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Caring About One Another



**Xavier
Kataquapit**

UNDER THE
NORTHERN SKY

I can't believe I am writing a column to warn everyone once again that Covid 19 is around us all and that many of us are getting sick. It seems like this virus does not want to leave us and that is causing a lot of people pain and tragedy.

Part of the problem is that governments have decided that life should return to normal so schools are open and it is business as usual with no wearing of masks and very little concern about dealing with the COVID variants.

There are vaccines available that deal with the BA4 and 5 variants that have come up over the past months but just recently it has been announced that there is another new variant threatening us.

The only good news is that for the most part the people that get sick with this virus at this point are the elderly and those with health issues.

Vaccines do protect these people to a point but still they can get very sick, end up in the hospital or even die. So, younger people tend to survive this COVID virus much better than the elderly.

It remains that as a civilized society that we have a responsibility to care for each other and that means more so for the elderly, fragile and those with health issues. We need to remember to take care of the most vulnerable in our society but to a great degree that is not happening.

Right now these COVID variants are running wild and a lot of people are getting sick. Many are putting off being sick as having a cold or flu or even allergies but don't be fooled. there is a very high de-gree of chance that they have COVID. We are in a pandemic and the new variants are extremely contagious and infecting so many people so be aware that people with colds most likely actually have COVID.

If you are elderly, have health issues and if you have not had up to date vaccines then be aware of your surroundings. Stay away from anyone with symptoms of COVID or any kind of flu or cold.

Try to limit any visiting indoors with people and wear a mask when you are out and about.

Get the latest fifth shot of the vaccine that deals in a better way with the BA4 and 5 variants, get the annual flu shot and be alert and aware of your surroundings.

Now that we are experiencing colder days much of our gathering is indoors and that will be creating a big problem in terms of COVID spreading through our population.

It is disheartening to have to keep fighting this pandemic and rampaging virus and we all want things to get back to normal however the reality is that COVID is still here with us and a big threat to the most vulnerable people in our society.

So, if you have any symptoms of COVID and even if they are mild please do your best to stay away from seniors and those who have health issues so they have the opportunity to stay healthy and stay alive to enjoy more years with their loved ones, family and friends. It is the civilized thing to do.

I have lost family and friends to COVID19 and I have experienced it first hand so that makes me very conscious of the danger that still lives with us.

The world seems a little dark right now with the war in the Ukraine and a looming recession but I believe we will somehow do the right thing as human beings and figure things out on a global scale with out causing more havoc and threats to world populations.

This is not a time for doom and gloom but we have to be realistic and realize that our path of intolerance, uncaring, right wing and mean spirited thinking can only make things much worse. It is time for kindness, understanding, openness and taking care of each other.

We have more power than we know as long as we are aware of what is happening around us, on the planet and we step up to keep our democracy alive and well.

While we are at it we need to remember to think about our seniors and the most vulnerable in our society while this COVID virus continues to spread.

There are things we can do to make sure people get through this current wave of COVID. We simply need to care more about one another.

www.underthenorthernsky.com

Oshki offers tours of mobile trades training lab



Oshki-Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute staff Vivek Krishnan and Gordon Kakegamic provided a tour of the Oshki-Wenjack's mobile trades training lab at the First Nation Student Golf Tournament 2022 at Whitewater Golf Club near Thunder Bay.

Looking Back At Recent Weather And Ahead To The New "Normals"



**Graham
Saunders**

WEATHER

We are in the middle of the fall season but first some words about this recent growing season. The growing season takes place when weather conditions are conducive to plant growth. The beginning and end of the growing season are determined by air temperature, available moisture, daylight and sunshine. Various plant species have individual cues to start and end their annual growth cycle. Vegetation growth typically happens in late April or early May across southerly areas of Northern Ontario and spreads north as spring continues. Native species like pussy willows flushed out about on schedule this year but gardeners needed to delay planting some vegetables because of some killing frost in later May. The arrival of frost will end the growing season for outdoor sensitive plants but hardier vegetation will persist a little longer.

The growing season this year was warmer than usual across the entire region – although not as warm as last year, the warmest on record for many areas in Northern Ontario. Last year available moisture was an issue for many gardeners especially in Northwestern Ontario where drought conditions were

common. This year's growing season, with the exception of a week or two in August, had sufficient moisture in most areas.

I speculate reasonable harvests this year were fairly comparable to last year, i.e. two reasonable gardening seasons in a row for most gardeners.

The length of the growing season has increased over time in most parts of Canada. The increase has been approximately two days per decade since 1950. In Northern Ontario this gain amounts to about three weeks. This increase has been driven by both earlier dates in the spring (about one week) and later dates in the fall (about two weeks). Of course, these averages and overall trend do not guarantee anything about temperatures or rainfall for next year's growing season!

The entire region was warmer than normal in September. Areas in the far north differed the most from their normal temperatures, 2-3 degrees above average. The final week of September featured killing frost in most areas but a few locations near open water likely had only light frost. or perhaps no frost at all.

Warmer than average temperatures persisted almost to the middle of October. A few daily record high temperatures were set across Northern Ontario in the second week of October.

30-Year Normals

The "New Normal" is an expression heard a lot these days, whether talking about

the COVID-19 pandemic, rising prices and technology. The expression usually implies bad or complicated news but for people with interests in weather and climate it means something different.

In this weather column the word "normal" often appears and has a specific meaning. Climate normals are used to summarize or describe average climatic conditions of a particular location. One might hear or see "Yesterday's high temperature in Moosonee was 20 degrees C, which is 13 degrees warmer than normal." The normal they are referring to is the average high temperature in the years 1981-2010, which is 7° C.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) began the practice of computing 30-year averages of weather variables in the 1930s. Most countries in the world comply with the guidelines of the WMO and issue 30-year summaries of temperatures – highs, lows, extremes and precipitation – rainfall, snow, freezing rain, hail, extremes. Books are written about why a sample size of 30 is important in statistical analysis. The one-line version is that a sample size of 30 is usually high enough to provide a useful average or "normal".

Typically, countries around the world update 30-Year Normals each decade, in agreement with WMO standards. In other words, the new normals cover the period 1991 – 2020 and should replace the (outdated) 1981 – 2010 normals. The latest decade officially began on January 1st 2022 and some

countries were fairly quick off the mark. The United States issued updated normals for thousands of American weather stations in May 2022.

Environment and Climate Change Canada acknowledged the process on its website: "At the completion of each decade, Environment and Climate Change Canada updates its Climate Normals for as many locations and as many climatic characteristics as possible."

Canada has not provided updated normals so far. This is only one of many problems with the Canadian climatological record. Thunder Bay Airport has normals for the years 1971-2000 and prior. When Environment and Climate Change Canada gets around to updating normals Thunder Bay Airport will not be included on the list. This is due to missing data and data that does not meet WMO quality standards.

For the years 1961-1990 there were 1587 stations contributing to the inventory of normals – stations with at least 15 years of data. For the years 1971-2000 there were 1480 stations and for 1981-2020 there were only 1136 stations. The number of stations that meet the WMO standards of 30 years of data is also declining. In the years 1971-2000, 567 of the stations had 30 years of data. In 1981-2010 only 264.

Climate data are important for understanding the past, knowing and forecasting current weather and predicting the future climate on local and global scales.

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Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Kathy Labrador, a second generation residential school survivor, shares her poetry during Thunder Bay's flag raising ceremony for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's official Residential School Survivors flag on Sept. 30 at Hillcrest Park.

Survivors raise flag at Hillcrest Park

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Thunder Bay marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with a flag raising ceremony for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's official Residential School Survivors flag on Sept. 30 at Hillcrest Park.

"When I look at the place of this flag I agree that it is a beautiful place for this flag to be raised," says Fort William Councillor Michele Solomon. "You can see Anemki Wajiw and you can see Nanabijou (Sleeping Giant) from the place that this flag will be raised, which is I think really beautiful. And it really lends to the symbolic ways we have been adopting as society to acknowledge these wrongdoings that happened so many years ago."

Solomon says the truth about residential schools was not known for far too many years.

"I know it's going to take a long time for us to get to a place where not only is it symbolic and external, but it is internal and we can have this day in a good way from our hearts," Solomon says. "We know there's people out there who are probably still struggling with what this day means and still struggling with the truth that comes with this day."

Grand Chief Derek Fox says he let out his tears that morning while walking his dog, noting that both of his parents were taken to residential school and he considers himself as an inter-generational survivor.

"I knew how heavy this day was and I knew I just had to let it out," Fox says, noting that he had spent most of his life angry about what had happened. "It's only recently that I started to forgive — I even told my parents that it's not your fault, it's not your fault that I was raised the way I was raised, it's not your fault that you were raised the way you were raised, it's not your fault that you were not taught to be proper parents."

that you were abused, that you were told not to speak your language, that you were punished for speaking your language, that you were punished for loving your brown skin, that you were punished for all these things that were true to you and that you brought that into your parenthood raising me."

Fox says he told his parents it was not their fault and it helped him to move forward.

"So my message to everyone here today is that you need to find a way to move forward," Fox says. "I'm from Bearskin Lake but I grew up here in Thunder Bay. I love Thunder Bay, I was in Grade 1 when we came here, I went to Ogden and I had the best teachers around. I say the best teachers because they knew what was going on in my life and they took care of me, when I didn't have a lunch they brought a lunch."

Fox says there are people in Thunder Bay who want to help and move forward in a good way.

"I want to be a part of that movement for Truth and Reconciliation," Fox says. "I acknowledge the Minister (Patty Hajdu), the Mayor (Bill Mauro) and all of our leadership — it's going to be them, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Fort William First Nation, businesses, hockey teams, parents, schools, educators in this city and across the country that help us move forward in a good way."

Fox says the greatest gift he ever got was being a father with four children.

"I believe if I'm going to make change it's going to be with my children," Fox says. "Just to tell them I love them every night, to hold them, tell them that you can be proud of who you are, you can be proud to want to hunt and fish and speak your language, you can be proud to have brown skin, you can be proud to be where you're from. Take pride in being First Nations, Anishinabe, even take pride in being Canadian if that's what you want to call yourself."



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Thunder Bay held a flag raising ceremony for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation's official Residential School Survivors flag.

Mauro says education is important for moving forward on Truth and Reconciliation, noting that he participated in a two-and-a-half-day Indigenous training session shortly after being elected as mayor in 2018 where the participants were asked what the single most important thing was that they had learned.

"There was a youngish woman in the crowd and I was stunned by what she said — what she said was she didn't know or have any knowledge whatsoever about the residential school system," Mauro says. "It reaffirmed to me that education is absolutely fundamental and foundational to any success being achieved on these issues over the next several years and decades to come."

Mauro says people also ask him how long Truth and Reconciliation will take.

"I simply say all the time, well it took us decades and decades to get to this point and it's going to take a generation or two or three before we have a resolution to this," Mauro says. "So the work is ongoing."


A stylized map showing the location of ABA. A blue location pin with the letters 'ABA' in white is placed at the intersection of Harbour Expy and Memorial Ave. A white box with a black border contains the text '995 Memorial Ave'. The map is composed of grey and white rectangular blocks representing streets and buildings. Other street names visible are 'Memorial Ave' and 'Simpson St'.

Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

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ONWA holds Sisters in Spirit Vigil

Thunder Bay.

"Oct. 4 is the National Day of Action for MMIWG (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls) and this annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil," Archibald says. "When this inquiry came about, one of the difficult words for non-Inde-

con't on next page



Dress Purple Day

October 27, 2022

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Λα.Ρ.Δ.Λ^ς 27, 2022

Dress Purple Day gives us the opportunity to show our communities that we are here for our children, youth, and families as a resource. Our philosophy, Mamow Obiki-ahwahsoowin, doesn't just include Tikinagan staff. It includes the whole community as we all work together to raise our children.

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Show your support on social media by posting your purple pictures with the hashtags #IDressPurpleBecause and #IDressPurple



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Community

Traditional food celebrated at LU



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News
Whitesand Elder Ernie Kwandibens and his partner cooked some geese from Quebec during Lakehead University's Fall Harvest at the Sweat Lodge Site in Thunder Bay.

from page 10

"We're in charge of cooking it today so people can learn a little bit about sturgeon and learn about the importance of it sustaining our families when they lived in that area," Baxter says. "When we said it was a prehistoric fish people were wowed because it is of course a very ancient species, and also how big it was. This fish wasn't too big, about three feet, but of course sturgeon grow very large. We would fry it like this, you can boil it, you can smoke it, you can make it into pemmican with dried berries and often it was the food of our family when they trapped in the winter, so the students thought that was quite interesting that this one particular fish could be used so many different ways."

Melissa Twance, a PhD student at Lakehead University who was frying the walleye on a campfire, says this was her fifth or sixth year at the Fall Harvest. "I'm like the resident fish cooker," Twance says. "It's nice to connect with students and other people from the university, it's nice to see families come out."

Twance says she decided to do her PhD at Lakehead Uni-

versity because it is in her home territory.

"It's close to home, I'm surrounded by people that I know and the research I'm doing is with this community so it makes sense to be at an institution that supports that community," Twance says.

Whitesand Elder Ernie Kwandibens says the geese he and his partner were cooking were harvested by her family in Quebec.

"Her brothers and relatives hunt for her," Kwandibens says. "We've got a couple of geese getting cut up as we speak, we have blueberry jam, bannock, moose meat soup and some spareribs."

Kwandibens says they continue to share their knowledge about preparing geese at the Fall Harvest because they want to keep the tradition alive.

"It's part of our culture and we need to show the world how we live in this part of the world," Kwandibens says.

Mattagami Elder Gerry Martin says he has been sharing knowledge about herb teas for about eight years at the Fall Harvest.

"I want them to appreciate that this is all from nature, it's free," Martin says. "I try to

teach people it's all out here, it's local stuff, learning to gather it, when to gather it and how to harvest it and keep it through the year."

Helen Pelletier, a former Lakehead University student and Lakehead University Aboriginal Awareness Centre director, says she was sharing knowledge about the birch bark baskets she makes with cedar rims and spruce root stitching.

"I'm trying to promote this more because I went to Toronto in June for the Indigenous Fashion Arts (Festival) and there were no other makers there of birch bark baskets," Pelletier says. "I didn't see basket makers and I was thinking this is a lost art. I'm learning more and more as the years go on."

Pelletier says she first learned about making birch bark baskets in 1998 when she worked with Ann Magiskan at Fort William Historical Park.

"She was the first person who taught me about working with birch bark and roots," Pelletier says. "The first year I remember just peeling roots, so there's been a process of learning and I feel like I'm still to this day learning about this material."



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DGC Achneepineskum stresses the importance of learning traditions

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum spoke about the importance of learning the traditional ways after introducing herself with her spirit name at the Matawa Health Co-operative's Traditional Healers Retreat. The retreat was held Sept. 27-28 with a variety of speakers and breakout sessions at the Nor'Wester Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.

"Twenty years ago, 10 years ago I probably wouldn't have been able to say that to introduce myself with my spirit name," Achneepineskum says. "And that was one of the things that held us back in terms of regaining and embracing our power, because we were not allowed to be who we were meant to be."

Achneepineskum says her parents, who had nine children, used to live off the land as fur harvesters and commercial fishers.

"Back in that time there were no government subsidies to support the families so people had to work in order to support their families," Achneepineskum says. "I'm very proud of my parents, both have passed on now, my mom's been gone for 26 years and my dad's been gone for 14 years now, but they worked really hard to support us. But they also suf-

ferred a lot of injustice — when my seven older siblings were taken to residential school, my parents were really hurt and they cried many tears. And at times the anger came out, especially when there was alcohol involved, because their role as a parent was severed and they were told they had no right to protect their child.”

Achneepineskum says she only lived with her parents for six years, but many of her parents' teachings are still instilled within her spirit and heart.

"My parents taught me about respect for the land," Achneep-ineskum says. "I had certain duties as a young child, even at the age of two there were certain things I had to do in order for us to survive. It was little things like hauling wood, of course as a little child I could only carry two pieces of wood. I even had a small bucket to carry water, and I knew I had to do it, that teaching was there."

Achneepineskum says everyone in her family had their roles and responsibilities when they were on the land.

"It was a good life out there, and I think that part of our life is what created that resilience within my family for us to be where we are today," Achneepineskum says.

Achneepineskum says she believes her experience as a small child and being part of that family unit living on the land is among the things that

are missing from family units today.

"Children are not given their roles as to their responsibility to be part of that family unit, because that's what instills that purpose, that sense of belonging is that you're contributing to the well-being of your family," Achneepineskum says.

Robert Baxter, health director at Eabametoong and president and chair at Matawa Health Co-operative, says the retreat was held to look at what traditional medicines were lost and how to use them properly.

"Plus we want to catalogue them and make sure they are there for the next generation," Baxter says. "That's always been my work over the years, even before the Matawa Health Co-op I've been a voice for that."

Baxter says there was a good response and turnout for the retreat.

"People are starting to open up a little bit, but the knowledge is very patchy," Baxter says. "This person might know just a little bit and this person knows that — eventually as time goes it's all going to come all together, and the teachings are going to come. Plus the other important part that I would like to see is some research dollars coming out of it where our people can have hands-on on the research and be a part of that."

Matawa hosts Traditional Healers Retreat

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Webequie's Ronnie Beaver delivered a Waking Up Our Ancestors presentation on the first day of Matawa Health Co-operative's Traditional Healers Retreat, held at the Nor'Wester Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.

“A lot of our communities were affected by residential school,” Beaver says, noting that he is a residential school survivor. “We’re all survivors, all of us — there was a time that they were going to eliminate Native people. So today you are here, you’re still here. A lot of us are learning about our ways again, and this is good.”

Beaver says he began his path back to the traditional ways by seeking knowledge from four Elders in Manitoba.

"I had to search for this life, this Anishinabe way," Beaver says. "One of the Elders that taught me this Anishinabe way, there were four Elders that I worked with, one of them told me I had to go back to my community, go home. He said it's time for you to wake up your ancestors, and he told me what I needed to do to wake up the ancestors. So that is why we are here today, we will continue that journey of healing."

Beaver says he was given his name Many Eagles Man by a sun dance chief, who was one of his mentors who taught him the Anishinabe way of life.

"He also showed me a lot of things — I'll go back to the time when we were children, all of us, even the old people that are

here remember those days," Beaver says. "We never had to worry about anything. I remember where I was from, I remember who I was, I remember the only language I spoke at that time was Anishinabemowin. That's the way I was brought up."

“We had our own land where we were free to roam, to hunt, to fish...”

– Ronnie Beaver

Beaver says they did not live on the reserve, they lived on their traditional territory.

"We had our own land where we were free to roam, to hunt, to fish, to take our families, to teach our families about that life," Beaver says.

Beaver says he didn't always live that good life, noting that he had to go for treatment and work hard to be where he is today.

"In 1987 I decided that I should do something about my problem, alcohol addiction," Beaver says. "My wife, a very powerful woman, she's the one who helped me. Without her, I wouldn't be here. She's always there, even when I was drinking and I was gone for a month."

Beaver says he and his wife Evelyn now have three children, 10 grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

"So I am very rich with family," Beaver says. "That's the way the spirits see it, they don't see money as a value, it's your

Beaver says one of the Elders at the treatment centre taught them about the importance of teaching their children and grandchildren the Anishinabe way of life.

"She said if they don't know who they are, they're not going to make it," Beaver says. "She said Creator gave you a power to represent that child — that power, that's your responsibility to look after that child. You have to give those teachings, you have to give that love, share that life with that child."

Beaver says he didn't know anything about the Anishinabe way of life when he went to the treatment centre.

"I didn't know anything about that smudging, that was the first thing they taught us," Beaver says. "I was brought up as an Anglican, my mother was very involved with the Anglican church."

Beaver says Evelyn was taught about the traditional medicines when she was a child by her mother, who had knowledge of the traditional medicines.

"Evelyn learned those things and today we work as a team," Beaver says. "She is a herbalist."

Beaver says the young people want to learn about the Anishnabe way of life, noting that he and Evelyn have seen changes during their travels to First Nation communities.

"I see some of the communities have put up their lodges, I see communities with powwows, I see many people carry that drum, that pipe, this is good," Beaver says.



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Confederation College honours alumni with President's Award



Jason Rasevych.

submitted photo

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Ginoogaming's Jason Rasevych was one of four Confederation College alumni who were honoured with a President's Award for their achievements on Sept. 29 at Confederation College's Community Partners' Evening. The four alumni were also nominated for the 2022 College Ontario Premier's Award, which celebrates Ontario's outstanding graduates, recognizes the contributions they have made within the province and beyond and will be presented on Nov. 28 in Toronto.

"I was honoured to be rec-

ognized," says Rasevych, partner, national Indigenous client services lead at Deloitte Canada and board member at the Anishnawbe Business Professional Association. "I'm thankful that Confederation College presented me with the President's Award and then also nominated (us) four alumni for the Premier's Award, which is going to happen in November in Toronto where we're competing against all the other candidates across Ontario colleges."

Rasevych says he transferred to a business program at Confederation College about 20 years ago from an economics program at Durham College.

"In general I think the college provided me with a learning environment that was positive but also was challenging," Rasevych says. "The opportunity to work closely with the instructors, the dean of the School of Business and the program coordinator and to have that type of close connection to be able to raise points with them but also have them work with me on what I was looking to achieve with the school was important."

Rasevych says he worked as a marketing specialist at the Alzheimer Society of Thunder Bay after earning a business degree at Lakehead University.

"I felt that doing something for a cause was important to do and also to support the need that's there for them to have some support to be able to raise awareness of the 10 warning signs of dementia and to clarify some of the misconceptions," Rasevych says.

Rasevych says he next worked as a band manager for his community and then as lead economic development advisor at Matawa First Nations Management.

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Alumni honoured

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“At the same time I continued to pursue education and also designations,” Rasevych says. “It seemed that if I could also develop some knowledge in certain industries that it would help the Matawa communities so I went on to get my certificate through the University of Waterloo in economic development.”

Rasevych says he also received the Technician Aboriginal Economic Developer and Professional Aboriginal Economic Developer certificates from the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers.

"These are designations from an Indigenous group so to this day I still promote and highlight them on my CV, in my email signature," Rasevych says.

Rasevych says he learned early on in his career to blend his mainstream education with Indigenous traditional knowledge and community driven grassroots input.

"That was an early learning lesson and lived experience that I still hold to today," Rasevych says.

Rasevych says he also applied to the Project Management Institute to secure his Project Management Professional designation.

"This is a major designation globally recognized," Rasevych says. "This credential for the PMP allowed ... the First

Nation communities I worked with to go to Indigenous Services Canada, to go to INAC, to go to the federal government or the province and say they are working with a PMP at Matawa, somebody that has a designation in Project Management to help support them.”

Rasevych says he is now going into his third year at Deloitte Canada.

“(I’m) making some headway on decolonizing the corporate mindset and positioning the largest professional services company in the world to be able to bring that toolbox to support Indigenous communities and people on their pathway to prosperity and also supporting them in any way they need on the pillars of nation building,” Rasevych says.

Confederation College alumni Tricia McGuire-Adams, David Lemay and Goro Koyama were also honoured with a President's Award and nominated for the 2022 College Ontario Premier's Award.

"Our award winners are wonderful examples of what can be achieved when you set goals and work hard to achieve them," says Kathleen Lynch, president at Confederation College. "Though each nominee is celebrated in different industries, they all have one thing in common: they started their journey at Confederation College. We are so proud of the significant achievements our alumni make and are thrilled to celebrate them."

Indigenous Led Projects Forum discussed Ring of Fire access roads

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Indigenous Led Projects Forum's Ring of Fire: Indigenous-led Infrastructure panel discussion featured discussions about three proposed roads into the Ring of Fire area on Sept. 27. The forum, held Sept. 27-28 in Toronto, also included panel discussions on Financing Indigenous Projects; Construction with Indigenous Nations; Transmission Lines: Past, Present, Future of Indigenous Proponency; and Indigenous Procurement.

"We undertook the chance to move forward because our communities basically need it, our communities need that infrastructure into our communities," says Marten Fall Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, whose community is working to develop the Marten Falls Community Access Road. "Promise of roads is incredibly appealing to my (citizens) because of many reasons, there's the cost lowering on the freight, there's access to more education opportunities, more health benefits, more health opportunities, easier access to doctors, there's a chance to upgrade infrastructure in the community."

Achneepineskum says Marten Falls brought in about 30 transport truck loads of supplies, including concrete and steel, over the winter road last

year for two large projects in the community.

"It's very risky, it's not conducive to building communities," Achneepineskum says. "And the shorter time frame (for winter road seasons) that is happening due to climate change is something we're looking at. Going back to those 30 transport loads, we were crossing our fingers, crossing our toes that all these transports would make it to the community over the frozen muskeg and the frozen creeks we have to cross."

Webequie Chief Cornelius Wabasse says his community held a blockade during the exploration rush in the Ring of Fire because they wanted to be part of the opportunities that may arise in their traditional territory.

"During that time we were not part of that rush," Wabasse says. "We stopped everything there, saying that this is our traditional territory and we want to be part of what is going to happen here in the near future."

Wabasse says his community is currently doing an environmental assessment for the Webequie Supply Road, which is designed to run from Webequie to the Ring of Fire site.

"Hopefully with that road we can develop and prosper from that potential road that is going to happen in the area," Wabasse says. "And I think that is the bottom line to make sure we are part of the process that is hap-

pening out there, the opportunities, so our community can see the prosperity. We have a lot of issues and challenges in our community, and hopefully with these opportunities we can address some of these issues in the near future."

Achheepineskum says his community's partnership with Webequie on the proposed Northern Road Link, which is designed to link the Marten Falls Community Access Road and the Webequie Supply Road, is purely economic, to be part of the economic development opportunity that is present in the Ring of Fire.

"It's crucial that First Nations are not only at the table on these large-scale infrastructure projects, but that they are spearheading them to bring cultural perspective and knowledge to major developments," Achneepineskum says. "With Indigenous leadership, major projects will be developed sustainably and efficiently, ensuring the benefits are shared by all. Marten Falls is proud to be a proponent of our own nation's future and advancing economic reconciliation in Canada."

The forum was organized by Indigenous Learnings Inc. with a focus on the most complex topics facing Indigenous proponents, including capital financing, equitable partnership models, construction and procurement practises.

"Its time to start focusing on



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News
Webequie Chief Cornelius
Wabasse.

the unique needs and interests of First Nations as developers, investors and owners in major infrastructure projects,” says Micheal Fox, partner at Indigenous Learnings Inc. “There is a new era in Canada – one where First Nations are either leading or partnering to advance some of the country’s largest economic projects both on and off their traditional lands.”

Qasim Sadique, partner at Indigenous Learnings Inc., says their intent is for the Indigenous Led Projects Forum to be the first of many future forums focused on Indigenous-led projects.

"The outcome is to create new spaces for dialogue, knowledge sharing and reciprocal learning for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and organizations," Sadique says. "It's time to collaborate on new models and solutions that will encourage improved stability and success for Indigenous proponents."



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