructure Investment Plan (FNIIP)** that outlines capital and infrastructure needs.

Communities will also need to engage with their Agency to develop the Agency's Child and Community Wellbeing Plan.

The Child and Community Wellbeing Plan identifies community priorities for Agencies and is a form of accountability. This plan is the agency's responsibility, but it must be developed collaboratively and reflect the direction they receive from communities.

Plans must be completed and submitted by November 30, 2026.

Where can I learn more?

Visit FNCFS Reform:

https://www.fncfsreform.ca/

or NAN OFA Engagement:

https://www.nan.ca/ofa-engagement-and-pre-implementation-gathering/

Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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For more information please email Asheley Wilson at awilson@nan.ca or Lyric Allin at lallin@nan.ca or ofainfo@nan.ca

Beginning September 9th, 2026, NAN will host weekly Information sessions from 2-3 pm. *Connect with the NAN team for the link!*

Notice of completion of draft Environmental Study Report

Wawa Timmins Power Line project

Hydro One briefly postponed the release of the draft Environmental Assessment Study Report (ESR) for the Wawa Timmins Powerline project to allow for additional time to complete the review process. The draft ESR is now complete, and you're invited to provide feedback.

Ontario's long-term demand for electricity is increasing.
To support growth, Hydro One plans to invest in the proposed Wawa Timmins Power Line, a single-circuit, 500-kilovolt transmission line that will run from Hydro One's Wawa Transformer Station (TS) near Wawa to Porcupine TS in Timmins. The proposed project also includes a station near Wawa. Once built, the project will reinforce the electricity grid to support the rapid increase in growth expected in northern Ontario.

As part of the Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project, Hydro One has evaluated alternative routes, identified a preferred route, assessed the potential environmental effects and identified mitigation measures. Engagement with community members and Indigenous communities will continue throughout the lifecycle of the project. For more information on the project and the Class EA process, please visit **HydroOne.com/WawaTimmins**.

Hydro One welcomes your feedback. We will review and address all concerns brought to our attention before finalizing and submitting the ESR to the Ministry of the Environment,

We want to hear from you

The draft ESR is available for a public review and comment from November 12, 2026 to December 12, 2026. The report summarizes the Class EA process, which was conducted in accordance with the approved **Class Environmental Assessment for Transmission Facilities (2024)** under Ontario's *Environmental Assessment Act*. The report can be viewed electronically on Hydro One's website at **HydroOne.com/WawaTimmins.**

Printed copies are available at the following locations during business hours:

- Timmins Public Library – 320 2nd Ave., Timmins
  705-360-2623
- Foleyet Nursing Station – 125 Sherry Ave., Foleyet
  705-899-2053
- Chapleau Public Library – 20 Pine St. W., Chapleau
  705-864-0852
- Wawa Public Library – 40 Broadway Ave., Wawa
  705-856-2244

Written comments or questions on the draft ESR must be received by Hydro One **no later than 4:30 p.m. on December 12, 2026**, addressed to:

Andrew Roberts, Manager, Environmental Services,
Hydro One Networks Inc., 483 Bay Street, North Tower, 14th Floor,
Toronto, ON M5G 2P5
Phone: **1-877-345-6799**
Email: **Community.Relations@HydroOne.com**

Conservation and Parks (MECP). The project will then be considered acceptable and may proceed as outlined in the ESR.

A request may be made to the MECP for an order requiring a higher level of study (i.e. a Comprehensive EA approval) or that conditions be imposed (e.g., require further studies) before the project can proceed. However, this request can only be made on the grounds that the requested order may prevent, mitigate or remedy adverse impacts on constitutionally protected Indigenous and treaty rights.
The MECP will not consider requests on other grounds.

Requests should include the requester's contact information and full name, and specify what kind of order is being requested (request for conditions or Comprehensive EA); how an order may prevent, mitigate or remedy potential adverse impacts on Indigenous and treaty rights; and any information in support of the statements in the request.

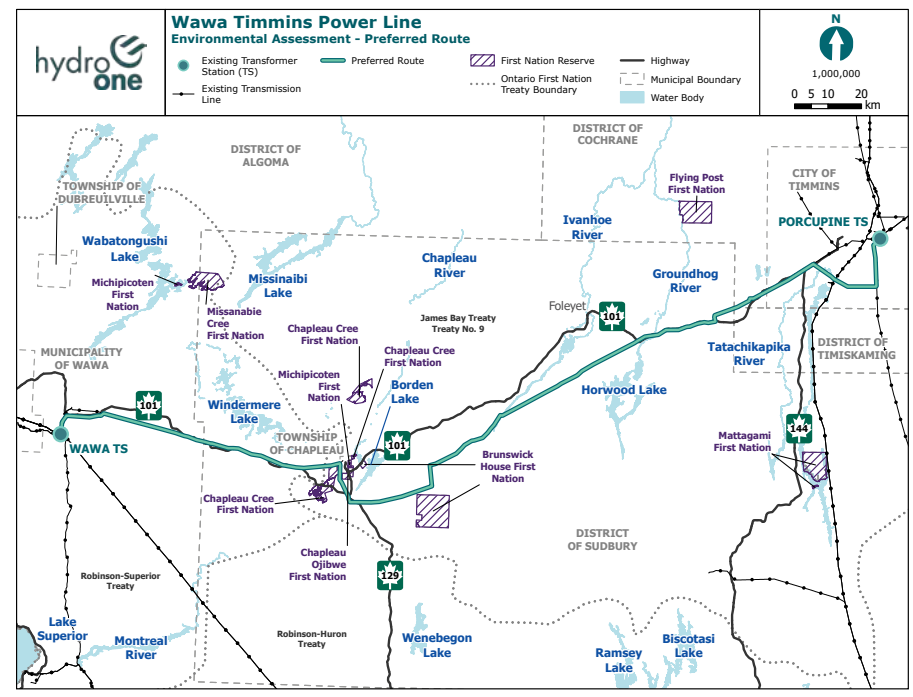
Requests should also be copied to Hydro One per contact information provided above. Please visit the Ministry's website for more information on requests for orders under section 16 of the *Environmental Assessment Act* at: **https://www.ontario.ca/page/class-environmental-assessments-section-16-order**.

If no Section 16 Order requests are submitted during the comment period, Hydro One will proceed with the project.

The request should be sent in writing or by email to:

Minister, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
777 Bay Street, 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
Email: **minister.mecp@ontario.ca**

Director, Environmental Assessment Branch
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
135 St. Clair Ave. W, 1st Floor
Toronto, ON M4V 1P5
Email: **EABDirector@ontario.ca**



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Education

Oshki and Pioneer Ridge open new living classroom

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Oshki-Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute and Pioneer Ridge Long-Term Care and Senior Services celebrated the grand opening of a new Living Classroom at Pioneer Ridge on Nov. 5 in Thunder Bay. The Living Classroom is an innovative training model designed to prepare the next generation of health-care professionals through hands-on, immersive education.

"We are proud to partner with Pioneer Ridge to offer our students an innovative learning experience that combines academic instruction with hands-on clinical exposure," says Lorrie Deschamps, president at Oshki-Wenjack. "Their willingness to embrace new models of education makes them an ideal partner for this initiative. This partnership builds on success of our Personal Support Worker Living Classroom in Grassy Narrows and represents the first Living Classroom of its kind for Practical Nursing students. It reflects our shared commitment to finding innovative ways to prepare the next generation of health-care professionals."

The Living Classroom will allow Personal Support Worker (PSW) and Practical Nursing students to gain valuable experience with mentorship and real-world interaction.

"This partnership represents a significant investment in the future of long-term care in Thunder Bay," says Traci Fisher-Zaiser, administrator at Pioneer Ridge Long-Term Care and Senior Services. "The Living Classroom is more than a learning space; it is a place where education, mentorship and compassionate care come together to empower students and support seniors."

Deschamps says the collaboration supports student success by providing immersive learning opportunities in a supportive environment.

"I'm glad that we have a beautiful classroom for them to come to and learn all the skills they need to work with the residents in Pioneer Ridge," Deschamps says. "It gives us an opportunity to train more students, this is a really exciting endeavour that we're doing."

Deschamps says they have 16 students who will be participating in the training at Pioneer Ridge.

"So we're going to have two cohorts coming of eight at the same time," Deschamps says. "We also have a lab at our campus, which is very similar to (this) one. So it's exciting and we're going to be training more people."

Kim Falcigno, senior vice president, academic at Oshki-Wenjack, says the Living Classroom takes experiential learning to the next level.

"This is embedded learning inside the workplace that truly bridges the gap between when a student leaves school and moves into the workplace," Falcigno says. "This prepares them for that transition by embedding the workplace truly into the learning experience, so this is the richest experiential learning opportunity that our practical nurses will have to learn the skills and characteristics of working in a long-term care home, a very important transition because health care needs nurses that are well trained and able to handle a variety of circumstances and this experiential component will prepare them with all of that."



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Oshki-Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute's Lorrie Deschamps speaks during the grand opening of the new Living Classroom at Pioneer Ridge on Nov. 5 in Thunder Bay.

Falcigno says the simulation manikin in the Living Classroom is a safe way for students to practice learning on a person without risk of harm, noting they also have simulation manikins in the health-care lab at the Oshki-Wenjack campus.

"Once they're comfortable doing procedures with the simulated manikins, then they can move forward to working with the residents in their long-term care home field placement," Falcigno says.

Erica Blekkenhorst, Practical Nursing program coordinator at Oshki-Wenjack, says the new Living Classroom is very similar to the lab space they have at the Oshki-Wenjack campus.

"When they learn something here, they actually get to go immediately out into the care environment and learn that in the real life scenarios, learning from the residents, learning from the health-care team," Blekkenhorst says. "When they're at campus (at) Oshki-Wenjack, it's quite an extended period of time before they get to really experience it first-hand, so it's really exciting to have direct contact."

The Living Classroom program was funded by the provincial government and led by the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging, in partnership with the Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators.

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Education



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Pelican Falls First Nations High School students Jaelynn Bighead Mekanak and Lyric Anishinabie delivered presentations on the first day of the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council Annual General Meeting.

Students present at NNEC's latest AGM

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC) included presentations by students from Pelican Falls and Dennis Franklin Cromarty high schools during the Annual General Meeting, held Oct. 27-29 at the DaVinci Centre in Thunder Bay. The students delivered their presentations during the 2025/2026 Annual Report session on the first day of the AGM.

"Since this is my final year after four years at Pelican, I've been reflecting on my time here and how much this place has become a part of my life," says Jaelynn Bighead Mekanak, student council chief at Pelican Falls First Nations High School (PFFNHS). "Coming to Pelican meant leaving my family and everything familiar behind, balancing school, sports and my responsibilities as student chief, while being away from home hasn't always been easy. Pelican has become a second home to me, drumming has also been a big part of my journey here, helping me stay connected to my culture throughout the years."

Mekanak says one change she would like to see is more opportunities for students outside the classrooms.

"I'm asking the leaders here today to help bring back dedicated funding for student trips, especially college tours and other educational experiences," Mekanak says.

Lyric Anishinabie, student council deputy chief at PFFNHS, says he loves playing the piano, learning about trees and how to identify them and playing games such as badminton.

see DFC page 15

ᐊᐧᐊᑌ WAWATAY COMMUNICATIONS SOCIETY

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.

The Position will be Posted until Filled **Start Date: ASAP**

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

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

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

For full job description please visit ***www.wawataynews.ca***

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www.HopeForWellness.ca

Education



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Darren Lentz, principal at Algonquin Avenue Public School, and Jean Marshall speak about hide tanning with a group of students during Algonquin Avenue Public School's Take Me Outside Day, held Oct. 21 in Thunder Bay.



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Lakehead Region Conservation Authority's Rachael Zacharias Bezanson and a group of students use binoculars to identify birds.

Hide tanning and urban birding for Take Me Outside Day

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Hide tanning by Jean Marshall and urban birding by the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority were featured during Algonquin Avenue Public School's Take Me Outside Day on Oct. 21 in Thunder Bay.

"It's Take Me Outside Day, so even in the little bit of rain we've had, we've got every class out a couple of times today learning about different parts of Aki, on-the-land learning," says Darren Lentz, principal at Algonquin Avenue Public School. "We're here with Jean, she's the expert on hide tanning and has a lot of the teachings. This is a hide that the kids tanned last year here at the school, and we hadn't finished the smoking part. I've only done this a few times, Jean has a lot more experience with it and she's helping us smoke our hide now."

Lentz says the students love doing traditional activities such as preparing hides.

"They love being around the fire, they love being around and learning teachings about the animals and how they're used," Lentz says. "They thrive on this."

Lentz says it is important to get the students outside.

"If they want to build a relationship on the land, we have to build a relationship with the land," Lentz says. "Even this weather teaches them perfectly that getting outside doesn't have to be a big chore, it's good for our health, it's good learning. There's good opportunities to learn out here and it's just a great place to be and they get to build a relationship with the land at the same time."

Marshall, a Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug citizen who lives in Fort William, says she enjoyed sharing her knowledge with the students.

"This is what I love to do, so it's really nice to share with them the possibilities of what you can do with your life," Marshall says. "The energy of these students is very curious and energetic, they loved coming outside. They have very good listening skills — they were interested and curious."

Marshall says it was also fun to work with Lentz on smoking the hide.

"He had a moose call and he started by sharing with the students about hunting — he taught them all how to do a moose call, and it was really interactive and fun and it was nice to see all of the kids participating," Marshall says. "They were all active and comfortable and having fun with each other, so for me it's just really nice to be here. A lot of the kids here are Anishinabe and they already have knowledge from their families from hunting. Land-based learning is critical to the minds of our young people and they need to be around this so I'm grateful to be here today at Algonquin."

Rachael Zacharias Bezanson, education coordinator at the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, says learning outside is always important.

"We had the kids learning how to use binoculars so they could see birds up close and today we saw starlings, ring-billed gulls and American crows," Bezanson says. "There were bluejays and ravens calling from the back — it was an exciting day."

Bezanson says she also showed the students a mounted American kestral.

"We took a look at some of the field marks," Bezanson says. "And I passed around some claws and some wings and asked them for their observations — they always give surprising observations."

Take Me Outside Day is part of Take Me Outside Week, held Oct. 19–23, which features opportunities such as live virtual speakers, virtual field trips, curriculum connected outdoor learning activities and resources for educators and learners.

Information about Take Me Outside Day is posted online at: takemeoutside.ca/.

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Education

DFC and Pelican students make presentations



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News
Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School students Marria Bekintis, Shailyn Bighead and Malachi Fiddler delivered presentations

...from page 13

"I also really like writing essays, making lyrics, hence my name, writing poems and creating fictional worlds and characters as they help me for entertainment," Anishinabie says, adding that he loves drawing and experimenting with cinematography. "As a deputy chief, I want to be seen as a person for which students have as a go to person for either suggestions, recommendations and or ideas."

Mekanak and Anishinabie also shared a video they had made about life at PFFNHS during the AGM.

Marria Bekintis, a student at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFC) says, the teachers are really supportive at DFC.

"It's like a big family, they welcome you and you can do a bunch of things without being judged," Bekintis says. "What are my favourite programs, they do a bunch of sports during the lunch like soccer, hockey, volleyball, and they do student council meetings as well for events like prom, dances and a bunch of other things — it brings connection to us, we get to see what we're all thinking and it brings us together."

Shailyn Bighead, a student at DFC, says DFC was very welcoming when she first transitioned from attending a high school in Thunder Bay.

"I'm learning to speak the language and to keep the language as much as I can," Bighead says, noting that the DFC Elders encouraged her to speak her language. "I often talk in the language with Elaine and Rebecca as well as the other Elders."

Bighead says her favourite after-school activity is the art club hosted by Greg Chomut on Tuesdays, adding that her wish is for broom ball to be offered at DFC.

"I want to play broom ball again," Bighead says. "I would like to see a musical and more guest speakers."

Malachi Fiddler, a student at DFC, says he likes the nice people and helpful teachers at DFC.

"Brandon helped me a lot through English when I was failing and I was not doing so good in his class," Fiddler says. "I like doing foot patrol after school, honestly, it gets my steps in and I get paid for doing it. I also enjoy the rec program they have over there, and hanging out in the Dilico room and catching up on work and tutorials — I did that a lot for my first year."

An Honouring the late Norma Kejick Presentation, an Indigenous Services Canada presentation and a report on the NNEC Audit were also scheduled for the first day of the AGM.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Education Jurisdiction Lead Negotiator

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is seeking proposals from qualified individuals to serve as Lead Negotiator for NAN's Education Jurisdiction Sectoral Self-Governance Agreement negotiations with Canada.

For more information, please contact Bryan Achneepineskum, EducationJurisdiction Manager at bachneepineskum@nan.ca

Please visit nan.ca for full RFP details and submission requirements.

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