

Matawa First Nations Management



2021 Message from the CEO

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Matawa member First Nations have faced 2020 and now 2021, tumultuous years marked by the COVID-19 global pandemic, remote community evacuations and many crisis situations. It seems this is a regular and normal life for our Peoples of the Land. The recent discovery of 215 unmarked graves that until now were unreported and unacknowledged, seems to have been

done purposely to hide the murders of these children as young as three years old. Imagine other graves that will be discovered as First Nations and the whole world demands the government of Canada be held accountable. These events are criminal acts that were undertaken against our Peoples as a matter of policy by the government, the Department of Indian Affairs and the churches. Today, Canada and its representatives of the Crown continue to discriminate against our Peoples and refuse to admit to the wrongs that have been done. This tells me that the government has many things they are hiding and are afraid these will come out with increasing scrutiny. I trust Canada, some day in the near future, will be forced to answer for those wrongs. I believe Canada is concerned that the truth will shake the economy, bankrupt the country and rightfully so.

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I see a light of hope in all this and I believe we, as First Nations Peoples will overcome our fears and face the future head on. Here is what I see for the future for our Peoples of the Land:

 The control of our lands will be rightfully returned to us. We will benefit economically and socially into the future including the control and ownership in our First Nation territories of our minerals and other resources.

- Industry partners will want to work with First Nations in all types of development that will be permitted and consented to by our Peoples.
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- 3. The economies in our territories will grow, benefitting our Peoples for better employment, housing, water, community infrastructure and essential services in health, social and education. ¹⁻Δ ▷C∩r⁻Δ[◦] ▷DL bJC4[◦] ⊲P CσCΔb[◦], ſ▷ſ Γ_□¹[◦] bP_□ Δσσ·⊲^b b^b ſΓ_□^b ⁴⁻Δρ²Δσ^b, ·⊲b^{*}ΔθΔ[◦], σΛ, CJ9Δ ·⊲b^{*}ΔθΔ[◦] ∇d L·⊲^c b_□C∇CdP[◦] ⊲_□PΔ_α[◦] Γ_□^bΔσ^b, ΛL∩r⁻Δ[◦] ∇d Pd_□^{*}DL9Δσ^bx
- 5. Our young Peoples today do not want the status quo of government and industry handouts like beggars. They are tired of being beggars of their own lands wherein Canada, provinces and industries get rich and we grow poorer and poorer. As First Nations we can grow and manage our own economies which will provide meaningful jobs and business opportunities. There will be jobs for anyone who wants to work and/or start a business.

6. We will achieve higher education for our children through our very own education system taught in our own languages.

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7. We will have an excellent health care system using our traditional knowledge of our very own medicines and healing solutions.
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8. We will eliminate suicides and social injustices by developing our adapting our traditional beliefs and practises.

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9. We will have a good standard of housing and anyone that wants a house will be afforded one. But I also believe that housing must be owned by individuals by putting in their equity and financing, therefore the ownership concept of First Nations community property must change as communal living has not provided adequate housing for everyone. There can certainly be social housing still available for those in need especially for the sick and our elders.

10. Finally, I believe our Peoples and Matawa member First Nations as communities can have happy lives and prosper as we were accustomed to in the past.

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The question is ... "how do we begin?"

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Number one, it has already started with Matawa the organization, an actual model of our First Nations owning and controlling the critical services for our Peoples - like KKETS, the Matawa Health Co-operative, Matawa Education, and the Four Rivers Environmental Services Group. We are starting this process in new areas such as in our children's services Awashishe Wiigiwaywiin and by initiating our own Regional Economic Development Corporation that can facilitate how our First Nations want to direct, control and expand our own economy through ownership of mining and resource development, as well as focusing on key areas of business development as a group and/or through individual entrepreneurship. Other areas that are beginning to emerge and we will need to work together on are developing our own policing and justice systems.

But, we as Peoples of the Land, must exercise our inherent rights as the owners of our lands, our resources and our future. We must believe we are a sovereign Peoples and Nation. We have these rights and must conduct ourselves as Nations. While I also believe that we still need to work with our Treaty partners on an equal basis with fair and meaningful partnerships. We must work with the industry and let them know that if they want to do business in our territories—they must work with us first and not through Ontario or Canada.

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That is what I believe in and I would like to think this is a shared belief by all of our Peoples of the Land.

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Miiway and may you have a good life and good health.

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Memorials were erected throughout Canada. Here is one with the photo courtesy of Manitoba MP Niki Ashton's office