# Sisters In Spirit Day held at NAN's head office

Rick Garrick Wawatay News

The families of Alex Lawson and Corey Belesky asked for assistance with the search for Lawson and the investigation into Belesky's death during Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Sisters in Spirit Day gathering on Oct. 4 at the NAN office in Thunder Bay. Belesky's death on Nov. 1, 2022 at a residence on Brent St. was determined to be a homicide and Lawson was last seen on Madeline St. on Nov. 27, 2022, both in Thunder Bay.

"It's so very important that we have these spaces and this time to hear from our families, hear from our mothers and our dads whose child was taken," says Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum. "I thank you Colleen for your courage to come here and talk about your baby (Belesky). I felt it was really important that we give her this time and space because there's people out there who are listening, someone knows what happened."

Achneepineskum says the search for Lawson will continue, noting that the family has set up a space at 515 Syndicate Ave. N.

"As the family said, Alex has been missing since ... Nov. 27 when Alex left his apartment, which is right behind the Grandview Mall," Achneepineskum says. "There's been a few tips here in Thunder Bay and other parts of Canada, but once they were investigated, it wasn't him. If you want to make any contributions to Alex's family, they'll tell you how you can do that, either to provide some food or monetary donations because I know they're not going to give up."

Achneepineskum stressed the importance of addressing all of the missing and murdered Indigenous people dur-



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

The family of Alex Lawson, who has been missing since Nov. 27, 2022, asked for assistance with their search during Nish-

ing the gathering.

"I prefer to say people now because we have to be inclusive of our men and boys as well who have been murdered and who have gone missing," Achneepineskum says. "And also our gender-diverse peoples, they deserve that respect and they also deserve that advocacy we need to have. So when we do these events, that is how we are always going to deliver our campaigns, is to ensure we also honour all

Achneepineskum says they had pictures of some of the loved ones who went missing or were murdered on a table at the gathering, but if they collected pictures of all of the loved ones who were taken they would probably need about six tables.

"It's very sad that we continue to represent the highest rate of violence inflicted on women and girls," Achneepineskum says. "Someone asked me a hard question once, why is that. First of all there's the traumas that we endured through the process of colonization, there is the Indian residential school system that fractured our family systems and our protective mechanisms, there's the Sixties Scoop which created that process and we still continue that where the child welfare system still has a lot of our children under their care. Those are things we need to change and very slowly it is."

Achneepineskum also raised issues with the justice system during the gath-

"The justice system treats those who commit crimes against our people leniently," Achneepineskum says in a statement on the NAN Facebook page. "This tells me our lives are worth less. There is systemic racism when it comes

neepineskum speaks about the importance of addressing all of the missing and murdered Indigenous people, including men and boys and genderdiverse people

Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Ach-

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

to the justice system where our people are concerned. Everyday must be a day we can make calls for justice, and advocate to end this cycle of violence our people endure everyday."

Other speakers at the gathering included Thunder Bay Police Chief Darcy Fleury, Irene Linklater, executive director at Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation, Nishnawbe Aski Police Service A/Detective Sergeant Carlie Drewes and Valerie Ooshag, executive assistant at Oshki-Pimache-O-Win The Wenjack Education Insti-

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nawbe Aski Nation's Sisters in Spirit Day gathering on Oct. 4 at the NAN office in Thunder Bay.

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Rick Garrick/Wawatay News The Nishnawbe Aski Nation Orange Shirt Day walkers marched along Arthur St. to Vickers Park on Sept. 30 in Thunder Bay.

# Nishnawbe Aski Nation holds Orange Shirt Day walk

**Rick Garrick** Wawatay News

Nishnawbe Aski Nation's (NAN) Orange Shirt Day walk featured the residential school experiences of survivors Ida Ralph and Shirley Sutherland at Vickers Park on Sept. 30 in Thunder Bay. The walk began at the NAN office on Syndicate Ave. and followed Arthur St. to Vickers Park, where a sacred fire was lit at sunrise, speeches were delivered by dignitaries and a barbecue lunch and other activities were held.

"My little sister and I came from the Fort Hope (Eabam-etoong) area," says Ralph, a McIntosh and St. Mary's residential school survivor. "My little sister was only two-yearsold, I was four and I didn't go to school until 1948 to attend classes. We were kept in the room upstairs, we never went out, they brought us food to eat. We each had a crib to sleep in. My little sister was in diapers and bottles so I managed to toilet train her myself."

Ralph says they were taken to Winnipeg later that winter to be adopted out, but it did not work out and they were taken back to McIntosh.

"By then I was able to attend classes and my sister was kept upstairs, what we used to call the infirmary," Ralph says. "I met some other friends my age and I don't know how I learned how to read and write — it was forced into me, if I spoke my language then that teacher would ... hit us on the ear. Gradually I learned how to read and write and I felt sorry for people that were coming in that were older than me, 11 and 12, so I started helping them out to write their names. Just one of them is alive today that I know of, she must be in her 90s, I'm 81. My sister is no longer here, she was found murdered in Calgary in 1983."

Sutherland, a St. Anne's residential school survivor, says Sept. 30 should not be the only day for Orange Shirt Day.

"Make it every day, we have grandchildren, our children have their children," Sutherland says. "We are survivors and those who didn't make it will always be remembered. I've lost a lot of friends to alcohol and drugs, some of them never even went for counselling. There were 10 of us in the family and all of us went to residential school. I was five-years-old when I was put in a floatplane, four of my siblings and four other children, we were just put in a floatplane. As I looked, crying, banging on the plane, I could see my parents getting

smaller and smaller." Sutherland says she and her siblings were all separated in the residential school.

"I remember crying hard trying to grab my siblings, but then after that we hardly got to see each other even though we were there," Sutherland says. "We weren't allowed to hug each other. When we were in line, if I tried to go grab my (siblings), I got pulled back by

Sutherland says her residential school experience doesn't stop, even though she went on her healing process.

"I still get triggered, especially when I hear a floatplane," Sutherland says.

Kyra Metatawabin, a youth from Fort Albany, also shared her perspective on Orange Shirt Day.

"I would like to acknowledge my grandmothers, granny Denise Metatawabin and my late nana Micheline Edwards, who both attended St. Anne's residential school that was housed in my home community of Fort Albany First Nation and suffered horrific acts," Metatawabin says. "They were taken away from their parents at a young age and were stripped of their names and provided a number, yes a number. They were not raised with parental

knowledge or love." Metatawabin says her parents experienced intergenerational trauma, noting that they both attended the same residential



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Residential school survivor Ida Ralph speaks about her experiences

school, St. Anne's, which was transitioned into an Indian day school.

"They are both doing their best to raise me and my siblings in a loving, caring home, that sadly my grandmothers and great grandparents did not receive," Metatawabin says. "They all did the best they could with what they knew. I'm standing here today because of them, living a better life that they weren't able to because of the institutions that Canada enforced."

# Thank You, Airlines!

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













# Shkoday hosts open house and micro job fair



Shkoday executive director Marilyn Junnila and Pathways to Education program supervisor Melinda Siemens held an open house at the Pathways to Education program location at 214 Red River Rd.

**Rick Garrick** Wawatay News

Shkoday held an open house and micro job fair at its Pathways to Education program location for high school students at 214 Red River Rd. on Oct. 5 in Thunder Bay.

"This our Pathways location, which is our newest program," says Marilyn Junnila, executive director at Shkoday. "It's for high school-aged students, Grades 9 through 12. It's a bigger location, it's right downtown, there's buses that come to the area whereas at our John Street Rd. location there's no buses, but we provide transportation for the children that come out there."

Junnila says the Pathways to Education location opened this past January.

"This is the first full school year that we are having a Pathways program," Junnila says. "Students are registering for the program, they're enjoying the cultural nights as well as the tutoring on Wednesday and Thursday evenings."

Melinda Siemens, supervisor of the Pathways to Education program at Shkoday, says the road construction project in the area along Court St. has not affected the students' access to the program.

"We've given them directions to re-route and a lot of our students take the bus and they are on foot," Siemens says.

Siemens says the advantage of the location is it is close to the high schools in the area. "So it's easy for them to get

dropped off," Siemens says.
"Also we've done some outings with them at the Marina Park." Siemens says they have MLC (Mentorship, Leadership and

Cultural) programming from 4-5 p.m. on Tuesdays.
"That's when we get our biggest turnout," Siemens says.

in-person for the cultural aspect. Yesterday we did a sharing circle with a smudge. We do crafts, we have a medicine wheel teaching coming up with an Elder that will be present with us.'

Siemens says they also offer financial incentives for the students to participate in the programming.

"If you participate twice a week for two weeks you get a \$20 gift card," Siemens says.

Junnila says Shkoday's Aboriginal Head Start program, which is held at the Shkoday building on John Street Rd. started off with another successful school year at the beginning of September.

"All of our classrooms are super busy," Junnila says.

Junnila says the Biwaase'aa program is located in eight schools with youth outreach workers.

"They provide one-on-one support with students, they also go into the classrooms and teach some of the subjects that teachers may want some firsthand knowledge about or there are some subjects they may not feel so comfortable to talk about such as residential school and the impacts of that," Junnila says. "We do bring in Elders as well for that in-school portion. We have a nutrition component so for each one of those schools we provide a nutritious lunch, and in the Biwaase'aa room there's also available snacks for any of the children and youth

that come into the program. We also have an after-school component that is in-person in each of the locations based on if we have enough staffing to be able to do that."

Junnila says they also held a micro job fair at the Pathways to Education location.

"Because of our expansion. we are looking for staff as well as now with the after-school program being totally operational in the eight schools, we are looking for part-time staff

— they could be college or university students that need part-time work, we're open to having them come in, especially if they're in the recreational or social work fields or in the teaching fields," Junnila says. "We also have available a cook position, a family support and cultural worker position and with Pathways we have the SPSWs (student parent support workers) that we're looking for



#### **WEQUEDONG LODGE OF THUNDER BAY Incorporated January 1984**

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Serving the First Nations in Northern Ontario since 1974. Wawatay News is a politically independent monthly newspaper published by Wawatay Communications Society.

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# **Commentary**

# Kitchi-Meegwetch Wab Kinew



am feeling a little better about the state of democracy these days thanks to the election of Wab Kinew as Canada's first Anishinabe Premier. He was elected recently with a majority government in Manitoba. So, congratulations to Wab and his New Democratic Party team and as well thanks to all those members of the voting public who chose to make their decision based on values that have to do with social democratic ideals of sharing, openness, tolerance and caring for everyone, the environment and the future of our planet. The fact that he has promised to save and enhance the public health care system is a bonus.

The main reason I am so happy about this win for the NDP is because this was not an easy victo-ry. Let's face it we are living in a time when our mainstream media and much of the social media are run by huge international corporations backed by the very wealthy who push more right wing ideals and par-ties. Just think about it. How many mainstream television media broadcast, print, radio or social platforms are owned and operated by Indigenous peoples, minorities, the poor, single moms and in general the dis-enfranchised? Of course the answer is none as they are all owned and controlled by very wealthy corporate interests that push a right wing agenda most of the time. That is why I am so happy with Wab's big win and the fact that he represents Indigenous people and all others who are minorities is just wonderful.

This election reminds me of a quote attributed to the American President Abraham Lincoln, "You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time but you can not fool all the people all the time." Even with all of the mainstream media for the most part lined up against the NDP and all of the money backing more middle democratic parties like the Liberals and the right wing parties, peo-ple still managed to have a deeper look at how democracy would best be

served in Manitoba and they decided Wab was a good choice.

As they say, money talks, and all over the world right wing parties almost always get the support of the very wealthy, the big corporations and lobbyists. It is not easy for those on the left or in the middle, who are more socially democratic, to get elected. Part of the reason is that mainstream media, which is corporate owned, is also funded to a great degree by wealthy interests who prefer a right wing style of government that will reward the very wealthy, ignore as much as they can about climate change due to global warming, are generally anti-union and not very supportive of Indigenous peoples, minorities and those who are disenfranchised. Could it be that even if the cards are stacked up against the general voting public we are seeing through all the propaganda strewn with misinformation and hate and we are now choosing more kind, open, tolerant and sharing governments dedicated to the common person rather than the wealthy dominating few.

Most Indigenous people don't really understand to a great degree how politics works and who represents Canadians. Thirty years ago when I was first starting out as a young man, my understanding of what the different parties meant in terms of representation was almost nil as was the case with most of the Indigenous people I was surrounded by. Along the way we began to figure out just what politics was all about and many of us became very wary of any politician with their speeches promising all kinds of things. We also grew to understand that when we stood up as Indigenous peoples for our rights, for our treaties, to protect rivers and lakes and protest negative environmental initiatives we did not get a lot of support from all governments and parties.

I know first hand that Indigenous people all across Canada are standing with more confidence, more pride and more hope with the election in Manitoba of Wab Kinew. This is an historic moment and one that I hope will be replicated more and more as we all realize it is up to all of us to vote for the good path in leadership for a fair, safe and positive future. Kitchi-Meegwetch (Thanks very much) Wab Kinew.

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#### Mattagami First Nation Elects Chief Jennifer Constant



photo submitted by Mattagami First Nation

Chief Jennifer Constant has been elected as leader of her home community of Mattagami First Nation. Mattagami held their election on September 30. Councillors elected for this upcoming term are Devin Naveau, Cindy McKay, Dereck McKay, Janelle Golinowski, Sue Prince and Kourtney Baulne. Newly Elected Mattagami First Nation Chief Jennifer Constant is shown here in the middle with her community youth Ava Naveau (left) and Ameria Wesley (right) at a recent event in Ottawa at the Parliament build-

# Heat Waves And Some Wildfire "Luck"



ctober seems an odd time of the year to be talking about heat

Environment Canada predicts a substantial increase in the number of days with "temperatures exceeding 30°C/86°F, levels that are dangerous to human health". Environment Canada defines a heat wave as "a period with more than three consecutive days of maximum temperatures at or above 32°C

Here are some temperature oddities from recent months in Northern Ontario. The last five months all have begun with temperatures that are well above average. It is coincidental, but it does make the question of, "When did the warmest temperatures of the summer take place?", more complicated. The usual quick answer - sometime in July or August - does not work this year. Let's start with summer like temperatures in October and then go back in time to June.

The first days in October brought record high temperatures for many locations in Northern Ontario. On October 2, the maximum temperature reached 30° C in Fort Frances Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay, Geraldton and likely in some places in between. This unsea-

sonably warm air mass reached the James Bay area a couple of days later, with maximum temperatures in the high 20°s and even up to 30° C in Moosonee.

#### September as a summer month

There was a significant heat wave throughout Ontario during the first week of September. Temperatures reached and exceeded 30° C for several days across the province. The duration of this heat event was a bit unusual but also odd were that the highest temperatures took place in the far north. The warmest temperature recorded in Ontario was in Moosonee at 35.1° C. Also, during this week, Humidex (feels like) values were the low 40s at many locations. Interestingly, on September 3, the highest Humidex reading was 43 in Thunder Bay, Moosonee and Toronto.

Typically in Ontario, July is the warmest month in the summer (as it was this year) but occasionally August takes that honour. August was not a contender this year with temperatures slightly cooler than average throughout the province. August had an unusual situation with daytime temperatures of 30° C being rare. Thunder Bay was the only city in Ontario to cross the  $30^{\rm o}$  C threshold (mentioned in Wawatay last month).

The beginning of summer also featured a heat wave in the Northwest. On June 1 to 4, from Fort Frances to the Thunder Bay area three or four days recorded highs of 30° C or more. The most notable extended period of heat in June (June 19 to 23) took place in Moosonee and the James Bay area. Weather stations in Moosonee or nearby reported four days with 30° C and five days with Humidex of 30 to 38.

Moosonee was the warmest location in Ontario in June (34.8 ° C) and in September (35.1 ° C). The highest temperature in Ontario during this warm season was recorded in Moosonee, warmer than Toronto, 900 kilometres to the south, and other communities in southwestern Ontario that usually have the warmest temperatures in the summertime.

Here is an attempt to explain

this unusual distribution of temperatures. It is fairly common to have large areas of high pressure that become stationary over Ontario. Typically, there are light winds and clear skies. These conditions can lead to relatively high temperatures in the afternoon. The circulation of such high pressure cells is clockwise, which means that on the western side warm air from the south or southwest is being pulled into the system. This summer, especially during the heat waves in June and September, warm air from the Canadian prairies and/or the western United States was channeled next to Hudson Bay and over to James Bay. Generally, these systems shift eastward or break down after a few days.

The situation of having very warm temperatures in the north is certainly not unique to this year. Long ago, when I was 15, my family had a summer holiday next to Lake Kenogamisis, near Geraldton.

September was a dry month in Ontario. In Northern

Ontario it was the 5th consecutive month with lower-thannormal rainfall. Part of the dryness was the due to the frequency of high pressure systems mentioned above.

As readers know, this has been a catastrophic year of forest fires in Canada. The area burned equals the area of Lakes Superior, Huron, Ontario, Erie, Nipigon combined. The most wildfire activity took place in British Columbia, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Quebec and Nova Scotia. In comparison, Northern Ontario got off relatively easy, although area burned and evacuations were slightly more than average. There are still active wildfires in Ontario but the fire season is winding down.

Nothing like this on the national level has ever happened in historical times. To state the obvious - much discussion is needed by various levels of government before the wildfires begin in spring 2024. People with training in firefighting was one of the obvious deficiencies this year. It was compounded by governments in Alberta and Ontario cutting back on funding for training in 2022 and early in 2023.

Unless there is more unusual weather in the next month we will take a look at the climate impacts in the Northwest, Northeast and Far North regions detailed in the report.

Here is a quick glimpse into the Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment,

"Overall, extreme heat, treme precipitation and seasonal temperature-related impacts are the drivers of highest risks across Ontario."

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Shkoday executive director Marilyn Junnila and Pathways to Education program supervisor Melinda Siemens.

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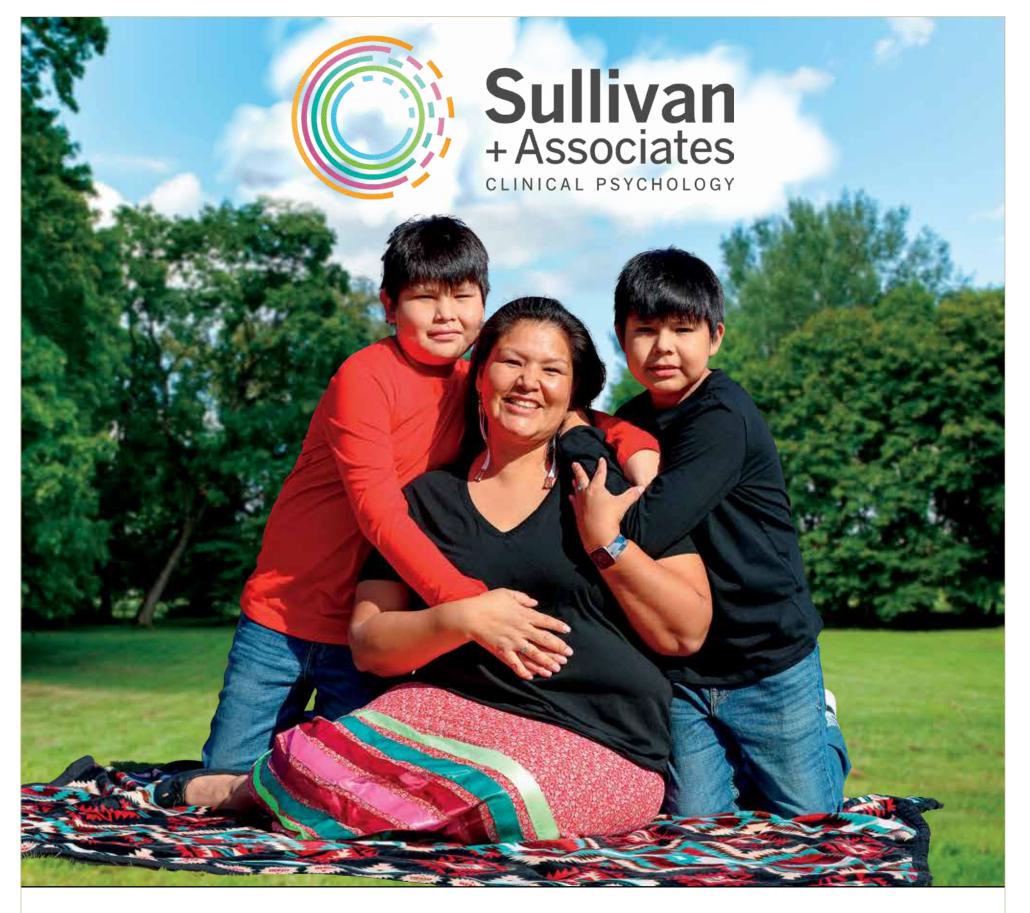




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# Wataynikaneyap Power connects Wawakapewin and North Caribou Lake to the power grid

Rick Garrick

Wawatay News

Wawakapewin and North Caribou Lake recently celebrated their Aug. 16 and October 2022 connections to the provincial power grid through the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Line in Septem-

Wawakapewin held their celebration on Sept. 29 at the Valhalla Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay and on Anemki Wajiw (Mt. McKay) in Fort William, where they did a blessing of the connection grid to the community.

"It's very exciting, less worry for me," says Wawakapewin Chief Anne Marie Beardy, noting that the community used to struggle with keeping the diesel generators operating. "It's a big relief for me, I don't have to worry about so much anymore."

Beardy says one of her dreams is to see the citizens returning home to the community now that they are connected to the provincial power

grid.
"Now we can start applying for getting new houses because (when we were) using generators there wasn't enough power (for new) buildings," Beardy

"Lack of reliable power meant not being able to grow. It limited the amount of com-

munity (citizens) who could stay in Wawakapewin all year long, instead of just seasonally. We are proud to majority own this power system on the homelands, bringing reliable power to First Nations."

Beardy says other dreams are to build a school and a nursing station in the community.

"Now that we have a connection, hopefully we get a school going and people to come back home," Beardy says.
"Our Elders built that community, my grandpa, because they wanted us to live in that community and raise our children and grandchildren there."

Margaret Kenequanash, CEO at Wataynikaneyap Power, says many people told her the connection of the communities to the provincial power grid would never happen.

"But here we are today celebrating," Kenequanash says. "I want to say congratulations to Chief Anne Marie as well as to the community (citizens), and I look forward to seeing community growth and continuing to work with you."

Eliezar Mckay, First Nation LP board chair, says the power transmission line doesn't just bring light, it brings hope.

"Our youth can now think about what they can do for their community, their families, and for themselves - without power restrictions," McKay says.



Rick Garrick/Wawatav News

Wawakapewin Chief Anne Marie Beardy speaks about the advantages of being connected to the provincial power grid during her community's celebration.

Frank Mckay, board chair for the Wataynikaneyap Power General Partnership, and David Hutchens, president and CEO, Fortis Inc., both offered congratulations on Wawakapewin's connection.

"I'm proud to be a part of this historical life changing initiative, directed by the people through mandate," Frank says. "It is great to celebrate the continued progress of this unprecedented project."

"The new connection to the Ontario electricity grid provides reliable, secure power to the people of Wawakapewin," Hutchens says. "Our team looks forward to additional Wataynikaneyap Power Project communities receiving reliable power in the coming months."

North Caribou Lake held their celebration on Sept. 14 in the community following their annual Hunting Festival.

"Grid connection has been a long time coming," says North Caribou Lake Chief Cornelious Benson. "Diesel generation was unsafe, unreliable and inadequate to meet the needs of the growing community. Since connection, we have been able to connect a new school, police station, a number of housing and trailer units and many building upgrades."

Kenequanash says North

Caribou Lake had been in discussions since the mid-1990s to bring reliable energy to the community.

"We finally did it and congratulations," Kenequanash says. "This is my home, and it is a very special day for me. We have travelled a long path that saw successes, learning opportunities and false starts to get us to this point. We are not done yet. Connecting all 17 First Nations and achieving the vision of 100 per cent ownership of this major infrastructure in our homeland is important for our future generations."

Hutchens says North Caribou Lake First Nation has benefited from being connected to the provincial power grid for nearly a year.

"Having shut down its diesel engines, the community has reduced its carbon emissions and secured room for current and future growth," Hutchens says. "We are proud to partner with all 24 First Nations in building the transmission line throughout northwestern Ontario and look forward to project completion."

Kasabonika Lake plans to celebrate its connection to the provincial power grid on Oct. 14 at the Kasabonika Lake School Gym/Community Grounds, and the connections of 10 more communities will be celebrated throughout 2023-2024.



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# Education

## Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC) celebrates opening of new facilities

**Rick Garrick** Wawatay News

The Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC) celebrated the completion of a new gymnasium and other indoor spaces including a kitchen, classrooms and a Student Care Centre on Sept. 29 in Thunder Bay. The MECC was transformed from the former Grandview Lodge Home for the Aged, which the City of Thunder Bay transitioned to Matawa in 2017.

"This momentous occasion is one that will continue to impact Matawa First Nations youth, their communities and families for decades to come," says Sharon Nate, executive director at Matawa Education. "Students who must leave the support of their families and communities and (their) way of life behind to access high school now have a safe and reliable facility in Thunder Bay. With staff who are committed to youth's physical, cultural, mental and emotional well-being, students now have a place where they can access equal opportunity to education and mental wellness supports."

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, Deputy Grand Chiefs Anna Betty Achneepineskum and Bobby Narcisse and Thunder Bay-Superior North MP Patty Hajdu, minister of Indigenous Services Canada, participated along with other dignitaries in the grand opening, which included a tour of the MECC.

— it was just incredible to witness how that old building, an old folks home, was transformed into this beautiful school in just a few short years," Fiddler says. "For the students that will be attending that school, it's more than just a school, it's a community. And I know it's a community that will love them and support them, that will speak to them in their language, that will teach them their culture, just what they need to become healthy and productive adults. And there's residences as part of that building, which will go a long way in ensuring student safety for students that will be attending that school. It's a beautiful safe space for our kids."

Achneepineskum adds that she was grateful there was a residence for the students in the MECC.

"It's been quite difficult to find places for our students to be able to attend school," Achneepineskum says. "They deserve to have places such as that that will keep them safe and (where) they will be taken care of and they will also be able to have those other resources and services they need, and also that they get to be together. In Thunder Bay, we have lost many of our young people who came here to attend school and this is what we need to have is these kind of residences. If we are unable to have a high school in our community, then we should be able to have these

"It was so great to be there kind of residential services for our young people."

Narcisse says they were honoured and proud to be part of the MECC grand opening.

"It's a state-of-the-art building and I think it will be opening up a lot of doors to many of our First Nation students across Matawa and NAN," Narcisse says. "It really shows the fact that our First Nation communities are taking hold of their dreams in terms of looking at developing an education system that is really reflective of their culture, their language and the Matawa new education resource centre is a step towards that. It's located by a nice wooded area - just to encourage a lot of the land-based education opportunities that are there."

Hajdu says it is exciting that 'well over 100 students" will be able to use the residence at

"There's emotional supports and cultural supports for students that are going to high school in the city," Hajdu says. "It's one of the Seven Fallen Feathers calls to action and the federal government contributed almost \$23 million towards the project. It's really important that kids feel safe when they come to a city like Thunder Bay and Matawa is doing such an enormously huge job for all of us to make sure kids feel secure and supported and loved while they pursue their high school education."

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# **Education**

# Pays Plat's Christopher Mushquash receives Gardiner award

Rick Garrick Wawatay News

Lakehead University and the Gairdner Foundation celebrated

work of Pays Plat's Christopher Mushquash on Oct. 6 after he was recognized with the 2023 Canada Gairdner Momentum Award this past March.

Mushquash, vice-president of Research at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC), chief scientist at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute (TBRHRI), Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Mental

Health and Addiction, professor at Lakehead University and NOSM University and psychologist at Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, was honoured with the 2023 Canada Gairdner Momentum Award for his work in Indigenous-led mental health and substance use research.

"It's really a pleasure and an honour to be here tonight to celebrate with you the work of Chris Mushquash," says Janet Rossant, president and scientific director at the Gairdner Foundation. "This is a new award for mid-career Canadian researchers whose research has already been transformative in their own

Rossant says that of the more than 400 awards the Gairdner Foundation has made since 1957, 98 of the recipients have gone on to receive Nobel Prizes. The Gairdner Foundation will hold a gala at the end of October in Toronto where Mushquash will receive his award along with the other Gairdner Foundation award recipients.

Gillian Siddall, president and vice-chancellor at Lakehead University, says Mushquash's variety of leadership and researcher roles is "quite remarkable."

"In each of these roles Chris has cultivated a reputation as a leader in Indigenous mental health in Canada, with some of his work influencing federal policy renewal," Siddall says, noting that his commitment to community-based participatory research is particularly noteworthy. "In partnership with communities, he weaves Indigenous knowledge and values into investigations into Indigenous mental health, substance use, trauma and mental wellness. The outcomes of his research has assisted leaders of these First Nation communities to make culturally and contextually appropriate decisions for their peoples, enhanced the quality of the delivery of mental health

care services to First Nation communities and influenced the national understandings of mental health and addictions."

Siddall adds that as a researcher, Mushquash has secured more than \$65 million from Canadian institutes of health research and produced 93 peer-reviewed articles and six periodical book chapters and contributed to more than 60 other publications.

"That is remarkable," Siddal says. "And I will remind you he is still in the early stages of his career. It is breathtaking to understand Chris' achievements, and so I extend my sincerest congratulations to you Chris on receiving the prestigious Canada Gairdner Momentum Award.'

Mushquash says he was profoundly honoured and humbled to be a recipient of the Canada Gairdner Momentum Award.

"I certainly want to express my deep gratitude to the Gairdner Foundation and the selection committee for this incredible recognition," Mushquash says. "I know prizes are awarded to individuals, but in my case it's really the collective effort of a great many people that allowed for the volume of work that we all collaborate on. No individual could accomplish what we've all contributed to."

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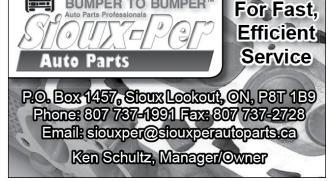
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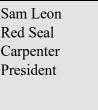
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#### **Environment Conference 2023**



Rick Garrick/Wawatay Newsx

Jessica Correa, founder of Random Acts of Green, delivered her Indigenous Voices Unleashed: How to Build an Online Community to Empower Climate Action keynote on the first day of the Northern Ontario First Nations Environment Conference 2023, held Sept. 26-27 at the Valhalla Hotel and Conference Centre in Thunder Bay.



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# Arts & Entertainment

# Betty Carpick projects artwork on Goods and Company building

Rick Garrick Wawatay News

Indigenous artist Betty Carpick recently projected images on the wall of the Goods and Company building in Thunder Bay during her Ontario Culture Days Creatives in Residence project, The Land is Dancing. The images were captured earlier in the summer during a drop-in Maker Session at Goods and Company from three by three inch ink blots created with her one-of-kind Boreal Forest inks and projected onto the building from across the street on the evenings of Sept. 28-30 from 6-11 p.m.

"It looks fantastic," Carpick says. "I think it really makes the downtown shine."

Carpick says it was an honour to be selected as one of eight Creatives in Residence for the Ontario Culture Days Festival.

"It's also such an honour to be on this land," Carpick says. "Even though I'm not from here, I feel that it's represented through the work I've done and the people who have participated."

Carpick says she grew up in northern Manitoba in a remote and isolated community and has lived in Thunder Bay since 1991

"The north is still home to my relations and the knowledge of my Cree and Russian-Ukrainian ancestors," Carpick says. "I'm so proud to be a northerner and I really identify as being a northerner, and part of what that means to me is I grew up knowing the importance of community. So much of who I am and what I do is tied to those connections of being in a small place, knowing all kinds of different people, having to be kind to others and welcoming and using what you have around you."

Carpick says much of her respect for the natural world

and her understanding of the intricacies of the seasons and all of her memories shaped her creative life.

"I spent a lot of time outside as a kid, I learned life skills and traditional skills," Carpick says. "I learned to participate in the hard work that helped my family and others to survive in the north. My relatives lived off the land, they chopped wood, hauled water, gathered plants and berries, fished, hunted, trapped, cooked, gardened, sewed, knit, tanned hides, did beadwork and did numerous other things."

Carpick says whenever a person needed help, everyone pitched in.

"Those skills will only live on in each generation if we embrace them, so they are a link not only to our roots but they're part of our shared heritage," Carpick says.

Carpick says her mother's community, South Indian Lake,

experienced the impact of the diversion of the Churchill River when she was in Grade 9 and was forced to relocate.

"The original community and fishing and hunting grounds were flooded," Carpick says. "So the water was no longer pristine and along the shores trees had fallen in the river because of erosion caused by constantly fluctuating water. Sacred sites were underwater and the river and water system that was once the basis of life was permanently altered."

Carpick says her work looks at social, cultural and environmental issues in both serious and playful ways.

"So conceptualizing and guiding inclusive community art has always been parallel to my practice," Carpick says. "For me, community arts is a way of finding common connections for joy in ways that are tangible."

Carpick says she wanted to create something beauti-

Rick Garrick/Wawatay Nev

Indigenous artist Betty Carpick speaks about her Ontario Culture Days Creatives in Residence project, The Land is Dancing, on Sept. 28 at the Goods and Company in Thunder Bay.

ful through the The Land is Dancing project to amplify the the importance of individual interconnections within a living planet.

"My original vision was for an animated archive using the handmade inks that I make on three inch by three inch squares of watercolour paper," Carpick says. "So that way anybody of any age or ability could make a mark and they weren't obligated to be artistic."

