

News

Concerns raised over Miranda Mamakwa's death

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Kiiwetinoong MPP and NDP deputy leader Sol Mamakwa is calling for direct action after the Sept. 8 death of Miranda Mamakwa, who had undergone open-heart surgery on April 23. The Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) had earlier called for accountability after Miranda died.

“It’s very disheartening, it’s very saddening, it’s very frustrating, maybe to the point where it’s very maddening that it was so preventable,” Mamakwa says during an interview with Wawatay News on Sept. 12. “And I think that’s very important that there’s got to be some type of direct action to make sure it does not happen again. Improving the system, putting in resources to the system, it’s not good enough any more — I think we need to be able to start looking at how we can go into where First Nations take over.”

Mamakwa says the larger First Nations in his riding such as Eabametoong, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, Pikangikum and Sandy Lake should have satellite hospitals.

“We need to bring services closer to home,” Mamakwa says. “I think that is one way to try to address the health care services.”

SLFNHA and NAN had stated in a Sept. 10 press release that the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program repeatedly failed to arrange the medical travel Miranda needed to attend life-saving follow-up care, specifically failing to arrange travel and accommodations for follow-up appointments on May 28, June 11, July 2 and August 6.

“It is outrageous that Miranda’s travel was denied on four separate occasions,” says Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

“There is no doubt in my mind that her life may have been saved if she had been allowed to travel to her appointments. The circumstances around her passing are extremely troubling and the denial of travel by NIHB demands accountability. Those in charge of NIHB need to understand that medical transportation is not just a paper exercise – these are matters of life and death.”

Over the Sept. 5-6 weekend, Miranda was taken to the local nursing station in Fort Severn and transported by Ornge to the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Her family made the difficult decision to remove her from life support on Sept. 8. The family is calling for accountability regarding the handling of her denied travel requests.

“Miranda Mamakwa should still be here today, raising her three children,” says Sonia Isaac-Mann, president and CEO at SLFNHA. “Her death is not something that simply happened to her, it is the result of a system that failed her, appointment after appointment, for months. SLFNHA and NAN have raised these gaps for years, and we are done accepting apologies with no accountability behind them. Indigenous Services Canada owes Miranda’s family, and every family across Kiiwetinoong, a straight answer: who is responsible, and what is being done right now so this never happens again.”

SLFNHA and NAN state that they have spent years warning that delays and administrative failures within the NIHB program put lives at risk in Kiiwetinoong and across NAN territory.

“The officials responsible should be asking themselves why our members are still subject to such a horrific bureaucracy that denies them access to life-saving care,” Fiddler says. “Days before she began her Spirit Journey,



Kiiwetinoong MPP and NDP deputy leader Sol Mamakwa, pictured at the Mamaw Kimicimanan Food Sovereignty Gathering, is calling for direct action after the Sept. 8 death of Miranda Mamakwa.

Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Miranda posted to social media that, ‘If I die, please go after them.’ We will honour her dying wish by demanding full accountability.”

Mamakwa stated in a Sept. 11 press release that First Nations people across northern Ontario have long been raising the alarm about the crisis at the NIHB program and the risks it poses to the lives of people living in northern fly-in First Nations.

“Only two months ago in June, hundreds of rights holders attended a rally calling for the federal government to take action and fix the NIHB program,” Mamakwa says. “Miranda’s death was not an accident, but a result of both individual decisions and systemic failures that continue to compromise the lives of First Nations people in this province. It’s time the NIHB program and the federal government

take accountability in Miranda’s death and acts to ensure that no more lives are lost because of the program’s failures.”

An Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) spokesperson states in an email reply, which is attributable to Jennifer Cooper, a spokesperson at ISC, that they recognize the serious impacts that gaps in service can have on clients and take the concerns raised by First Nations leadership and partners in Ontario seriously.

“Indigenous Services Canada acknowledges that medical transportation is a critical service for remote and fly-in communities as it provides coverage for transportation, accommodations and meals for clients who must travel to access medically necessary health services not available in the community,” the spokesperson states. “ISC has been working diligently

to improve service levels in the Ontario Region medical transportation call centre. To improve service efficiency, we have increased staffing and training and simplified internal processes as well as travel request documentation. These changes aim to improve travel request processing times, reduce delays and decrease phone wait times. We are taking further actions toward continuous improvement by continually re-assessing call centre performance and service levels and further streamlining our processes to improve client-focused service.”

The spokesperson states that regular dialogue with First Nations leadership about NIHB services has been an important part of their work to improve service levels.

“Partner feedback is essential as we evolve service delivery,” the spokesperson states.

“ISC holds regular bilateral meetings with several partners in Ontario including the Chiefs of Ontario, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority to discuss NIHB services in the region. ISC leadership also met with Matawa Chiefs in May to hear concerns and discuss NIHB Ontario Region operational improvements. In addition to regional meetings, an NIHB Joint National Review is also underway, led by the Assembly of First Nations in collaboration with the federal government. We are committed to working closely with the nations we serve to identify and address any gaps in NIHB medical transportation on service delivery.”

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Community



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

Nishnawbe Aski Nation held an International Overdose Awareness Day Walk on Aug. 26 from Marina Park to the Intercity Shopping Centre in Thunder Bay.



NAN holds International Overdose Awareness Day walk

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) held an International Overdose Awareness Day Walk in support of surviving mothers and families on Aug. 26 from Marina Park to the Intercity Shopping Centre (ISC) in Thunder Bay.

"It's important that we bring awareness to the drug overdose and the drug epidemic that we're experiencing here in Thunder Bay," says Clarence Fisher, men's healing initiative manager at NAN. "Awareness is always best to keep top of mind so we don't forget about what's occurring. When we go about our lives, we often overlook some of the more vulnerable people and it's good that we're bringing awareness to those things."

Fisher also shared his own healing path during the International Overdose Awareness Day event that was held by the City of Thunder Bay Drug Strategy and Thunder Bay District Health Unit at the ISC on Aug. 26.

"I had to go and I had to figure out how I was going to relieve myself from this stuff I carried and I started to seek therapy and I started to talk to people," Fisher says during the event. "And I want to share a little part of that healing journey with you, part of my own personal healing journey."

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit states in a press release that 61 people died from opioid toxicity in the District of Thunder Bay in 2025.

“Overdose Awareness Day is a time to remember the people we’ve lost and to stand with the families, friends and communities who continue to carry that grief,” says Rachel Globensky, drug strategy specialist at the City of Thunder Bay. “It’s also a reminder that substance-related harms are preventable, and that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and have access to care and support.”

The International Overdose Awareness Day event included drumming, speakers, interactive activities, resource tables and the distribution of naloxone. It also created space for remembrance, grief, care and community connection, while emphasizing the need for continued action to reduce substance-related harms.

“Thunder Bay has been deeply affected by the toxic drug crisis,” says Kandace Belanger, manager of Street Outreach, Harm Reduction and Sexual Health at TBDHU. “This event is an opportunity for our community to come together, challenge stigma and remember that behind every number is a person, a family and a community.”

Thunder Bay Councillor
Brian Hamilton, acting Mayor

at the International Overdose Awareness Day Walk, says the walk was important to bring awareness to the people who have been lost to drug overdoses.

"It's also equally important to remember that there's folks out there that right now need support, that need help, that want to begin a recovery journey but we currently have a system that has gaps and it's difficult for people when they choose to get to the help that they need," Hamilton says. "So the walk is really important to bring awareness and offer some condolences to family, but equally important to remember that folks are out there in the community right now trying to get out of the cycle of addiction, trying to move their lives forward and are increasingly confronting barrier after barrier, stigma after stigma and not able to move forward."

Thunder Bay Police Service Chief of Police Darcy Fleury says it was important to attend the event and see all the supports that are available for people in the community.

"Families can come out and see what's available and really have a good conversation and get some supports as to maybe what people are going through and have a good understanding so that they don't feel isolated and alone," Fleury says.



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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

Pow Wow Is A Sacred Gathering



**Xavier
Kataquapit**

UNDER THE
NORTHERN SKY

This past month, I was happy to attend two Pow Wows I hadn't been to in years. I attended the Mattagami First Nation Pow Wow and the Matachewan First Nation Pow Wow. These are two special communities I have had the good fortune to be involved in for over 30 years.

I stopped attending public events eight years ago when my partner Mike was diagnosed with a debilitating disease. We could not afford for him to get sick with a common cold which meant that I also could not catch anything for fear of passing on any sickness to him. We both missed many events over the years but we were more than happy to hear about these Pow Wows since they meant so much to so many people.

Many people who hear about Pow Wows mainly think of them as entertainment events filled with drumming by young people and surrounded by male and female dancers who perform for everyone's viewing pleasure. Part of these events is to make everyone feel good about the sights and sounds. It is a powerful feeling to hear the pounding of the drum, even from far away and it is entrancing to hear the metallic, rhythmic shaking of a jingle dress. It's also amazing to witness the bright coloured twirling and twisting of a fancy shawl dancer, or the power and athleticism of a young male fancy dancer or grass dancer.

The Pow Wow is more than just performance art or entertaining music. Over the years, I've been taught and informed by many drummers, dancers and traditional people that Pow Wow is foremost a ceremonial and spiritual event. To many traditional people, it is a religious gathering meant to bring families together and allow those who are hurt, grieving and mourning to heal and be around a supportive community.

Many of the MC announcers, Arena Directors, drummers, singers, dancers and organizers are lifelong practitioners of traditional culture, dance and ceremony. These traditional people are often drummers, dancers and singers themselves who take on different roles for different Pow Wow events. They have spent years learning from Elders in their home community, as well as from other traditional teachers.

The dancers wear regalia and it is incorrect to refer to their dress as 'costumes'. These dancers and their families have

spent a lifetime accumulating everything they wear. Each piece tells a story of how it was made, what it symbolises, what the colours mean, who did the beadwork, and often, the parts are handed down from relatives, parents, grandparents or Elders. There is a story to every part of their regalia.

The grand entry and exit are the most sacred moments of the gathering and those in attendance are asked not to take photos or videos. Everyone is asked to stand solemnly to honour the opening, remind ourselves why we attend these events and why these gatherings are important and think of our families, friends and loved ones in attendance, as well as those who are no longer with us.

Over the past 20 to 30 years, Indigenous people in northeastern Ontario have worked to reconnect with our cultural past. A few generations before, our people were taught to disregard our cultural past. Survivors of the residential school era were taught to fear any traditional gathering and many of them grew up believing that they would be punished for taking part in Pow Wow. I was very happy to see so many young people working towards rekindling this sacred connection to our past. People like Elaine Daley, Jean Lemieux and Marilyn Groulx worked with Elders like Vina Hendrix-Landry and the late Marie Boucher to bring Pow Wow back to Matachewan FN. In Mattagami FN, I watched young people like Dana Cosgrove, Janelle McKay-Golinowski and Kourtney Baulne as they became part of the traditional revival in Mattagami FN and worked with local leaders like Dorothy Naveau, Devin Naveau and current Chief Jennifer Constant, as well as Elders such as Elder Clara Prince, Elder Walter Naveau and Elder Morris Naveau. There are so many other people from these communities who developed their annual Pow Wows and it makes me proud to see them celebrating our traditional culture.

In my own home community, I see people like my cousin George Rose and his family leading Pow Wow events, as well as Charlie Kioke and his family. I've felt a great sense of pride seeing my own community members over the years, like Gordon Hookimaw, Sage Iahtail, Conrad Iahtail, Tristan Ashishkeesh, Ramon Kataquapit, Janie Kataquapit, Rosie Kataquapit and so many others who sing, drum and take part in ceremony.

These gatherings honour our traditional past, remember our loved ones, celebrate our identity, comfort our pains and share the love we feel for one another.

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Rebecca Belmore's artwork on display in Queen's Park



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

A closeup of one of the pieces of Lac Seul artist Rebecca Belmore's new work, Gichigami, which she created during a studio residency at Definitely Superior Art Gallery in Thunder Bay. The Opening Weekend Performance at the Toronto Biennial of Art, her new work opens as a procession that moves from Queen's Park to the University of Toronto on Sept. 26 and will remain on view as an installation at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto for the duration of the Biennial.

Opening The New St Francis Xavier Church In Attawapiskat



**Xavier
Kataquapit**

UNDER THE
NORTHERN SKY

I was happy to see my home community of Attawapiskat on the James Bay coast announce the opening of the new St Francis Xavier Parish Church on August 25. The community enjoyed the celebration together, filling the new church for the official opening.

The ribbon-cutting event began with a traditional drumming ceremony led by Danny Metatawabin and dancers led by Janie Kataquapit on the riverbank next to the new church. The gathering then took part in a Catholic ceremony to consecrate the new church. The ceremony was led by local parish priest Father Kingsley Njoku, S.M.M.M., of St Francis Xavier Church and was joined by Bishop Pierre Olivier Tremblay, O.M.I., Diocese of Hearst-Mooseonee and Bishop Alan Edward Campeau, Diocese of Thunder Bay. The event was also attended by 17 regional priests from northern Ontario and northern Quebec, as well as representatives from the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre, based in Espanola, Ontario. As

part of the ceremony, Catholic relics associated with St Kateri Tekakwitha also arrived with Father John O'Brien, a Jesuit priest with the Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario. St Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680) is recognized as the first North American Indigenous woman to be canonized as a saint in the Catholic Church.

During the ceremony, Chief Sylvia Koostachin-Metatawabin also addressed the gathering to thank the visiting Catholic leadership for attending and to speak for the community in expressing their appreciation for the opening of the new church.

This was a much-needed celebration for the community, as everyone was deeply saddened by the loss of our historic 104-year-old church. On April 21, 2021, the original historic St Francis Xavier Parish Church burned down in a rapid fire that easily spread because the building was filled with dried and aged timbers.

It was terribly sad for everyone, including myself. The old church had been condemned in 2019 due to structural issues and degradation. Serious work was needed to save the church but funds and plans were de-layed for several years. The congregation then moved religious services to the local Parish Hall next to the old church. When church services began there, it was renamed the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Chapel.

Thankfully, parishioners saved many special artifacts and objects when they moved them to the tempo-rary chapel before the fire. I spoke to Elder Francis Hookimaw and she explained how the community moved the pulpit, the ceremonial tabernacle, statuary, the 14 Stations of the Cross and most of the wooden pews that once filled the church. The fire destroyed the old church bell but the tall iron cross at the top of the steeple was saved and placed over the entrance of the new church. She explained that the pews had been handcrafted by the people who built the church 104 years ago. She said it felt good to see these old wooden benches, marked and worn by so many people over the past century. These old benches came from our lands and were crafted by our grandparents and great-grandparents, guided and assisted by Catholic missionaries who provided professional knowledge.

I spoke to Elder Francis in our Cree language and it felt good to hear her talk. My talk with Elder Francis brought back so many memories of our church. She shared a childhood memory of how often her family attended services back then. On feast days like the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Benediction on Corpus Christi which takes place in the summer, parishioners would spend the entire day at church,

then take breaks by sitting on the riverbank overlooking the water. Back then, everyone took part in these services in our traditional Inineemoon (Cree) language. I was happy to hear that Elder Francis still leads song and prayer in Inineemoon along with Elder Annabella Iahtail.

Father Kingsley Njoku, who has been in Attawapiskat since October 2025, was happy to celebrate with the community. When I spoke to him, he said it was important to have the new church, as he described it as a spiritual ship for the people and without it, people felt lost.

I also had a chance to speak to Bishop Tremblay and he noted that rebuilding a church is a symbolic event that represents strength and resilience for the whole community and that establishing this new building will aid in healing and peace for everyone involved.

I've talked with my family several times over the past week and they are all excited about the new church. Everyone is happy to see this familiar structure at the centre of the community overlooking the river again. Hopefully, we will be able to enjoy the familiar view of our church on the banks of the river for another hundred years and more.

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2026 Mamaw Kimiciminan Food Sovereignty Gathering

"We have a team called the Preventing Chronic Disease Team and I'm so happy that that team along with a number of partners and advisory council have put this gathering on for us over these three days," says Dr. Lloyd Douglas, public health physician at Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority.

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Community



submitted photos
Apitipi Anicinapek's wild rice camp, held Aug. 19-21 in partnership with Black Duck Wild Rice, included the dancing process for removing the chaff from the wild rice.

Apitipi Anicinapek holds wild rice camp

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Apitipi Anicinapek recently held a wild rice (manomin) camp in partnership with Black Duck Wild Rice on Aug. 19-21, including traditional processing demonstrations and discussions, a land-based field excursion and lake visits and habitat assessment.

“Wild rice was not something I knew about when we were living on the land,” says Apitipi Anicinapek Chief June Black. “We have the big Abitibi Lake and I was living in a place called Low Bush River. I didn’t hear my mom talk about wild rice — we did everything else, we hunted everything else and our diet consisted of fish, moose meat and beaver and in the summertime berries.”

Black says the community was very excited about learning the wild rice teachings.

"It wasn't just a food, there was a whole ceremony attached to it," Black says. "The ceremony before you prepare the wild rice was just amazing, I sat there and I couldn't believe it."

Black says the whole process of growing, harvesting and preparing wild rice for cooking was also amazing.

“I would do it again just to learn more,” Black says. “It was a three-day event and the first day of course was the traditional wild rice processing. I had the opportunity to put on a pair of moccasins, as well as a little girl who was like seven or eight-years-old, and her and I both had moccasins on and we had our feet in the pot swishing around the wild rice. It was amazing because that’s what you’ve got to do to have the rice fall out of its husk.”

Black says they went out on the land during the camp and found “so much” wild rice, noting that one of the band members had planted wild rice in the area.

“And now it’s all there,”
Black says.

Kara Tremblay, food coordinator at Apitipi Anicinapek, says her late traditional knowledge keeper and auntie Elizabeth Babin had planted wild rice on Wahgoshig Lake, which is located in Apitipi Anicinapek's traditional territory about five kilometres from the community, and the late Denis Tremblay had planted wild rice on the Ghost River.

"As a food champion within Apitipí Anicinapek Nation I was really trying to find how we can develop our food systems within the community and have good healthy foods for our children and our Elders," Tremblay says, noting that she kept hearing of James Whetung from Black Duck Wild Rice. "And I heard Curve Lake had a really beautiful annual manomin ceremony and harvesting camp."

Tremblay says she met Whetung at a conference and they connected for more than a year.

"We talked about establishing and developing a relationship and having them come host a camp inside our community so that we can start scouting our homelands looking for manomin that has been planted in the past, learning how to process it and we did almost every step except for the curing and the actual harvesting because it's still early in the season," Tremblay says.

Tremblay says they began the camp with opening remarks from Black and a presentation on the history of manomin in the community before going into demonstrations.

"We opened with a manomin ceremony, we spoke about our medicines and then we really began to talk about the plant and how do you nurture that plant and care for it," Tremblay says. "But then we talked about the next steps which would be harvesting in the canoe with your harvesting sticks and then how you would bring it home."

Tremblay says the next step was to lay out the wild rice and cure it for a couple of days with daily turning.

"We dried it over a fire in this really big black kettle," Tremblay says. "After it cooled, they took us through the dancing process, so we put on these beautiful bare hide moccasins and danced on the manomin for the rest of the day enjoying presentations and each other's company."

Whetung says he delivered a hands-on experience for people who did not have any experience in the processing of wild rice.

“Once we’ve cured it, we go to roast it,” Whetung says. “Fire keeping when you’re roasting rice is very important, you can’t have your fire too big or too low. If it gets too big it will pop the rice or burn it and if it’s not big enough it will take you forever to roast it.”

Whetung says they are trying to remove up to 90 per cent of the moisture from the wild rice during the roasting process.

"That makes the chaff on the seeds become brittle like onion skin, and that's desirable because the next step is dancing and when we go to dance on the rice we want the chaff to come off easy or you'll be dancing it for a long time," Whetung says, noting that the last step is the winnowing process, where they throw the wild rice into a breeze with a sheet or blanket to blow away the chaff and dust.

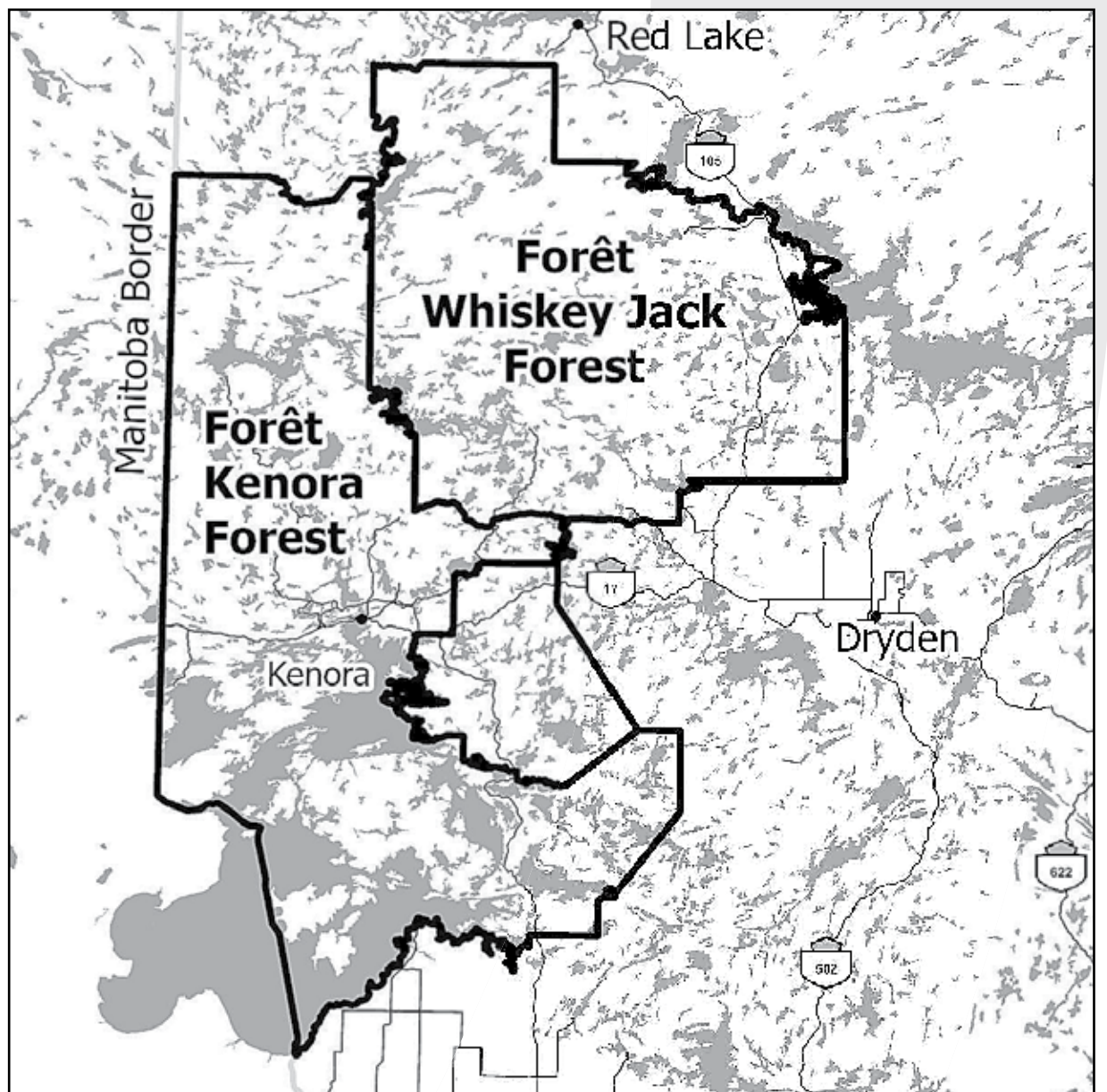
Whetung says the wild rice camp participants were happy about learning how to harvest and process wild rice.

"It's a big important part of our life and to be able to relearn that, it's satisfying," Whetung says.

Inspection

Inspection of MNR-Approved Prescribed Burn Plans for Slash Pile Burning for the Kenora and Whiskey Jack Forests

The Ontario **Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)** invites you to inspect the MNR-approved prescribed burn plans for slash pile burning that will be carried out in the **Kenora and Whiskey Jack Forests** (see map).



As part of our ongoing efforts to regenerate and protect Ontario's forests, some recently harvested areas have been selected to be burned under the guidelines of the MNR's *Prescribed Burn Manual*. The prescribed burn will reduce the area covered in slash piles while increasing the area available for regeneration and reducing the fire hazard. The burn is scheduled for ignition between **October 15, 2026**, and **February 15, 2027**.

The approved prescribed burn plan for slash pile burning, including specific locations and maps, is available for inspection by contacting **Miisun Integrated Resource Management Company** and on the Natural Resources Information Portal at ontario.ca/ForestPlans until **March 31, 2027**, when the Annual Work Schedule expires. Please note, the **slash pile burning** will occur in specific areas of the **Kenora and Whiskey Jack Forests**, and not the entire management units. More detailed information on the location(s) of the activities within the **Kenora and Whiskey Jack Forests** can be viewed on the Natural Resources Information Portal for **Kenora Forest: ontario.ca/f52dc** and for **Whiskey Jack Forest: ontario.ca/d2402**.

Interested and affected persons and organizations can arrange a meeting with MNR staff to discuss the prescribed burn plans. For more information, please contact:

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Education



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News
Lucille Atlookan shares some beading techniques during the Art with Neechee Studio workshop at the DFC Experience on Sept. 11 at Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in Thunder Bay.

Workshop presenters shared skills at the DFC Experience

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

A wide range of workshop presenters shared their skills with students at Dennis Franklin Cromarty (DFC)

High School during the DFC Experience on Sept. 11 in Thunder Bay. The workshops included Art with Neechee Studio, Cooking with Chef Hayden Johnston, Volleyball and Basketball with Lakehead University Athletes, NOSM University, Hair Braiding with Trivena Andy and Music Counts: Music Industry Careers Panel Discussion.

“Today we’re very excited to host the DFC Experience,” says Sharon Angeconeb, principal at DFC. “Different people come in from the community and even out of town to share their experiences, traditional knowledge, new skills for our students. It’s very important for our students — for one thing, it’s a welcome to the community and it’s also a welcome to the school. Here at DFC we do our best to provide a lot more than just the academics, a lot more than just the in-class stuff. We want to see personal growth and that means going out, making new friends, getting to know your teachers, staff on another basis other than just in class.”

Johnston, who delivered the Cooking with Chef Hayden Johnston workshop, says the older he gets, the more he appreciates seeing the youth and the next generation take up the trades and skills.

“Today we made a fun one, it was pretty involved, we made a ricotta gnocchi with a blistered cherry tomato sauce,” Johnston says. “(It’s) maybe not your traditional breakfast food but we wanted to make sure we made a dish that the kids can take something away from. This is my fifth year being here — I really enjoy it, they’re engaged, they’re great, everybody made beautiful plates and it’s been a lot of fun.”

Megan Meekis, a Grade 11 DFC student, says she enjoyed making the ricotta gnocchi with a blistered cherry tomato sauce during the Cooking with Chef Hayden Johnston workshop.

“It’s fun, I like it,” Meekis says, adding that she likes being at DFC. “The teachers are nice, I like the different courses that there are.”

Andy, who delivered the Hair Braiding with Trivena Andy workshop, says she taught the students about how she styles her children’s hair for when they are dancing in their regalia.



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News
A Dennis Franklin Cromarty (DFC) High School student prepares their ricotta gnocchi.

“But I also go over our regalia, which are the jingle dresses,” Andy says. “And I also show the students our beadwork pieces, from necklaces, beaded bowties to hairpieces, talking about our belts. I just started dancing about two years ago and they started dancing about four years ago. We are still fairly new to it as a family but we are very humbled with how welcoming the powwow circle has been with teaching us tips and tricks or gifting my kids, a lot of their beadwork is gifted.”

Domenica Thurier, who helped with the Hair Braiding with Trivena Andy workshop, says she taught the students how to do the double dutch braid.

“The kids seemed very interested and they all participated and I feel like it was a successful learning experience for everybody, even myself, I’ve never done this (teaching) before,” Thurier says. “We’ve had some really nice braids, even for first timers they’ve done a really good job.”

Lucille Atlookan, who delivered the Art with Neechee Studio workshop, says they made bracelets with pony beads and bone beads.

“It was good, we engaged with them and showed them how to make it,” Atlookan says, noting they are doing a Pow Wow Dance for Beginner Youth at the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre during September and October. “We are doing traditional dance and we have youth who are going to be leading it.”

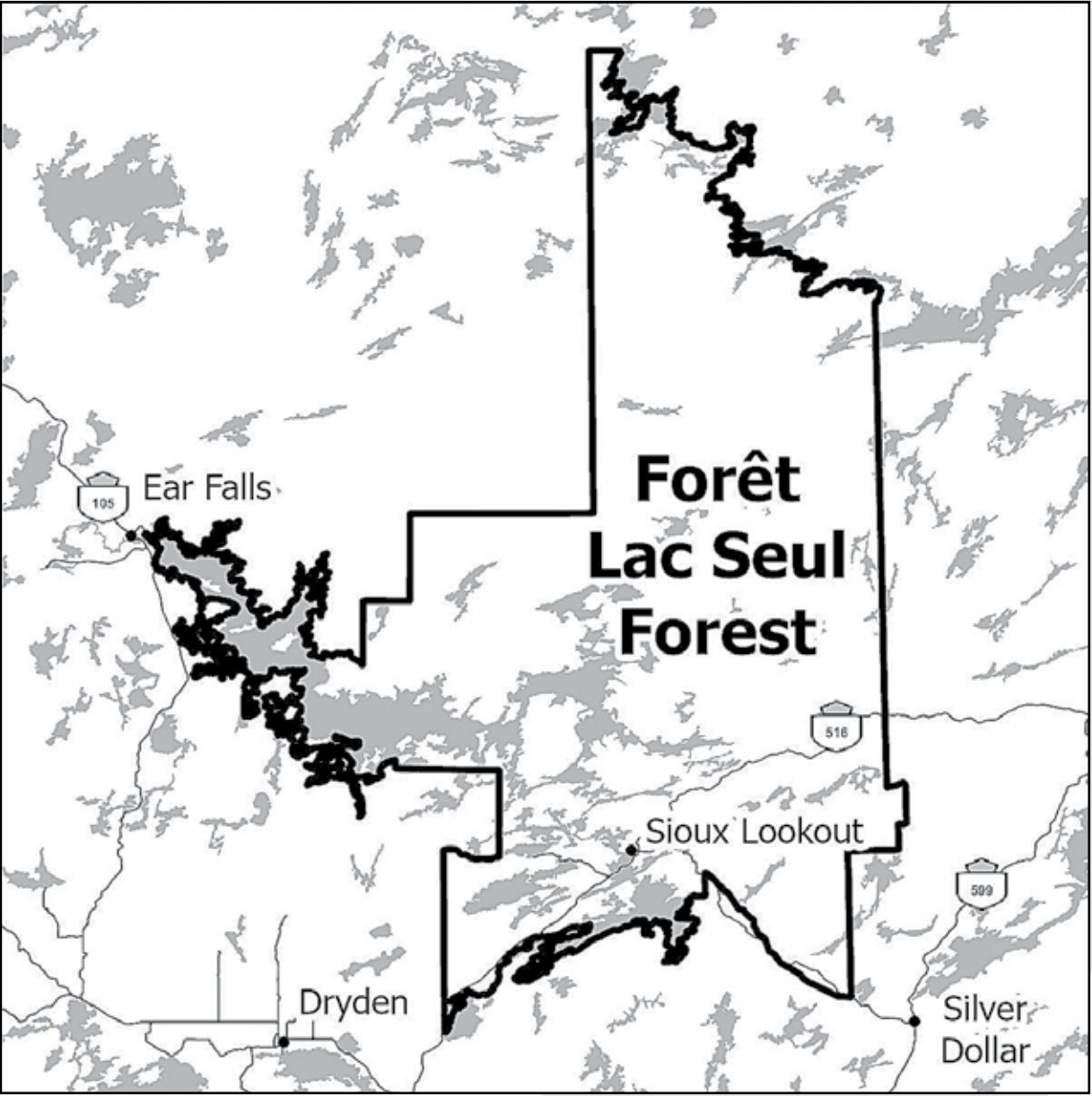
Malachi Fiddler, a Grade 12 DFC student, says he enjoyed doing the Art with Neechee Studio and NOSM University workshops.

“I’ve got this new bracelet and that (NOSM University) is pretty cool as well,” Fiddler says.

Inspection

Inspection of MNR-Approved Prescribed Burn Plan for Slash Pile Burning for Lac Seul Forest

The Ontario **Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)** invites you to inspect the MNR-approved prescribed burn plan for slash pile burning that will be carried out in the **Lac Seul Forest** (see map).



As part of our ongoing efforts to regenerate and protect Ontario’s forests, some recently harvested areas have been selected to be burned under the guidelines of the MNR’s *Prescribed Burn Manual*. The prescribed burn will reduce the area covered in slash piles while increasing the area available for regeneration and reducing the fire hazard. The burn is scheduled for ignition between **October 15, 2026**, and **February 15, 2026**.

The approved prescribed burn plan for slash pile burning, including specific locations and maps, is available for inspection by contacting Obishikokaang Resources Corp. and on the Natural Resources Information Portal at ontario.ca/ForestPlans until **March 31, 2027**, when the Annual Work Schedule expires. Please note, the **slash pile burning** will occur in a specific area(s) of the Lac Seul Forest, and not the entire management unit. More detailed information on the location(s) of the activities within the Lac Seul Forest can be viewed on the Natural Resources Information Portal at ontario.ca/039c9.

Interested and affected people and organizations can arrange a virtual or in-person meeting with MNR staff to discuss the prescribed burn plan. For more information, please contact:

Maegan Ciurko, R.P.F.
Ministry of Natural Resources
49 Prince Street
Sioux Lookout, ON P8T 1A6
e-mail: maegan.ciurko@ontario.ca

Jared Binguis, R.P.F.
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Education



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

A group of Dennis Frankly Cromarty (DFC) High School students checked out the Teachings about Nanabozhoo station at Marina Park during the DFC Amazing Race, held Sept. 10 in Thunder Bay.

DFC students participate in amazing race around Thunder Bay

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Dennis Frankly Cromarty (DFC) High School students enjoyed the opportunity to check out the transit system and various locations around Thunder Bay during the DFC Amazing Race on Sept. 10.

"My favourite pit stop was probably Wacky Wings because I got to beat one of my friends in pool," says Sage Nobis, a Grade 10 DFC student. "The (Amazing) Race was good."

In addition to Wacky Wings, the students also had an opportunity to go to The Hive Studio, NOSM University, Cinema 5 Skatepark, Intercity Shopping Centre, CEN-CAN Expo and Marina Park, which featured booths set up by local organizations and companies and a Teachings about Nanabozhoo station on the shoreline of Lake Superior.

"It was fun riding on the buses. DFC is a fun school."

— Megan Meekis

"It was fun, I liked the group I was with," says Megan Meekis, a Grade 11 DFC student. "It was fun riding on the buses. DFC is a fun school."

Malachi Fiddler, a Grade 12 DFC student, says it was very hot during the Amazing Race.

"But going around seeing the town again and going out and doing that, it was really fun," Fiddler says. "I haven't gone on a long walk around the place in a while, so honestly, it was really refreshing."

Laneeshia Meekis, a Grade 11 DFC student, says the Amazing Race was really fun.

"I like going around the city with the students and showing them around," Laneeshia says, noting that she enjoyed seeing the mining exhibits and tractors at the CEN-CAN Expo at Fort William Gardens. "That stuff really interests me so I really wanted to go. That really inspired me."

Breire Meekis, a Grade 11 DFC student, says he enjoyed the Teachings about

Nanabozhoo.

"She was talking about the different names of the Sleeping Giant," Breire says. "It's pretty nice here (in Thunder Bay). My favourite part is probably the mall (Intercity Shopping Centre)."

Sharon Angeconeb, principal at DFC, says the Amazing Race went very well.

"The purpose of that is for the new students from the northern communities to travel around the city with returning students, and it's one way for them to get to know the bus routine and also get to know the (DFC) staff and other students," Angeconeb says. "They get to make new friends, they learn how to ask where the bus routes go and where the bus stops are, it's a learning experience for them. I just saw a lot of excitement, it's team building, they went with their classes so they got to know each other and learned how to work together as a group. It's always exciting to be out and about."

Aaron Guthrie, healthy active living teacher at DFC, says the Amazing Race is an annual event they do at DFC as an orientation of the city for the new and returning students.

"We gather into small groups and we race around the city of Thunder Bay," Guthrie says. "We jump on the city bus and we're orientating the students to safety, to safe transit, safe places that they can go if they need help, if they need support, other things within the community that they might not normally find on their own as well as to point out some things that maybe they would want to avoid."

Guthrie says his group had mainly Grade 9 students but they recruited some Grade 12 students to come as leaders who knew the bus system in and out.

"If you think about where the majority of our students are coming from, a community of 500 to 1,000 people with no traffic lights, no paved roads and you come to the city all of a sudden, there's a lot of danger, there's a lot of things that maybe you aren't used to or haven't seen before and you want to make sure that somebody teaches you and shows you the safe way to do it," Guthrie says.

National Day for Truth & Reconciliation



We encourage everyone to take a moment to reflect, remember, and honour those impacted



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Lakehead University raises survivor flag

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Education



Rick Garrick/Wawatay News

ABOVE: Lakehead University student Jared Visitor.

RIGHT: The TD Bank Group donated \$600,000 to Lakehead University.



Lakehead University and TD Bank fund Indigenous learning

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The TD Bank Group donated \$600,000 to Lakehead University on Sept. 9 to advance the Gichi Kendaasiwin Constellation, which will expand Indigenous learning, cultural connection and belonging at the university. Gichi Kendaasiwin, which means Higher Knowledge, is envisioned as a living centre that brings together learning, research, ceremony, student support and community connection.

"Gichi Kendaasiwin represents an important part of Lakehead's continuing work toward Truth and Reconciliation and the kind of university we are working to become," says Gillian Siddall, president and vice-chancellor at Lakehead University. "It will create new opportunities for Indigenous-led teaching, learning, ceremony and community connection, while enriching the life of the university as a whole. We are deeply grateful to TD for helping us move this vision forward."

Fort William Chief Michele Solomon, a Lakehead University alumna, says Fort William has had a longstanding relationship with Lakehead University.

"Since president Siddall has been here, that relationship has continued and it has thrived and I look forward to opportunities to come here and celebrate the great work, the work that impacts not just the students from my community but the

students that come from First Nations around the province and at times from around the world," Solomon says. "I am a graduate of Lakehead and I can certainly say that the resources that had been available to me as a student at that time were significant to contributing to my success. Knowing that Lakehead is committed to expanding those resources and strengthening those resources for the students and for the community is really significant."

Solomon says she recently met with the Lakehead University team and Elders about Gichi Kendaasiwin.

"I know that will be a beautiful community space, a beautiful space for the student community and the community at large, for people to gather and really have a place where Indigenous knowledges and ways of being can be shared and celebrated," Solomon says. "I think back to a time where Indigenous knowledges were not a significant part of the education system and how that has evolved speaks to reconciliation and action, so I look forward to those ongoing relationships."

Nicole Beaton, vice president and region head for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and northern Ontario at TD, says university is a formative time in a student's journey, marked by learning, personal growth, relationship building and self-discovery.

"That's why TD is proud to support Gichi Kendaasiwin Constellation, which will provide Indigenous learners with spaces, resources and programs that celebrate their identities

and help ensure Indigenous cultures and knowledge are reflected in campus life," Beaton says. "At TD, we believe that when people feel included and empowered to participate in their communities, good things happen. We are honoured to support Lakehead University in fostering a stronger sense of belonging and creating opportunities for Indigenous students to thrive."

Jared Visitor, a Lakehead University Bachelor of Arts in Psychology/Bachelor of Education dual degree student, says he worked with youth this past summer through his role with Lakehead University's Nijiji Indigenous Mentorship Program.

"We were running an internship where we hired Indigenous youth from the community to come and just learn what it means to be a student, learn and explore the different faculties, the different career pathways they have here," Visitor says, noting that one of the interns lost their father during the internship. "The day he found out, his grandmother asked me to watch over him, so I did and he came back every single day afterwards. That showed me that the impact of our programs, the impact of the heart and the energy that we put into these things, we can't see that from the surface. We really have to take the time to speak with these youth and to listen to them and to hear their stories. Something happened in that internship where he felt like he belonged, that he was loved, that he was cared for, that he

was safe, to come back every day even though he was experiencing such loss."

Lakehead University states that TD's donation will directly advance three key areas: the Gathering Place project that has advanced significantly through guidance from Elders, architectural planning and the selection

of a site near existing land-based learning spaces; the Nijiji Indigenous Mentorship Program, which facilitates 7,500 interactions with Indigenous youth each year; and Indigenous-led cultural programming and investment in honouraria that respect the roles of Indigenous scholars and Elders.

"Lakehead University is grateful for TD's philanthropic investment," says Michael den Haan, vice-president, University Advancement at Lakehead University. "This is an important step forward for Gichi Kendaasiwin and builds meaningful momentum for the campaign."

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National Day for Truth & Reconciliation 2026

Mayor, Councillors and the staff of the Municipality of Sioux Lookout extend best wishes to all Indigenous residents, stakeholders, neighbours and friends on the occasion of National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, September 30, 2026.

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



Early, meaningful and open engagement is important to all of Hydro One's projects. Feedback from local residents, Indigenous communities, businesses, government agencies and interest groups will be instrumental to inform all aspects of the Class EA. We invite you to drop in at our community open houses, where dinner will be provided while supplies last, and learn more about the project, ask our team questions and provide input.



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Culture

Anishinaabe Keeshigun 2026

Fort William Historical Park held its annual Anishinaabe Keeshigun weekend event on Aug. 22-23 with powwow drumming and dancing and a variety of activities such as baggataway (lacrosse), double ball and a bannock making contest.



photos by Rick Garrick/Wawatay News



ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ 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

Arts & Entertainment

Wake The Giant 2026 featured DFC students

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

The Wake the Giant Music Festival featured a group of Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFC) jingle dress dancers performing with Sebastian Gaskin, who they had created a song with this past school year. Gaskin, a Cree singer-songwriter and producer from Tataskweyak Cree Nation in Manitoba, was one of the musicians who performed at the Wake the Giant Music Festival, which also included LOV, Shawnee Kish, Tia Wood, Plain White T's, The Wallflowers and Flo Rida.

"It was really amazing, I get to be back here again, I get to teach new youth how to dance, overall it's just positive vibes," says Debra Thomas, a former DFC student who performed on stage with the other DFC students during Gaskin's set. "I'm one of the alumni, I graduated from DFC already and this my second year dancing with this group."

Sharon Angeconeb, principal at DFC, says they were happy that Gaskin had worked with the students to write the song this past school year.

"This afternoon Sebastien debuted that song and we had the DFC jingle dress dancers also dance to the song," Angeconeb says. "It's a huge achievement for the girls to be able to dance to a song that they had written. So (we're) very happy to have that performance today."

Gaskin says he was invited to DFC this past February to do a workshop with the music class.



Sebastian Gaskin performs with the Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School jingle dress dancers at the Wake the Giant Music Festival, held Sept. 12 at Marina Park in Thunder Bay.

"The stories that a lot of these kids have, they're tragic in some ways but also deeply inspiring, the fact that they are able to leave their communities for the sake of their own education," Gaskin says. "If anybody needs more support, it's Indigenous youth."

Gaskin says he was able to share some of his new music during his performance.

"We brought out some of the DFC jingle dress dancers during one of the songs, and oh my gosh, they were just completely on beat, on point and everything worked out very beautifully," Gaskin says. "They just have such depth of character at such a young age, and the lyrics they're able to come up with, it's heartbreaking but like beautiful at the same time, and it was very inspiring to be able to write with them."

The Wake the Giant Music Festival, which was held on Sept. 12 at Marina Park in Thunder Bay, kicked off with music by LOV, a musician from Treaty 6 territory, which is located in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

"My experience here, it feels like one big family, it feels very devoted to youth and to just community," LOV says. "It was an honour to be invited this year. I'm at a point in my career right now where anything that has a good stage, I am just like yes, because I've been working so hard to have these showcases."

LOV says she found out what the Wake the Giant Music Festival was about when she arrived in Thunder Bay. "I was actually about to cry, I was like wow, this is so meaningful," LOV says. "It's a place for us to exist together, it's a place for us to come together, it's community and that's something that has been unfortunately taken and shook from us because of trauma and because of so many things and barriers that our youth have gone through."

LOV says she first saw the Sleeping Giant a couple of years ago while travelling through Thunder Bay but did not learn about the legend at that time.

"I actually had the chance to learn about it this time and it's very powerful," LOV says.



Tia Wood performs her music.

Laneeshia Meekis, a Grade 11 DFC student, also enjoyed performing with the DFC jingle dress dancers during the opening ceremony.

"It being my first year, it's very exciting having to experience this at DFC and Wake the Giant for my first year," Meekis says, adding that she loved the Wake the Giant Music Festival. "I love it so much, the food, the people, they're really nice. I can't wait to see Flo Rida and I'm so excited to be here."

The Wake the Giant Music Festival also featured a variety of activities and food vendors for the participants, including a Love Is art project set up by Betty Carpick, an Indigenous artist originally from northern Manitoba.

"We're creating a giant word love in Anishinabemowin," Carpick says. "People are painting strawberries and we're placing them on all the letters to fill in all the letters of zaagi'idiwin. It's really nice to be at the festival and do something low key and something that everybody can take part in. They're just having a nice time, happy to be outside, happy to be in community and listening to music."

Pays Plat's Jeanette Posine also set up The Bannock Lady food truck at the Wake the Giant Music Festival.

"It's awesome," Posine says. "I enjoy being here with all the students and it's such a good cause. We will be listening to these great musicians all evening."

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Arts & Entertainment

Addica MacIver's moose welding project shared in Austria

Rick Garrick
Wawatay News

Ginoogaming's Addica MacIver enjoyed having her Moose of Steel welding project shared digitally at the International Institute of Welding (IIW) Annual Assembly in Salzburg, Austria. The Moose of Steel sculpture stands three metres high, or just less than 10 feet high.

"I don't even have words for that, honestly — it was mind blowing," MacIver says. "Just to think before I was just a little girl with a big dream and then having that out for so many people to see and be inspired, it was really cool."

MacIver began working on the project just before she graduated from Grade 12 at Geraldton Composite High School in 2025 and finished it after graduating.

"There was a cutout online — so there's a template for the plasma cutter and it cuts out all the pieces," MacIver says. "I had to clean all the pieces, so it took me a little bit. I had to take a chipping hammer, I chipped away all the slag that comes off of it. And I scraped it and scraped it, and once all that stuff was off I (used a grinder on) all the pieces so they were nice and clean so the weld would penetrate better into it."

MacIver says she had some help from her high school shop teacher, Terry Burke, to hold the pieces while she tacked them into place.

"Once it could sort of stand up, it was just more tacking and tacking, making sure everything aligned because metal distorts a lot when it is under heat," MacIver says. "Once we got to the antlers, he had to set up some scaffolding for me because it was so high up I couldn't reach it with the ladder."

MacIver says once all the pieces were tacked together, she was able to weld them together.

"That took a lot because it was spot welding, it's not a full bead," MacIver says. "Because the metal was so thin, if I were to weld it, then it would just fall in."

MacIver says she got interested in welding after an ironworker delivered a presentation on welding when she was in Grade 7.

"She talked about the trade and how it worked and how she travelled a lot and it was just something she loved to do," MacIver says. "As soon as she talked about it, I just loved it." MacIver says the ironworker brought some of the students to the shop to try out welding after her presentation.

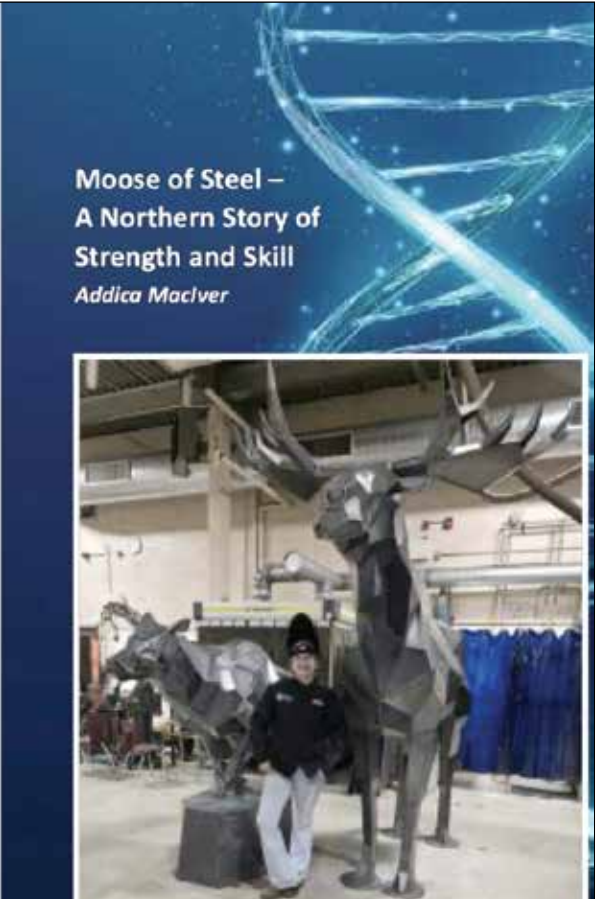
"When I first tried it, she said, 'Wow, you're a natural,'" MacIver says. "So ever since then, that's when I wanted to be a welder and that's how it started."

MacIver says she watched videos on welding when she was younger and her high school shop teacher also showed her a lot about welding.

"It was easy, for me anyways, I really enjoyed it and then stuck with it," MacIver says. "So here I am now and it's just crazy to think how far I've come."

MacIver credits having a good support system and her shop teacher always being there for her for getting through her studies at high school.

"A lot of the times I did get discouraged but for the longest time that was what I wanted to do so I just pushed through it," MacIver says. "Even though it was hard sometimes, I still did it."



Ginoogaming's Addica MacIver created a Moose of Steel sculpture, which stands about three metres high, or just less than 10 feet high, beginning during Grade 12 at Geraldton Composite High School.

MacIver says she took a year off after high school before she took the Welding Techniques program at Confederation Col-

lege. "It was amazing," MacIver says. "The teachers were amazing. I suggest that program to

a lot of people because it was great."

MacIver says she is currently working as an apprentice welder

at Greenstone Gold Mines.

"I love it," MacIver says. "I'm hoping to get my Red Seal eventually, which takes four-to-

five years, so that's what I'm going to work towards. That's my main goal right now, is to get my Red Seal."



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Qualifications and Requirements:

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Education & Certification:

Possession of (or eligibility for) a valid Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) Certificate.

Alternative: Successful completion of an accredited Indigenous Language Teacher's Diploma program (e.g., Lakehead University's KITEP/Anishinaabemowik program) or equivalent certified elder/knowledge keeper status recognized by the Board.

Cultural Knowledge: Deep lived experience and a profound understanding of Northwestern Ontario First Nations heritage, values, and community dynamics.

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