

Politics

NAN and Chiefs of Ontario celebrate Ontario's Final Agreement

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Chiefs of Ontario and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) met to celebrate the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's summary ruling to approve the Ontario Final Agreement on March 30 in Toronto. The meeting is posted online on Chiefs of Ontario Youtube page at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJmXPhYInE, and information about the Ontario Final Agreement and summary ruling is posted online at: fncts-reform.ca/.

"Today is an extraordinary day — today the Canadian Human Rights (Tribunal) has released its decision with respect to the Ontario Final Agreement," says Regional Chief Abram Benedict. "It's an agreement that talks about the pathway forward, the pathway forward that our leadership had set forth for us, the pathway forward that our leadership has said, 'The discrimination must end now,' and also the Chiefs of Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, with the support of all our communities across this region, have advanced that."

Benedict says their efforts have always been for the children, adding that they are finally securing the jurisdiction necessary to ensure children grow up immersed in their culture and supported by the love of their communities.

"This agreement is about more than just a settlement, it is about achieving substantive equality for our children and families," Benedict says. "For too long, our communities have been forced to operate within systems that did not reflect our realities or meet our needs. This approval affirms our inherent right to care for our children in ways that are equitable, culturally grounded and responsive to our nations. Today marks a critical step towards true self-determination and lasting change."

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler says the agreement puts the authority for the care of chil-



Mishkeegogamang's Ashley Bach speaks during the Chiefs of Ontario and Nishnawbe Aski Nation meeting about the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's summary ruling to approve the Ontario Final Agreement on March 30 in Toronto. screenshot

dren back where it belongs — with their families, leaders and communities.

"Today is a great day for our children, it's a day we've been waiting for for a long time," Fiddler says. "I want to acknowledge and thank the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal for approving our agreement here today, it's an agreement that our leadership directed us to negotiate and try to secure because they acknowledged and they recognized that the current child welfare system as it's being currently designed and administered to our communities and especially to our children is very harmful."

Fiddler says a couple of the things in the agreement are significant for him and the NAN communities.

"One is the work that went into creating a remoteness quotient formula that actually figures out what the true cost is of delivering a service, in this case child welfare service, in a remote community like Kashechewan or Fort Albany or Webequie," Fiddler says. "We not only plan to use this table in the area of child welfare, but we want to also apply that to education and health and policing and capital. The other thing I reflected on when I received the news this morning is the Tri-

bunal's decision to respect the authority of our leadership, that our chiefs have the authority to decide how to look after their own children and what is in the best interests of their children."

Mishkeegogamang's Ashley Bach, who was adopted out when she was five-years-old, says First Nations children and youth from across the province have been waiting for the decision for about 10 years.

"Over the last decade I've been closely involved on this issue with NAN when I was on the Oshkaatisak (Youth) Council and also with the AFN's (Assembly of First Nations) class action related to this issue

as representative plaintiff," Bach says. "I've experienced the ups and downs of this long journey. There have been so many harms against our children over the past decade and the decades before that under a discriminatory system that was designed to take us away from our families, our communities, our nations, our traditions and our lands. I am one of the youth who experienced this and I can confidently say that our children and youth have been waiting for this historic decision to be made, but also some of our children and youth in and from care aren't with us anymore and I want to hold space for them

too." The Chiefs of Ontario states in a March 30 press release that the agreement ensures that First Nations across Ontario finally have the resources and authority necessary to care for their own children and youth within their own communities, adding that the approved agreement establishes a comprehensive framework for long-term reform, including safeguards to ensure accountability, continuous improvement and sustainability of services beyond the life of the agreement.

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Politics

Indigenous Services Minister speaks at NAN Chiefs Assembly

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Chiefs Spring Assembly, held March 24-26 in Toronto, featured a presentation by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Minister Mandy Gull-Masty and a Question and Answer session and an Open Chiefs Forum with Gull-Masty.

"I know there is a lot of power and strength in this room in advocating for their members, not only for the members of today but also those that are to be, I also want to acknowledge that there's with that power a lot of responsibility in supporting every day families, children, protecting the future and building the strength of your nations," Gull-Masty says. "But I also want to acknowledge that we are in an urgent moment right now, for progress to really hit the mark we must deliver real measurable outcomes for children, families and communities — this means that we have to act in true partnership, and be guided by your priorities and by your leadership."

Gull-Masty says she has a lot of bridge building and trust building to do.

"But I hope that you have the confidence in me to know that when I come here it is with the intention to empower you in who you are as First Nations and respect who you are as distinct nations," Gull-Masty says. "I want to also today announce that \$738 million will be provided to strengthen health

services, governance and emergency management for First Nations communities."

Gull-Masty says the funding will include \$283 million over two years to strengthen First Nations governance and capacity building.

"Through programs like band support funding, contributions to band employee benefits, professional and institutional development and tribal council funding, we know that these investments are going to provide First Nations governments with the important resources and tools that they need to further support and strengthen their governance structures, planning and core administrative functions," Gull-Masty says.

Gull-Masty says they are also investing \$400 million over the next five years to support essential health services in remote and isolated First Nations communities.

"This funding is critical and will help support things like nurses and other health professionals, digital tools and front-line care services," Gull-Masty says.

Gull-Masty says they are also committing \$55.6 million over the next year through the Emergency Management Assistance Program to strengthen preparedness response and community capacity.

"As this world is changing, First Nations communities are often the ones to see and feel it first," Gull-Masty says. "They are disproportionately affected



screenshot

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Minister Mandy Gull-Masty speaks on the third day of Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Chiefs Spring Assembly, held March 24-26 at the Chelsea Hotel in Toronto.

by emergencies. In 2025 alone, we had more than 45,000 First Nations people from over 73 communities in this country be displaced due to wildfire."

Gull-Masty also spoke about visiting Kashechewan on March 17 alongside Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak and having the opportunity to meet with evacuees in Niagara Falls.

"I want to assure communities that we are here to continue supporting them for as long as it takes, but more importantly

we're working with communities and partners at every level of government to ensure that our next steps include restoring clean water and getting everyone home safely," Gull-Masty says.

Gull-Masty also spoke about child and family services, Jordan's Principle and the Choose Life initiative.

"Since its launch, the (Choose Life) initiative has helped thousands of young people reconnect with who they are, their culture, their commu-

nity and provide ongoing care but also reinforce the respect of who they are as First Nations people," Gull-Masty says. "We have seen what is possible when we act together and we must ensure that we move forward in partnership and acknowledging what communities want to choose for themselves."

Gull-Masty says ISC is not facing major savings reductions in response to the country's current economic pressures.

"We want to acknowledge the decision of the prime min-

ister (Mark Carney) to ensure that he protects the investments in First Nations communities," Gull-Masty says. "It's our government's distinct duty to First Nations people, and the opportunity that we have to move forward needs to be based on stronger renewed relationships, especially in the moments when we face a crisis. In Budget 2025, priority is given to housing, water and other resources to close the socioeconomic gaps and continue building infrastructure."

The Question and Answer session provided an opportunity for the chiefs to raise concerns with Gull-Masty, including Attawapiskat Chief Sylvia Koostachin-Metatawabin on the exploitation of their lands without consent; Neskantaga Chief Gary Quisess on his community's longstanding 31-year boil water advisory and the drug epidemic; and Muskrat Dam Chief Carla Duncan on fire safety and emergency response after the loss of a child in a house fire in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and a call by the Independent First Nations Alliance for an investigation into the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Gull-Masty's presentation, the Question and Answer session and the Open Chiefs Forum are included in the video of the third day of the assembly, which is posted on the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Youtube page at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNLx09TYI8.

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Community

National Site Search holds Forum on healing and reconciliation

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Deputy Grand Chief Mike Metatawabin and Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Linda Debassige shared opening remarks at the National Site Search Forum, held March 24-26 at the Chelsea Hotel in Toronto. Information about the National Site Search Forum, including videos of the three days of the forum, is posted online at: www.sitesearchforum.com/.

"I was just talking to a fellow band member here and she was telling me it was 34 years ago that we started this journey in our community, the healing, the reclamation of our being, of who we are as people, as survivors," Metatawabin says. "It was in 1992 back home in Fort Albany that we held the first gathering for our survivors on a regional level."

Metatawabin says they were seeking the chiefs support to continue their work on the Indian residential school response strategy at the NAN Spring Chiefs Assembly being held across the hallway at the Chelsea Hotel.

"I want to acknowledge the partnership of Queen's University as well for providing their technical expertise (with the Indian residential school response strategy)," Metatawabin says. "I was explaining

to them too that we know the story inside out, emotionally, spiritually, physically, mentally, painfully, but we don't know how to write, so with their expertise in writing, that's why we developed that partnership."

Metatawabin says the resolution for the Indian residential school response strategy, 21-10, called upon the leadership of Nishnawbe Aski Nation to develop a strategic response to the identification of unmarked graves and the recovery of missing Nishnawbe Aski Nation children from the Indian residential schools.

"This mandate arose from grief, from truth and from responsibility," Metatawabin says. "As a survivor of the Indian residential school, I know that these schools are not a matter of the past, they live within us, they live within our families, they live within our communities — the harms did not end when the doors closed, they continued across generations shaping identity, language, parenting, health and spirit. For this reason, Indian residential schools are not solely a survivor issue, they are an intergenerational reality for our nation and for Canada. This work cannot be bound by funding cycles or federal timelines, it cannot sunset, it is sacred work that requires enduring commitment."

Debassige says she was



screenshot

Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Linda Debassige.

24-years-old when the first residential school agreement was signed, adding that she was born into a family of survivors.

"My father was taken by his grandfather into the hills to avoid being taken away, and he kept him there and they lived in the bush so that his grandpa could protect him, my great grandpa," Debassige says. "As a result of that, my father didn't attend residential school because my great grandfather ... was a great navigator of the land and once they went into the bush they couldn't really be found unless it was one of the brothers that would go out or find them or the aunties."

Debassige says she was approached by Kelsey Anger, reconciliation director at the Anishinabek Nation, shortly after being elected as grand

council chief about Percy Onabigon, a Long Lake #58 citizen who had been taken from St. Joseph's Indian residential school in Thunder Bay and sent to McKellar Hospital in Thunder Bay and then to hospitals and institutions in southern Ontario as a child. He was never seen again by a family member, and he later died when he was 27 in 1966.

"The Onabigon family never gave up in finding him," Debassige says. "I believe he was found because they have pictures of his existence but yet his parents never knew where he went or what happened to him, and I thank the family for carrying that on to search and find this little boy, this young man."

Debassige says the federal government said they would not help bring Percy home.

"But I will in this moment recognize the province of Ontario who stepped up and said what is it going to take, we're here to help, let's bring Percy home," Debassige says.

Fort Albany's Edmund Metatawabin, a residential school survivor, former chief of Fort Albany and author of *Up Ghost River: A Chief's Journey Through the Turbulent Waters of Native History, Harvesting: Cree Hunting and Gathering Techniques* and *Hanaway*, also delivered an opening keynote on the first morning of the forum.

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Community

Elder Aaron Therriault passes

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The late Aroland Elder Aaron Therriault is remembered for his path with the traditional ways, his children and foster children and the organizations he supported with his traditional knowledge. He passed on March 14 while on vacation with family in Punta Cana.

"Aaron was born in Aroland, he was raised there and they did a lot of trapping and hunting — his parents took him up to Abamasagi all the time to do their annual spring hunt," says Monique Turpin, Therriault's widow. "He remembered going to powwows and ceremonies as early as the age of seven — his parents would take him and do stuff with that, but you didn't talk about it back then. He worked at his culture and retained his language and everything, that was important to him."

Turpin says Therriault began singing with Richard Lyons' drum group and later with the Spirit Wind drum group.

"In 2004, he had a dream, and in that dream it was telling him he had to build this drum and this drum was going to be called Thunder Spirit," Turpin says. "That drum in that dream was supposed to be a healing drum, it was supposed to be to help people heal. He's been carrying that drum since 2004, and he's done a lot of work, travelled many places. (He'd) do ceremonies, do powwows, do healing, and that was a big part of who he was, and even when he was tired and exhausted and done something all day long, if he'd get a call at night saying somebody needed help, even if it wasn't with the drum but just himself, he would go and do it."

Turpin says they had four children and three foster children.

"We've taken care of a lot of children over the years," Turpin says. "We've been doing that for



submitted photo

The late Aroland Elder Aaron Therriault passed on March 14 while on vacation with family in Punta Cana.

about 20 years, just to see the kids thrive and grow."

Jade Therriault, one of Therriault's sons, says Therriault always stressed the importance of connecting with the land.

"The same with education, he always wanted us to do the best we could in school," Jade says. "He always wanted us to go to college and follow through with that."

Jade says they used to go on a lot of trips to Minnesota and to powwows around the area.

"I liked the Nipigon powwow and the Lac Des Mille Lacs powwow, mainly because there's lots of fishing to be done

there," Jade says. "I could go in the circle and dance and then I could go fishing at the same time."

Aaron Therriault Jr., one of Therriault's sons, says Therriault dedicated his life to his culture.

"My dad would be smudging basically every day," Aaron says. "He used to always take us on the powwow trail in the summertime, we travelled a lot — he'd go singing all weekend and then drive home on the Sunday night."

Aaron says his father was always super excited to see him and his fiancée Jessie Robertson whenever they visited.

"He'd always be happy to share what he was doing, where he was travelling to," Aaron says.

Cheya Belmore, one of Therriault's foster daughters, says she enjoyed going on the powwow trail with Therriault.

"He taught me things along the way," Belmore says. "He would give me teachings and stuff about the bears and the sky and the thunder. He always made me see the other side of everyone's story, and he was a good guy."

Jessie Robertson, Therriault's daughter-in-law, says she was awkward at first but grew to be very comfortable with Therriault.

"I went to a couple of powwows and I always loved to hear him singing," Robertson says. "He would just tell me different cultural teachings, before I started working at Matawa he opened up my eyes to a lot of things and I use that in my work all the time."

Paul Francis Jr., vice president N'doo'owe Binesi at St. Joseph's Care Group, says Therriault was involved with the Ogichidaa Onaakonigewin (Elder's Council) at St. Joseph's Care Group.

"Aaron specifically supported our (Repairing the) Sacred Circle cultural training — this is a mandatory training that we have for all of our employees," Francis says. "It's heavy training and he supported that through the cultural part, the ceremony part. It's hard work to bring that education piece and help non-Indigenous people understand that history."

Francis says Therriault also helped support N'doo'owe Binesi with the traditional drum they were gifted.

"He was really instrumental in helping guide us and our cultural team in supporting that drum," Francis says. "Our cultural team really appreciated his support and guidance in that area. He will definitely be

missed with that knowledge and those songs."

Const. Bob Simon, community service and liaison officer at Nishnawbe Aski Police Service, says Therriault had recently done a teaching circle with NAPS, and he had previously helped Therriault with some training sessions for the Thunder Bay Police Service before he left that service and joined NAPS last year.

"I got to know him a lot throughout those times and then just connected with him on a more personal level afterwards," Simon says. "He just had that persona about him, he's just a kind and gentle soul, he was always caring for everybody, it didn't matter where you came from — he made people feel seen every time. He was very respected in the community, within the police services."



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Education

Rachel Johnson featured at Lakehead's Indigenous graduate series

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Lakehead University's Indigenous Graduate Student Speaker Series featured a presentation by Rachel Johnson, a Master of Environmental Studies (MES) student and Lac La Ronge citizen, on March 19 at the Gakina Nindinawemaaganag lounge.

"Since starting graduate studies this past fall, I've had a lot of great opportunities that weren't necessarily available to me during undergrad," Johnson says. "I've attended lots of events and gatherings that have strengthened my connections with research partners, promoted networking with individuals and organizations involved in food sovereignty initiatives, and since the MES program is research based, I got to experience hands-on learning with professors and other students on my research team."

Johnson says she travelled

to Mississauga First Nation this past October with Elders, knowledge holders, community members and their Lakehead University research team.

"On this trip we processed manomin, or wild rice (as it's more commonly known, that was harvested from five different areas in Ontario using traditional methods," Johnson says, adding that they also made moccasins that are used in a step of the traditional processing of manomin. "So on this trip I got to learn about traditional Indigenous food systems while also deepening my understanding of the time and energy it takes to feed a community using foods from the land."

Johnson says she attended another MES student's land-based learning camp just outside of Upsala this past November that "brought together Indigenous Elders, adults and youth to learn from the land, our ancestors and each other as

a way to strengthen Indigenous food systems."

"Over the course of this camp we got to learn how to set snares, observed from Elders how to process wild game, like rabbit and beaver, participated in hide tanning and gathered together in sharing circles to voice what we had learned," Johnson says. "This was definitely a highlight of my semester, this was really fun and I think it was only possible because of the connections I made through the MES program."

Johnson says one of the differences between undergrad and a master's is the schedule becomes more open and flexible for master's students.

"So it's just figuring out how to balance your work load — it's very like self directed, no one's going to tell you to do your work," Johnson says. "Also you'll typically have a lot of work outside your actual



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Rachel Johnson, a Master of Environmental Studies student, delivers her presentation during Lakehead University's Indigenous Graduate Student Speaker Series.

courses or your research, lots of people are graduate assistants. Or you're also helping your professors with outside projects that they're working on."

Johnson says it is important to apply for extra funding because graduate studies can have high costs.

"Your supervisor may have funding for you to support your actual project, but scholarships and grants can help pay for your tuition and just your day-to-day

life," Johnson says, noting that two well known scholarships are Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and Ontario Graduate Scholarships (OGS). "The year I applied for graduate studies in my undergrad, I applied for both these scholarships and I actually ended up getting the SSHRC scholarship."

Yolanda Twance, at Lakehead University, says the ISSC hosts the Indigenous Graduate Stu-

dent Speaker Series every year.

"It's an opportunity for Indigenous students in graduate programs, so either master's or PhD level, to come and connect with other students in undergrad in the hopes that it will inspire them to apply to grad studies themselves," Twance says. "So they come and they share about their educational journeys, their research that they are doing and share stories of their experiences. It's just a really nice opportunity for undergrad and grad students to connect with one another."

The other students who were scheduled to deliver presentations during the Indigenous Graduate Student Speaker Series were Brandon Chevrier, a Master of Education in Education for Change student; Abbey Radford, a PhD Clinical Psychology student; and Teagan Neufeld, a Master of Clinical Psychology student.

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Education

Land-based curriculum shared at NAN's Resource conference

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School's David Thompson highlighted DFC's land-based program during Nishnawbe Aski Nation's First Nation Resource and Curriculum Sharing conference, held March 25-26 at the Superior Inn in Thunder Bay.

"I just wanted to share with educators how our land-based program has been evolving over the years," says Thompson, land based coordinator at DFC. "Today I was focusing on the mental wellness, so I wanted to present a variety of different activities we do through the seasons while we're at school."

Thompson says during his Land-Based Learning and Mental Health presentation that he was fortunate to be raised by his grandparents, noting that he never thought he would use all of the things they taught him later in life.

"This is (a photo of) my daughter and my grandfather, we're out on our trapline pretty regularly because that's our centre of our lives, that's where my ancestors hunted and fished going back many generations," says Thompson, who also shared a photo of his great grandmother and great grandfather in their cabin on the trapline. "My grandfather was also a fisherman, so that was my life growing up as a child, and now I'm taking my family to those same places so that tradition continues, that transmission of cultural knowledge and wisdom."

Thompson says his daughter shot her first moose two falls ago.

"I was going to go help her cut the moose up and quarter it up, haul it out, but by the time I got there she was already doing it," Thompson says. "She did the whole thing and I was just totally amazed, and I felt very proud as a father."

Thompson says some of the land-based activities they do at DFC include putting up the teepee, fishing, berry picking, an annual hunting camp, ice fishing, rabbit snaring, skinning beavers, operating snow machines, snowshoeing and dog sledding.

"We also have the Junior Canadian Rangers program based out of Thunder Bay, so we have a lot of student involvement from the northern communities that have patrols,"

Thompson says. "We lobbied for this for a long time because we wanted to have that continuity when they are away from the communities that have patrols."

Thompson says they have produced a lot of great shooters at DFC.

"A couple of summers ago I took a group to the North American Indigenous Games and they came back with all kinds of bling, silver medal, bronze medals," Thompson says. "I was proud to see their success."

Robin Bacher, an educational consultant at Learn Different, delivered a presentation on Culturally-Relevant Reading Assessments: using data to create a responsive action plan during the conference.

"We were presenting on a tool for universal screening called academicassessments.ca that came out of our work with First Nations communities on customizing universal screening passages to fit the culture and community experiences that students would have," Bacher says. "We were showing a little bit about the tool, a little bit about how reading develops and a little bit about how communities could customize not just the tool but supports for



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School land based coordinator David Thompson speaks during Nishnawbe Aski Nation's First Nation Resource and Curriculum Sharing conference, held March 25-26 at the Superior Inn in Thunder Bay.

their schools, for their students, for their teachers to help them achieve their goals."

Rita Mannella, curriculum development officer at Matawa First Nations, was scheduled to deliver two presentations on Growing Success and Indigenous ways of assessment and evaluation of learning and Dif-

ferentiated Instruction and honouring diverse learning pathways during the conference.

"I'm honoured to be here and be asked to present a workshop on aligning the Growing Success document from the Ministry of Education to Indigenous ways of learning and assessment," Mannella says. "So

I'm looking forward to sharing some of the knowledge that I've gained, not only from my own experiences in working with the Ministry of Education but also from our Elders — their voice and vision is part of my presentation and I'm excited to share that with the attendees this afternoon."

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Sports



submitted photos

Lac Seul's Jesse Terry won the 2026 Iditarod Rookie of the Year award at the 2026 Iditarod Sled Dog Race in Alaska.

Jesse Terry wins Iditarod rookie of the year

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Lac Seul's Jesse Terry enjoyed winning the 2026 Iditarod Rookie of the Year award with the best time among the rookies at the 2026 Iditarod Sled Dog Race in Alaska. Terry finished the race in 14th place on March 19 with a time of 10 days, 23 hours, 36 minutes and 3 seconds with 12 dogs in harness.

"It was really amazing — it was a goal that I've been working towards for a long time," says Terry, who owns and operates On The Land Sled Dogs with his wife Mary England in Sioux Lookout. "It was pretty surreal to be out there running it and living that dream, that goal I've had for so many years."

Terry says his family, who lived on Abram Lake south of Sioux Lookout, got some sled dogs when he was 11-years-old.

"I was lucky to grow up around them and grow up into it, for sure," Terry says. "It was kind of a recreational pursuit when I was in my teen years. That's where I did my first sled races as a teenager and then really got into the longer races, the first ones in 2012, and then have been really building the team since 2020 to be more competitive and to race in longer races."

Terry says sled dogs have a yearly cycle, with time off during the summer when it's too hot to work in harness.

"Once we get to be around 5C at night again, at the beginning of fall time, they start working in harness again," Terry says. "Just like any athlete that's had time off, they kind of build up right from the beginning again and they're doing just really short couple of mile runs ... to build up their endurance

and their stamina while avoiding injuries. From there you kind of build up the length of the run incrementally by introducing a new distance after they've done the previous one (a) number of times."

Terry says he and England each ran a team of sled dogs during two races leading up to the Iditarod race.

"We put in two teams so we would have enough dogs to pick from for the Iditarod," Terry says. "They're a 10-dog or a 12-dog race and the Iditarod is a 16-dog race, so to have enough dogs trained up for the Iditarod you've got to have two teams in the earlier races to get ready for the Iditarod."

Terry says there was lots of snow on the Iditarod race course this year and the temperatures were similar to what he has experienced in Sioux Lookout, including -30C to -40C temperatures at night.

"Some of the highlights were running along the coast (during) the last third of the race where you're out on the Bering Sea coast," Terry says. "The communities were just really welcoming. It was just really cool to be out there (and) visiting the communities along the way."

Terry says he received a lot of support from the area, including the KuhKenah Network, Dryden Veterinary Services, Slate Falls Airways, Dori's Sewing Studio, Empire Wool and Canvas and 5 Mile Convenience.

"It was a big undertaking for us to make it up to the Iditarod," Terry says.

Terry says he is also the owner and builder at Gatt Sleds, a race dog sled business previously owned by Hans Gatt from

the Yukon.

"I took over that business about a year ago now and I'm making Gatt sleds here in northern Ontario — I'm happy to be filling that void for high quality race dog sleds," Terry says, noting that he makes the race dog sleds out of mostly aluminum and high-end plastics. "(They are) really light and really flexible and really strong material for these race sleds."

Terry's efforts to win the 2026 Iditarod Rookie of the Year award were acknowledged by Grand Council Treaty #3 Ojichidaa Francis Kavanaugh and Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler on March 20.

"Jesse's achievement in completing The Last Great Race with the fastest rookie time reflects years of dedication to the sport of mushing, as well as the strong foundation built through family, mentorship and hard work," states Kavanaugh and Fiddler in a press release. "His personal journey, from his early passion for sled dogs to building dog sleds and training his own team of 30 dogs, demonstrates the values of perseverance and respect for the land and animals. His determination, resilience and commitment to excellence have earned him this well-deserved recognition on an international stage. We celebrate Jesse not only for his success in the Iditarod, but also for the pride he brings to his community and to First Nations across our territories. His accomplishment is an inspiration to young people and a powerful example of what can be achieved through dedication, cultural connection and community support."



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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- ↳ 2:00 PM to 4:30 PM (CT), Monday May 25, 2026
- ↳ 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM (CT), Tuesday May 26, 2026

Snacks and refreshments will be provided!

For more information, click here: https://uwaterloo.ca/1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bDjkfs2l1dkTVI

Please RSVP before May 11, 2026 using the Registration Form in the QR Code. You can also contact Brenda Sedgwick at +1 (807)215-8070 or brenda@grovescare.com

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #47400).



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