



2020 / 2021

# Annual Report

Prepared for the Matawa 33rd Annual General Meeting





# ISO 9001 Quality

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## Matawa First Nations Management Annual Report

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Matawa First Nations Management

# Message

from the **President of the Board**



It's been one year since the pandemic hit globally causing everyone to drastically change in our everyday lives. There has been a strong emphasis from our health care professionals emphasizing on cleaning, sanitizing, and keeping our distance to minimize the risk of contracting the virus. As we continued to make these necessary changes, it felt like change was done overnight.

Living through this pandemic has driven dramatic shifts in our jobs, home life, eating habits, childcare, our livelihood (mental/physical/emotional health) all have been affected. Families, friends, colleagues, and our communities have been deeply affected by these changes one way or the other.

As many of our First Nation communities, offices, schools, and other businesses were forced to close on short notice, discussions were held not knowing what the long-term result would have. This was not a risk many of our leaders, boards will not take. In a world filled with technology, many were imposed to utilize Zoom to carry out our business in hopes to move forward in a positive and safe way.

Through these changes, sometimes it takes a global pandemic to appreciate our own backyard. As days went on, weeks followed, months progressed, many of communities continues to instill a bit happiness and hope through their current programming while remaining at a distance or at home. Some days weren't pleasant as we watched the numbers grow either through the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd waves. If there was one thing that this pandemic has taught me, it has taught me to count my blessings everyday, always keep thinking positively and never lose focus.

Although our offices were closed to the public, many of our departments within Matawa made every effort to provide services to our Memberships in any which way they can.

This fiscal year we have brought forth initiatives/projects despite challenges, barriers that we face during this pandemic. In the fall of 2021, we were pleased and grateful to work with District of Thunder Bay Social

Services Administration Board on the establishment of eight (8) rent-gear to income units. A proud accomplishment/partnership stemming twenty-four (24) years and counting. Some notable highlights included various departments within our Tribal Council coming together to address challenges faced during Covid. By securing funding for Mental Health Support, working with families and people at risk during homelessness, providing emergency supplies, food hamper distributions, and many others.

Our biggest task at hand no doubt has to go out to the Matawa Health Co-operative for all their hard work to ensure our First Nations Communities/Membership were updated with any information pertaining to this virus/variants and any upcoming news. We greatly appreciate the determination, and commitment from our front-line health care officials and our leaders who supported their efforts in moving forward.

For all the 280+ employees at Matawa First Nations Management, on behalf of the Matawa First Nations Management Board, I would like to commend and acknowledge all the hard work that has been completed for the 2020/21 year. It is my pleasure to present you with the 2021 Matawa First Nations Annual Report. This annual report highlights every department success/challenge and on-going initiatives.

Let me close by urging you all to continue to show your support and engage with us. Engage with us as we continue to strive to better serve you, to better improve our communities' successes. Challenge us to better serve you and see which areas we need to improve. But most of all, help celebrate with us as we reach notable milestones.

Thank you for your continued support over the past 3 years and being an integral part of this journey moving forward.

**CHE MIIGWETCH!**

**Robinson S. Meshake**





## Matawa First Nations Management

# Board of Directors - 2020/2021

### President

**Robinson Meshake**  
Aroland First Nation

### Vice President

**Frank Onabigon**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation

### Secretary/Treasurer

**Charlie Okees**  
Eabametoong First Nation

### Lisa Echum

Ginoogaming First Nation

### Stanley Oskineegish

Nibinamik First Nation

### Christopher Moonias

Neskantaga First Nation (effective July 6, 2021)

### Roy Spence

Webequie First Nation

### Robert Moonias

Marten Falls First Nation

### Rosemary Moonias

Constance Lake First Nation





from the  
CEO

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

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- First Nations will have the leadership role of within our homelands and territories on environmental processes that will protect our lands and water for future generations.
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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.

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.

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

## The Power of Unity, The Dignity of Difference

# Current Matawa Chiefs Council

The Matawa Chiefs Council is comprised of nine (9) First Nations Chiefs of the Matawa First Nations. The Council provides overall strategic direction to the organization and broad governance on collective issues.

For updates on Resolutions passed this year, refer to the 2020/2021 Matawa Chiefs Council Report which is available under separate cover.



**Chief Dorothy Towedo**  
**Aroland First Nation**



**Chief Wayne Moonias**  
**Neskantaga First Nation**



**Chief Ramona Sutherland**  
**Constance Lake First Nation**



**Chief Judy Desmoulin**  
**Long Lake #58 First Nation**



**Chief Sheldon Oskineegish**  
**Nibinamik First Nation**



**Chief Solomon Atlookan**  
**Eabametoong First Nation**



**Chief Bruce Achneepineskum**  
**Marten Falls First Nation**



**Chief Cornelius Wabasse**  
**Webequie First Nation**

Note: Chief Wayne Moonias of Neskantaga First Nation (replacing former Chief Chris Moonias), Chief Ramona Sutherland of Constance Lake First Nation (replacing former Chief Rick Allen), and Chief Solomon Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation (replacing former Chief Harvey Yesno) joined the Matawa Chiefs Council this year (elections took place in Neskantaga First Nation on March 12, 2021, Eabametoong First Nation on June 23, 2021 and Constance Lake First Nation on June 26, 2021).





## Matawa First Nations Management

L<sup>h</sup>.b L.J.ΔΓΔΓ.Δ<sup>ε</sup> ΓΡΓ.τCL<sup>ε</sup> bJ V<b<sup>ε</sup> Γ<sup>ε</sup>b

## VISION

Matawa First Nations will be prosperous and enriched First Nations both individually and collectively. By creating enhanced social and economic opportunities for everyone, the Matawa First Nations will reach their maximum potential and have confidence in the future.

## MISSION

Matawa First Nations are committed to supporting each other and focusing our collective efforts on core strategic priorities. By working together as a regional community, we will use our combined knowledge and resources in order to champion the social and economic vitality of our First Nations and invest in community and people building.

## VALUES

### Matawa First Nations Work Together

We have the opportunities to grow and reach our maximum potential as a regional group. The diversity within our regional communities is valued and a source of local and regional pride. We are proactively involved in the economic, cultural and political development of the Matawa territory.

### Matawa First Nations are Dynamic and Sustainable Communities

We integrate modern social and economic development practices with our traditional culture and heritage. We build capacity and economic wealth for present and future generations and are well positioned to succeed in the national economy.

### Matawa First Nations Uphold Quality of Life

We invest and protect our quality of life – socially, economically, culturally and environmentally – and ensure that the Matawa First Nations are prosperous and healthy communities in which to live, work and raise a family.





# Communications

## STAFF:

Carol Audet, Communications Manager

## OVERVIEW:

The Communications Department provides communications and advisory support to First Nations in Matawa, Matawa Chiefs Council, Matawa First Nations Management departments, services, corporations, and KKETS departments and services in the following areas:

- Media monitoring and support
- Development of informational materials and promotion
- Brand implementation and visual identity
- Website/cultural portal/intranet updates and training (shared role with Matawa IT)
- Social media updates and monitoring
- Radio broadcasting, recording, PA systems
- Translation equipment

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Continued assistance to communities in employment recruitment and providing up to-date information on COVID-19 (social media and website updates)
- Communications (Comms) Support for Ginoogaming FN (4 pandemic media releases, Minodahmun employment ads, July Chief & Council newsletter); Constance Lake FN (2 pandemic media releases); Neskantaga FN (media charter in October 2020, 6 media releases related to evacuation and pandemic, attendance at 44 All Partners conference calls regarding evacuation, and proposal to Indigenous Affairs Ontario for bulk food delivery); Long Lake #58 FN (1 pandemic media release, assistance with Canada Job Bank postings); Aroland FN (1 media release); Webequie FN (1 media release)
- Comms Support for Education: language graduation certificates, Canada Job Bank posting, media releases and liaison on Seven Youth Inquest and Safe Sobering Site, digitization of post-secondary application form
- Communications Support for Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction: development of graphics for

Treaty Recognition Week 2020, media liaison, youth outreach on social media, First Nations in Ontario outreach

- Comms Support for Matawa Health Co-operative: social media announcements/events, update of website section, signage, media liaison, Nurses Week 2021 recognition campaign
- Comms Support for Technical Services: winter road social media/web updates, media liaison on infrastructure related issues
- Comms Support for CEO's office: compilation of Matawa Chiefs Council Resolution Updates (various times throughout the year for Matawa Board of Directors & Chiefs), ordering of Matawa branded PPE and Orange Shirt Day collaterals, preparation of AGM materials and comms support prior to/during AGM
- Comms Support for Health & Social Meno Biimadeswin: Anti-Racism Proposal updates, development of missing persons posters, program announcements throughout the year
- Comms Support for Chiefs Council: board representation, food security and homelessness task force

## Matawa Messenger Newsletter

- On track to meet workplan target of 4 newsletters/year

## Radio Broadcasting

- 21 Bi-weekly radio shows ongoing providing continuous updates on Matawa programming via Wawatay (was able to adapt to method of radio programming with the ongoing global pandemic and provide programming without disruption this year)

## Media Monitoring and Support

Regular media monitoring and support was provided as follows:

- 28 media releases (8 issued last year and 16 the year prior) many of these releases were related to Matawa First Nations response to the pandemic
- 5 media advisories (3 issued last year and 10 the year prior)
- 42 Bi-Weekly Ring of Fire Media clips (45 issued last year and 127 the prior year)
- Staff kept apprised of news items, published reports/studies, funding opportunities relevant to respective departments

### Informational Materials and Promotion

- Matawa Monday Memo issued every Monday (or Tuesday, if it was a holiday) highlighting schedules of Matawa First Nations Management staff and upcoming events
- Continued participation in Thunder Bay Anti-Racism & Respect Committee
- Promotion of Matawa's support of LGBTQ2S Two-Spirit People during Pride Month

### Social Media Update and Media Monitoring

- Increasing followers and likes on social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) and continuing to double or triple amount of likes/followers
- Creating content responsive to community/world events and efforts made to engage audiences and educate our Peoples

### Website

- Completion of the translation of the website in one of Matawa's Indigenous languages
- Continuous updates of staff directory, job postings, department updates (where provided)
- Preliminary content and design of new Rapid Lynx website

## CHALLENGES:

### Maintaining Adequate Staffing Levels

- Department continues to be understaffed for the amount of users of the services
- Require a minimum of 2+ permanent positions and a 1/2 time translator to support the increased number of departmental/community requests and to fulfill some of the opportunities that are available

## OPPORTUNITIES:

- Continued training opportunities for First Nations and MFNM staff in graphic design
- With the approval of respective Matawa First Nations, collaborate with appropriate non-mainstream media outlets and/or policy think tanks on First Nations issues needing exposure



*Social media posting of Constance Lake First Nation Band Representative Team - Orange Shirt Day/Every Child Matters Campaigns*





# Health & Social Meno Biimadeswin

## STAFF:

Francine Pellerin, Health & Social Meno Biimadeswin Director  
 Leanne Whitehead, Health & Social Administrative Assistant  
 Ila Beaver, Mental Wellness Team Facilitator/Coordinator  
 Nicole Jacob, Regional Crisis Intervention Coordinator  
 Elizabeth (Liz) Wapoose, NIHB Client Navigator  
 Hilary Fox, Social Emergency Coordinator  
 Leesa Davey, WiiChiiHehWay Win Outreach Navigator  
 Micheal Whitehead, WiiChiiHehWay Win Outreach Worker  
 Rachel Yesno, WiiChiiHehWay Win Outreach Worker  
 Roland Okeese, WiiChiiHehWay Win Outreach Worker  
 Melba Woodhouse, WiiChiiHehWay Win Outreach Worker



## OVERVIEW:

The Health & Social Meno Biimadeswin (HSMB) department oversee the management, administration, coordination and implementation of several health and social wellness program and initiatives. HSMB provides advisory, advocacy, technical support and direct supports and services to Matawa First Nations experiencing social crisis and/or emergencies. HSMB supports primarily community-based programs, offers limited education awareness, promotion and prevention. We also provide client advocacy and referral services for people accessing Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB), assist with Jordan's Principle applications, and provide outreach services for people experiencing challenges of living in Thunder Bay. The HSMB works in partnership with several groups, organizations, agencies and institutions who are affiliated with our First Nations in Health and Social Services.





## KEY PRIORITY AREA:

To strengthen, enhance and promote health and wellbeing within our First Nations. Our main key priority this past year was dealing with COVID-19 and maintaining supports to those members who are most affected by COVID-19.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- **Continuation of all HSMB Programs.** HSMB maintains and administers ten ongoing programs and five one-time/short term initiatives.
- **Secured on-going additional funding for Mental Wellness Team/Crisis Support.** Due to high number of our First Nations experiencing crisis, HSMB received additional resources to cover some of the expenses.
- **Secured funding for WiiChiiHehWayWin Outreach.** Addressing the high number of overdoses and deaths in Thunder Bay, HSMB submitted a proposal to assist individuals and families living in Thunder Bay who were most affected. The proposal was funded for three months (Jan.-Mar) and again for six months (June-Nov).
- **PDA-Back to Our Roots Review. A review of Back to Our Roots: Chii Kee Way Meno Biimadeseyung, the strategy to overcome Prescription Drug Abuse/Misuse in Matawa Communities was conducted.** The findings and recommendations include continued and on-going support, resources and funding to all community-based programs. The document is available on the Matawa website and hard copies provided to all Matawa First Nations.
- **BiimadeswigKamik Life Lodge: A Place of Good Life, A Framework for Case Management for Matawa First Nations.** This document was produced in consultations with Community Health Directors, frontline mental health and wellness workers, regional staff and elders. The framework is intended to create BiimadeswigKamik Life Lodge and be utilized



as a guide for First Nations to ensure that community members have access to effective, coordinated and culturally based mental health and wellness services through effective case management.

- **New HSMB Programs.** Two new programs, NIHB Client Navigator and Social Emergency Coordinator, are incorporated into the overall HSMB department. NIHB Client Navigator program assists individuals and families who access the NIHB program by providing support and advocacy. Social Emergency program assists First Nations in developing community social emergency plans and assist with First Nations dealing with social emergencies.

## CHALLENGES:

- COVID-19 restrictions and protocols affecting program deliverables. HSMB staff were unable to travel into the communities to assist in delivering programs, conduct visits and training and to physically respond to crises and emergencies. Some of the frontline workers were re-assigned to other responsibilities related to COVID-19.
- Program funding and process for allocation continues to be a challenge. HSMB continues to operate with what is committed.

- Submission of program reports from certain First Nations is challenging and could jeopardize the overall funding for a particular program.
- Communication challenges within the system both internal and external.
- Continued social and healing challenges - addictions issues, dealing with historical trauma from Indian residential school, day school and other trauma.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

- Increase opportunities to creating and enhancing community services through new programs.
- Participating and partnering with other organizations in health transformation and planning for health system change. I.e. conducting community planning, engagements and assessments.
- Increase internet services and access for First Nations.
- New and innovating delivery methods and virtual capacity building.





# Awashishewiigiihiwaywin

## STAFF:

Robin Haliuk , Program Manager  
Dionne Beardy, Training Coordinator  
Kelly Tiboni-Ranta, Family Support Worker  
Ron Frost, Family Support Worker  
Britni Westphal, Family Support Worker (on leave)  
Jessica Minoletti, Family Support Worker (on leave)  
Simon Magiskan, Family Support Worker  
Paul Magiskan, Family Support Worker  
Carlee Kwandibens, Family Support Worker (contract)  
Michelle Levesque, Intake/Admin Worker

## OVERVIEW:

Awashishewiigiihiwaywin (Social Services Framework) provides assistance to families from the Matawa First Nations (both on and off-reserve) who are at-risk of child welfare involvement, have open files, or have had children apprehended. It also supports families from the Matawa First Nations with Customary Care Agreements, Kinship Agreements, and advocacy.

Opportunities are also provided for care givers and children to participate in traditional parenting programs, life skills, cultural programs and other group programs

- Support when dealing with child welfare agencies
- Assistance navigating the system
- Support for personal goals
- Connect to other resources
- Life skills
- Housing advocacy
- Nutritional programming
- Crisis counselling and support
- Address housing, domestic violence and child custody issues
- Referrals to additional supports that work towards family needs
- Traditional programming



## AWASHISHEWIIIGIIHIWAYWIIN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Matawa First Nations are nine independent First Nations who have come together to address the high number of Matawa First Nations children in care in First Nation communities and in the city of Thunder Bay and other jurisdictions.

The Matawa Chiefs Council directed the development of community-based, culturally appropriate and responsive care models for children with a focus on prevention and family reunification.

### *Mandate*

Matawa Chiefs Council have given direction via resolution #02 – 04/04/2019 as well as Resolution #26-31-07-14 that references a Matawa child welfare system.

The Social Services Advisory Committee is to provide strategic guidance on the continued implementation of the Matawa Social Services Framework in accordance to the above stated resolutions. The committee will act in an advisory role to support the program and provide guidance on all aspects including; operations, protocols, finance and budget and program direction.

### *Membership*

#### Advisory Committee

The membership of the Social Services Framework Advisory Committee shall consist of one representative appointed from each of Matawa's nine member communities or their alternate and shall include the following communities: Aroland, Constance Lake, Eabametoong,





Ginoogaming, Long Lake #58, Marten falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik and Webequie.

#### Technical Support

- May include an Elder and a Youth or other technical resource persons, Awashishewiigihiwaywiin staff and Band Reps
- Chair
- Once representatives have been established the Chair will be identified as well as any Working Groups

#### KEY PRIORITY AREA:

Awashishewiigihiwaywiin works with families from the Matawa First Nations to support them in navigating the child welfare system through prevention, planning and goal setting using community-based, culturally appropriate/responsive care models for children with a focus on prevention and family reunification.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- We have established a small food cupboard to assist families with emergency food security and construction continues on a new Community Kitchen
- We have moved to the Matawa Training and Wellness Centre and that has allowed us more space to work as a team and see clients
- Virtual programming - we have done community kitchens and craft activities over zoom to support engagement with our families
- Delivered approximately 100 gift bags during Christmas to our families that had children in the home
- Holiday bags for easter with treats, thanksgiving turkey vouchers and gift cards
- Monthly Good Food Box deliveries for registered families within our program
- Community assistance during pandemic and evacuations
- Support for vaccine clinics
- Support for new Band Representative programs including education and partnership development
- Staff have participated in many virtual training opportunities developing enhanced skills in case management and trauma informed care
- We have closed 19 child welfare files
- We have assisted clients to complete 26 service plans with child welfare
- We currently have a case load of 218 files that include 340 individuals

### *Awashishewiigihiwaywiin Advisory Committee*

1. Robyn Bunting, Constance Lake First Nation
2. Alex Ostamas, Neskantaga First Nation
3. Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation

The following have been attending meetings but have not been officially appointed:

Bobby Narcisse	NAN
Aurora Smith	NAN
Nicole Kinzel	NAN
Robert Baxter	Eabametoong
Sonny Gagnon	Aroland
Angela Sofea	Webequie
Barb Munroe	Marten Falls
Chelsea Head	Aroland
Elizabeth Mattinas	Constance Lake
Carrie Sutherland	Constance Lake
Laurn Stevens	Constance Lake
Levi Sofea	Webequie
Melanie Waswa	Eabametoong
Danielle Yellowhead	Eabametoong
Theresa Moonias	Constance Lake
Trenton Moonias	Neskantaga

## CHALLENGES:

- In person programming due to pandemic has been a challenge with many of our families not having reliable communication (e.g., pay as you go phones)
- Funding this year has been difficult to secure as well as continued costs of renovations to the Matawa Training and Wellness Centre
- Safe affordable housing continues to be a challenge in the City of Thunder Bay and for many of our families
- Education regarding jurisdiction to communities
- Appointed membership of our advisory committee

## OPPORTUNITIES:

- Developing working agreements with existing on reserve and in city Band Representative programs will assist in providing a continuum of care for clients and prevent duplication of services
- As we move to phase 2 of construction within the Matawa Training and Wellness Centre having dedicated programming space and a community kitchen will allow for more prevention programming including cultural and community kitchens
- Opportunities to develop education tools regarding exercising jurisdiction for Matawa Communities and begin community consultations
- Continue to develop working relationships with community organizations to support clients in a holistic way





# Financial Advisory

## STAFF:

Lloyd Wabigwan, CPA, CMA, Director Financial Advisory Services

## OVERVIEW:

The Financial Advisory Services Department works closely with the CEO and more specifically; The Band Managers Committee, to assist with managing the development of member First Nations' capacity in relation to accounting, finance, and governance. The department is community-based that provides outreach services, supports, and resources directly to the First Nations at the community level with a focus on sound financial management.

## COMMITTEE:

The Band Managers Committee has been reestablished. The committee consists of the Band Manager and Finance Manager from each Matawa member community and is to meet on a quarterly basis. The purpose is to provide guidance and direction to the Financial Advisory Services department as to what the regional mandate is to be implemented.

## KEY PRIORITY AREA:

To provide support to member First Nations by providing information and capacity development in the area of accounting, finance, and governance.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Given direction by the Matawa Chiefs Council to establish a Matawa First Nations Financial Management Support Strategy.
- Established and presented to the Matawa Chiefs Council a Matawa First Nations Financial Management Support Strategy/Proposal.

- Given approval of the proposed strategy/proposal and directed by the Matawa Chiefs Council to seek the required funding to support it.
- Provided both the Federal and Provincial government contacts with the Matawa First Nations Financial Management Support Strategy/Proposal and began discussions to have them both look internally to seek other departments which could fund it. Both levels of government were very interested in the strategy/proposal and hoped to find funding sources.
- Have been researching funding options for communities and updating the Band Managers Committee with funding streams that could be tapped into by the communities.
- As requested, provided input to communities in terms of policy development and job descriptions.
- Assisted two communities with evacuation efforts while they were evacuated to Thunder Bay.
- Assisted internally with the Matawa team on various issues that COVID-19 presented.
- Began providing an Income Tax assistance service to those Matawa members with little to moderate incomes i.e., preparing and submitting tax returns for membership.
- Have been looking into Trusts, Wills & Estates, and different types of funding streams.

## CHALLENGES:

To establish a network that allows for member First Nations to share best practices and/or key success factors that allows each First Nation to learn from one another in unison so that each member First Nation can feed off one another and share their understanding of what works and what does not in terms of developing capacity in relation to accounting, finance, and governance systems.

Getting those member communities who are under the Indigenous Service Canada (ISC) Default Prevention and Management Policy out; with the ultimate goal of





# Financial Advisory

keeping them out (all communities) now and into the future. Ensuring member communities will no longer be at risk of insolvency and that funding and financing avenues are predictable and consistent.

With the COVID-19 pandemic that took effect and still in effect at the time of writing; it is evident that the governments did not prioritize such proposals as the Matawa First Nations Financial Management Support Strategy/ Proposal given the health crisis presented by Covid. Once the pandemic is over, we can hopefully revisit the funders and determine how to proceed.

Travel restrictions and lack of suitable broadband width for internet in some communities has presented a challenge in terms of having Band Manager Committee meetings and being able to provide any sort of workshops or training.

Being dependent on the governments funding delays our strategy as we don't know if they will provide the necessary funding. Looking for opportunities for other revenue sources is not impossible but challenging. We need to have our own source revenues and that requires the leadership to advocate that the governments need to have a revenue sharing partnership with First Nations without us having to apply and report back to them.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

To establish a capacity development process and system which will allow for current community-based staff to increase capacity and understanding of accounting, finance, and governance, and to ensure there will be others who are willing to apply for staffing positions responsible for these roles if and/or when they become vacant.

To improve member First Nations accounting, finance, and governance systems so that accurate and timely information to evaluate a member First Nations financial status is readily available to management for decision making purposes; and to third parties such as financiers in order to make confident decisions about a First Nations borrowing capacity. This will assist with long-term borrowing needs a First Nation may have, i.e. large infrastructure projects.

To establish a clear communication system that allows for member First Nations to share best practices and/or key success factors with each other which will allow each First Nation to learn from one another and develop capacity and systems in unison.



# Technical Advisory Services

## STAFF:

Aaron Wesley Manager of Technical Services  
Lindsay Jupp, Environmental Technologist  
Saverio Rizzo, Housing Inspector/Coordinator  
Michael Bazdarick, Water and Wastewater Operator  
Neil Neegan, Water and Wastewater Operator  
Jeffrey Mitchell, Water and Wastewater Technician  
Carla-Jean Chisel, Infrastructure Projects Coordinator  
Leah Echum, Administrative Support and Travel Coordinator  
Oksana Ostrovska, Environmental/Public Health Officer  
Karen McGoldrick, Environmental/Public Health Officer  
Monica Budiselic, Emergency Management Coordinator  
Moe Douglas, Fire Marshall

## OVERVIEW:

### Technical Services

- Project Management/Coordination of Major and Minor Capital Services
- Technical Advisory Services
- Project Planning
- Housing and Infrastructure Project Applications
- Emergency Management Coordination, and Fire Prevention
- Water and Wastewater Operator Support
- Public and Environmental Health Services

## KEY PRIORITY AREA:

- Community Capital Planning
- Water Treatment Plant Construction and Upgrades
- Wastewater Repairs and Rehabilitation
- Water and Wastewater Operator Support
- Remote Monitoring of Water and Wastewater Systems
- Maintenance and Repairs to Water and Wastewater Systems
- Water Quality Monitoring, Bacteriological and Chemical Analysis
- Wastewater Effluent
- Safe Food Handling Program
- Biomedical Waste Disposal
- Housing Inspection for new construction and renovation
- Public Health Housing and Building Inspection
- Communicable Disease Investigation (Dog Bites)
- Environmental Project Management
- Fire Investigation
- Emergency Management Coordination

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Neskantaga Water Treatment Project
- Marten Falls Water Treatment Project
- Eabametoong Water Treatment Project
- Annual and Quarterly Water Sampling for 9 communities as well as wastewater system sampling,
- 19 Major Renovations
- 51 New Housing Projects including Teacherages
- 42 After Hour calls for Water and Wastewater Operator Support
- Sewage Lift Station Repairs in Ginoogaming and Webequie
- Reverse Osmosis and Water Treatment System Repairs
- Fire Smart Proposals for all 9 Matawa First Nation communities



# Technical Advisory Services

## CHALLENGES:

COVID-19 has been and remains a significant challenge. Projects have been delayed, providing service to the communities has been limited and only provided on an emergency basis. Travel was only done by charter as well to limit the exposure to staff and community members.

Funding for projects is always a challenge, Indigenous Services Canada has not been providing funding for Community Expansion and Development. Their primary capital investments have been on water treatment projects while community expansion is necessary to assist with overcrowding.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

We have been asked by Nishnawbe Aski Police Services to consider overseeing the project management of the Marten Falls police detachment and possibly the Neskantaga detachment. This will allow us to generate revenue that, in turn, will help us hire more staff to assist First Nations with community development.

**DID YOU KNOW WE PROVIDE WINTER ROAD UPDATES? Check them out at:**  
**[www.matawa.on.ca/services/technical-services](http://www.matawa.on.ca/services/technical-services)**







# Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction

## STAFF:

Kathy Brady, Manager  
Alanna McKenzie, Policy Coordinator  
Rosanna Peever, Logistics Coordinator  
Holly Pyhtila, Information & Implementation Officer

## OVERVIEW:

The Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction (RP&J) Department provides coordination, support and advocacy to the Matawa Chiefs Council, Matawa member First Nations, Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction Working Group, Matawa Regional Development Corporation, Matawa Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Partners Working Group and departments across the Matawa organizations.

The RP&J department's mandate is to focus on regional topics of jurisdiction, governance and opportunities while respecting the autonomy of each Matawa member First Nation. The department is responsible to ensure the Matawa member First Nations have quality information on emerging issues and priorities that may impact the communities and the RP&J department strives to do so with transparency, respect, efficiency and professionalism.

- Gather and present comprehensive, current research and information on regional priorities, regional development corporation issues, jurisdiction and governance, and lands and resources.
- Regional planning and preparation of rights-based strategies to move forward with regional plans re: business, decision-making, governance and jurisdiction.
- Capacity building and community engagement.
- Track political and governmental developments, Indigenous organizations and their directives - in order to act - instead of react - based on community directives.
- Research, review and analysis of information regarding Inherent Aboriginal Rights, treaties, government legislation, policy and regulations, past and present.
- Prepare and distribute detailed briefing notes, original supporting documents, updates and newsletters.
- Logistics and coordination of virtual meetings, and post-pandemic activities will resume planning, logistics and coordination of large gatherings and related working group/committee/Matawa Chiefs' meetings.
- Provide support and advice for across the Matawa departments and organizations, including technical briefings and writing assistance.
- Maintain regular communication between Matawa Chiefs Council, departments, organizations, community members and working group members.

## REGIONAL PRIORITIES & JURISDICTION WORKING GROUP (RP&JWG)

- The RP&JWG is an evolution of the former Jurisdiction Working Group with a broader mandate of regional priorities, and each Matawa member First Nation appointed one person to the working group from their community.
- The RP&JWG are tasked with regional priorities and jurisdiction research and information gathering, directed by the Chiefs and their communities; to ensure community concerns are brought to the RP&JWG to provide information and recommendations on priority regional subjects.

## KEY PRIORITY AREAS:

The Matawa member First Nations are committed to working collectively with regard to regional priorities, jurisdiction and governance. The RP&J Department is responsible to take communities' direction on identified priorities, provide information and strategic recommendations for consideration, and facilitate change as directed. The Matawa member First Nation people are leaders in asserting their Inherent Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. It is the department's responsibility to stay informed on the ever-changing political landscape across Canada and all levels of government, both indigenous and non-indigenous.

### Matawa Regional Development Corporation

As directed by the Matawa Chiefs Council, a new regional development corporation has been formed to develop opportunities to meet the infrastructure needs of the Matawa communities, and other potentially emerging business opportunities. As part of this process, a number of reputable and established Canadian companies with experience in large-scale construction projects including roads and highways, water treatment, electricity, government relations and finance have signed MOUs with Matawa to help develop a new path forward. Going forward, these processes are intended to progressively position the Matawa member First Nations to research, plan and participate in the socio-economic aspects of regional development opportunities in the North.



### Watershed Partners Process & Youth Strategy

The RP&J Department and the Watershed Partners team have been assisting Matawa communities on a unique journey of community-led collaborative design for decision-making, which has evolved to provide flexible platforms during the COVID-19 global pandemic. During the 2020-2021 year, the Matawa-Watershed Process took the opportunity to review the work to date from previous community gatherings and events and revisit and analyze the contributions and input of community participants. Additional input has also been gathered through continued pandemic-appropriate outreach with Matawa Chiefs, community members and staff in order to design and implement a "youth strategy" as directed by the Matawa Chiefs Council.

## Direct Assistance To Support Matawa First Nations During the Pandemic and Communities' States of Emergency

Throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic, the RP&J Department has provided assistance to other Matawa departments and Matawa member First Nations whenever possible. The RP&J Department provided immediate assistance with the unfolding of the emergency procedures enacted by the Matawa member First Nations and procured a significant amount of needed PPE, securing additional funding for pandemic needs for communities and assisted with stockpiling PPE materials for future needs.

To date, the RP&J department has been able to secure:

- 157,200 masks
- 100,000 KN95 masks
- 40,000 gloves
- 5,200 face shields
- 1,000 disinfectant cleaning bundles
- 1100L of hand sanitizer

All items shipped free to communities!



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

### Summary

Despite being in the midst of a global pandemic which altered the way communication and meetings are held, 2020-2021 was a productive year for the Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction Department, with over 400 meetings coordinated and supported since last year's AGM. With the ability to meet virtually multiple times per day, connecting with a variety of groups, productivity was very high and the RP&J Department moved forward on several key fronts, including:

- Coordination and support for the interim Board of Directors for the structure and formation of the Matawa Regional Development Corporation including the gathering of technical data and information for Matawa member First Nation infrastructure needs with the Matawa MOU Partners Working Group; this technical aspect was in collaboration with the Matawa Technical Services department and staff.
- Presentation of emerging legislative and policy issues and potential positions/strategies to the Matawa Chiefs Council, as the governments of Canada and Ontario have both proceeded with significant initiatives that impact the rights and interests of Matawa member First Nations. Despite the significant health and public safety threat of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the pandemic has provided an opportunity for all levels of government and industry to proceed with the development of the North.





# Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction

## Current Activity and Mandate Resolutions

2020 09 11 - Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction Department 2019-2020 Report and Next Steps

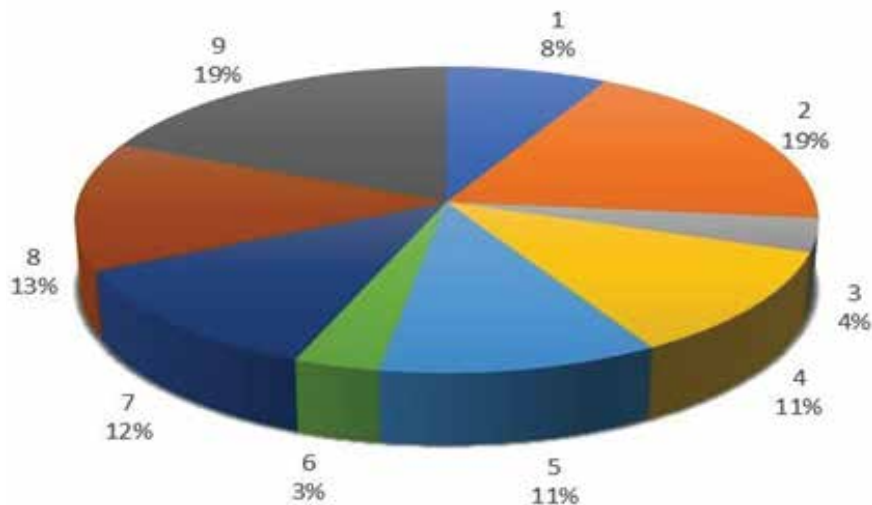
2021 03 17 - Matawa Development Corporation Structure Appointments

2021 03 31 - Direction for Battery Plant Opportunity

RP&J Meeting Time Over 12 Months		
June 2020-June 2021		
	Meeting Type	Total
1	Matawa Chiefs Council	33
2	Matawa Departments	79
3	Matawa Community	15
4	All Partners – State of Emergency Community	48
5	MOU Partners	46
6	Matawa Development Corporation	14
7	Other Organizations	50
8	RP&J Department	57
9	Watershed Partners	78
	TOTAL MEETINGS	420



RP&J Meeting Time Over 12 Months - June 2020 to June 2021





# Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction

## RP&J Political Briefing Notes – Matawa Chiefs Council

- 2020 04 20 – Ontario Committee and ‘Action Plan’ for Economic Recovery
- 2020 04 28 – Response to Ontario Economic and Consultation Initiatives
- 2020 06 26 – Ontario Mining Working Group
- 2020 07 20 – Federal and Provincial Update, NAN Response RP&J Preliminary Overview Document
- 2021 01 - The Far North – Emerging Issues Impacting Our Inherent Aboriginal and Treaty Rights
- RP&J Significant Presentation/Briefing to Matawa Chiefs Council
- 2021 04 28 – Impact Assessment Agency of Canada – Regional Assessment

## RP&J Media Releases

- 2020 08 28 – Matawa Chiefs Council Reject the Ontario Government Bill 197 Crown Tactics to ‘Take Up the Land’ and Access the Resources and Wealth of the North & Backgrounder to Bill 197 – Ontario’s Strategic Areas Related to Accessing the North
- 2021 01 14 – Matawa Chiefs Council Reject Ontario Government-Imposed Deadline Today During Declared State of Emergency for Comments on the Proposed Revisions of the Far North Act, 2010
- 2021 02 10 – Matawa Issues Call for Canada to Establish Regional and First Nation Partnerships as Northern Ontario First Nations May Hold the Purse Strings of Canada and Ontario’s COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Security

## Letters to Government

- 2020 06 08 – Matawa Chiefs Council Letter to Premier Doug Ford re: Matawa Chiefs Council – Ontario Action Plan for Jobs and Economic Recovery
- 2020 07 28 – Matawa Chiefs Council Letter to Minister John Yakabuski (MNRF) re: Matawa member First Nations Issues Related to Forestry (Revoke MNR-75 and Draft Forest Sector Strategy Including Proposed Resource Revenue Sharing) and the Far North Act, 2010

## Establishment of Matawa’s New Regional Development Corporation

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the direction of the Matawa Chiefs Council to form a new regional development corporation was completed with the coordination and support of the RP&J Department. This new corporation will be guided by the Mamow-Wecheekapawetahteewiin (Unity Declaration), and Matawa member First Nations will own the path forward, as well as profit from future projects. Key developments this year include:

- Increased understanding of each communities’ goals and concerns identified on a regional scale through various meetings with Chiefs, MOU Partner Steering Committee, and internal Matawa departments.
- Data compiled into a comprehensive first draft of community priorities regarding information related to common community items.
- Information drafted and shared to update Chiefs and community members.
- Matawa Development Corporation registered and incorporated.
- Matawa Development Corporation Interim Board of Directors appointed by Matawa Chiefs Council include: president, vice president and secretary/treasurer.
- Matawa Regional Development Corporation Draft Shareholders Agreement and Partnership Agreement presented to Interim Board of Directors.
- Increased understanding of scale of projects by leadership and membership.
- Increased understanding of regional land development options improving.
- Direction received to further discussions and add detail to what a water utility business/structure could look like and the positive results possible.
- Direction received to further our discussions and add detail to capital financing of projects within our MOU industry partnerships.



#### MATAWA FIRST NATIONS

Building our Own Path: Developing Infrastructure in the Matawa region

October 20, 2020



#### Information Circulated by the RP&J Department to Communities to Inform The Decision-Making Process:

- OPG, PCL and EPCOR PowerPoints – April 2020
- Enterprise Capital Draft JV with Matawa – May 2020
- Matawa Community Infrastructure Consortium Draft – Oct 2020
- Large Scale Battery Presentation – Dec 2020
- Seeds of Development Flyer – Updated – Jan 2021
- Regional Development Corporation Briefing – Oct 2020
- Seeds of Development PowerPoint - updated Jan 2021
- Matawa Timeline Poster ROF Updated – Feb 2021
- Battery Production/Storage Opportunity – Jan 2021
- Battery Plant Research/Narrative – Feb 2021
- Battery Plant External Briefing Draft3 – Feb 2021
- Matawa Development Corporation Registration Form - Feb 4 2021
- Matawa Development Corporation Certificate of Incorporation – Feb 3 2021
- Matawa Development Corporation - Task Tracker - Mar 2021
- Matawa Development Corporation Meeting - Appointed Chiefs – Mar 2021



Going forward, the Matawa member First Nations will be positioned to research, plan and participate in the socio-economic aspects of regional development opportunities in the North. The Matawa territory has been long-identified as a major area of potential development, and it is the intent of the Matawa Chiefs Council and First Nations to have an active role in the decisions being made.

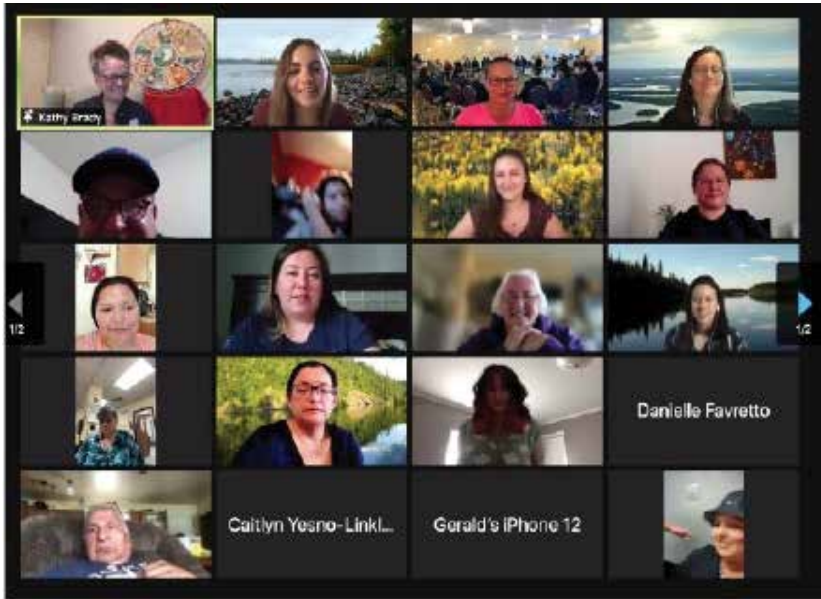




# Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction

## Communications

It is imperative to have clear, accurate and regular communication to both Matawa leadership and community members for all of the work of the RP&J department. Briefing notes, draft letters and media releases, research and information packages, meeting minutes and summaries, regular newsletters and updates are produced in a timely fashion and distributed via a variety of methods to ensure the materials reach their intended recipients. The RP&J Department prides itself on ensuring detailed information is recorded properly, compiled and distributed as directed.



- March-July 2020 Matawa Messenger (Back Issue) – RP&J Dept section
- July 2020 – RP&J Dept Newsletter
- Matawa Annual General Meeting report – Sept 2020 – RP&J Dept section
- Matawa Community Radio Stations Announcement – Sept 2020
- Matawa Radio Show – RP&J – Sept 22 2021
- Matawa Community Radio Stations Announcement – Oct 2020
- October 2020 Matawa Messenger – RP&J Dept section
- Nov 2020 - Treaty Week deck – for Matawa Facebook page
- Dec 2020 Matawa Messenger – RP&J Dept section
- March 2021 Matawa Messenger – RP&J Dept section

## Community Projects

**First Nation Technical Support** - The Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction Department provides specific technical advice and support to individual Matawa member First Nations as requested by the Chief and Councils. There is background work that is provided in the case of First Nation emergencies, press releases and formal letters to government that the RP&J Department contributes to on a regular basis.

**Aroland First Nation** has had no effective cell service for almost a decade, but through the persistence of Aroland leadership and members, as well as the assistance of the RP&J Department, TBayTel has committed to installing a new tower to bring back cell service to the community of Aroland. If all goes according to schedule, the new tower should be up and running by the fall of 2021.

**Long Lake #58 First Nation and Ginoogaming First Nation** are finally on the air after many years without their own community radio stations, Long Lake #58 and Ginoogaming First Nations are now enjoying their own programming for the community – by the community. Music programming as well as critical information about COVID-19 or other emergencies can be quickly communicated to the members through their home radios or their vehicles. Matawa's RP&J department was happy to help leadership get this project going.

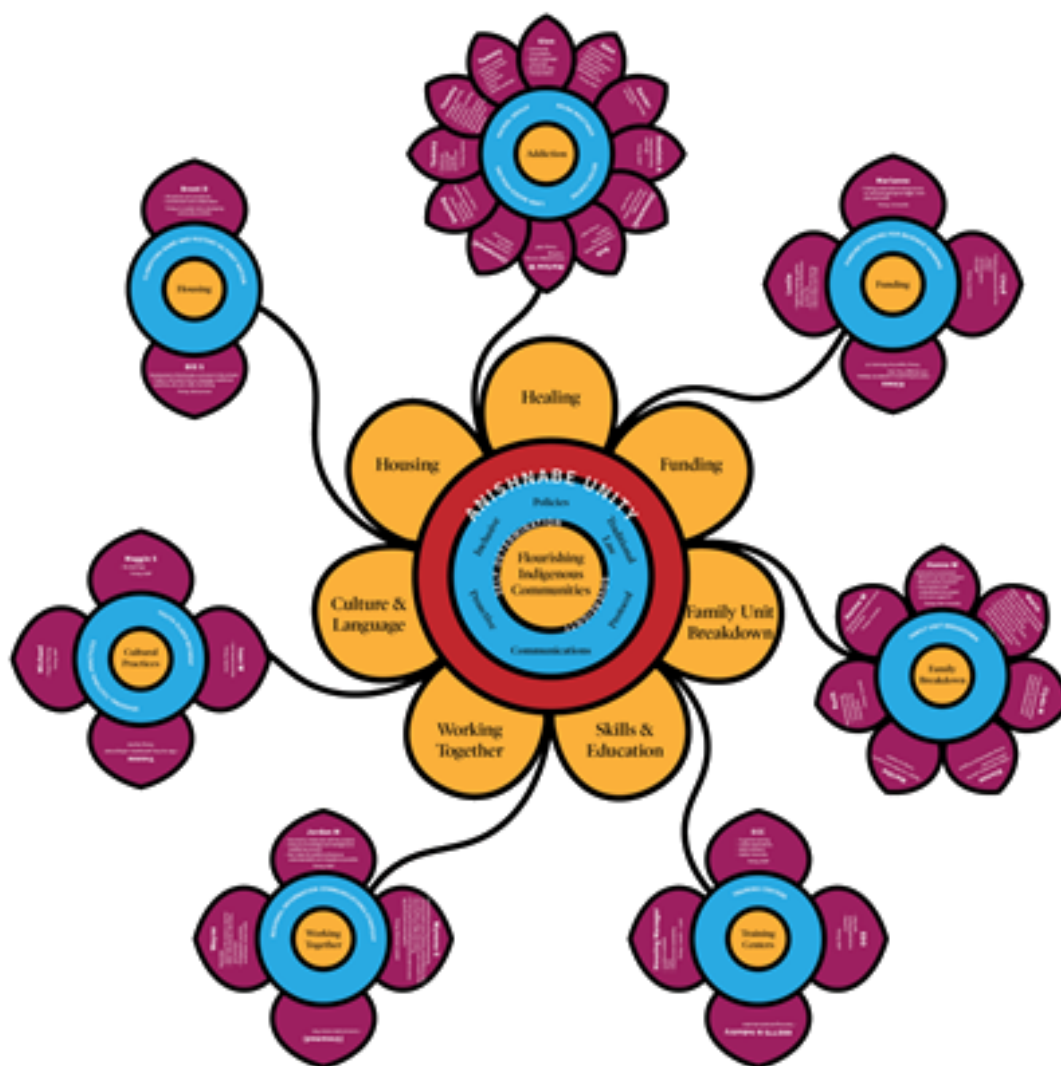


## Department Funding

RP&J Department funding for the 2020-2021 fiscal year is shared between both Crown- Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). The RP&J Department competes on a national-level for the limited funding available through the Nation Rebuilding Program for its core operations, and Matawa management works to secure the additional funds from federal partners to add financial resources for the activities directed. The RP&J Department is awaiting the formal response for funding approvals for the 2021-2022 fiscal year at the time of this report and the Matawa Chiefs Council will be updated accordingly.

## CHALLENGES:

- Department is continuously working to secure funding as the capacity and community demands grow.
- Long-term resources to secure funding for community needs.
- Communication and implementation of multiple large projects.
- Moving forward on a regional strategy, respecting community decision-making
- Community engagement throughout the pandemic.
- Pace of legislative changes proposed and strategy needed going forward.
- Matawa Development Corporation structure completed and operational, Directors in place, decisions needed on battery plant and other work going forward.
- Engaging youth for strategy development and youth healing/wellness retreat design including funding requirements to complete.

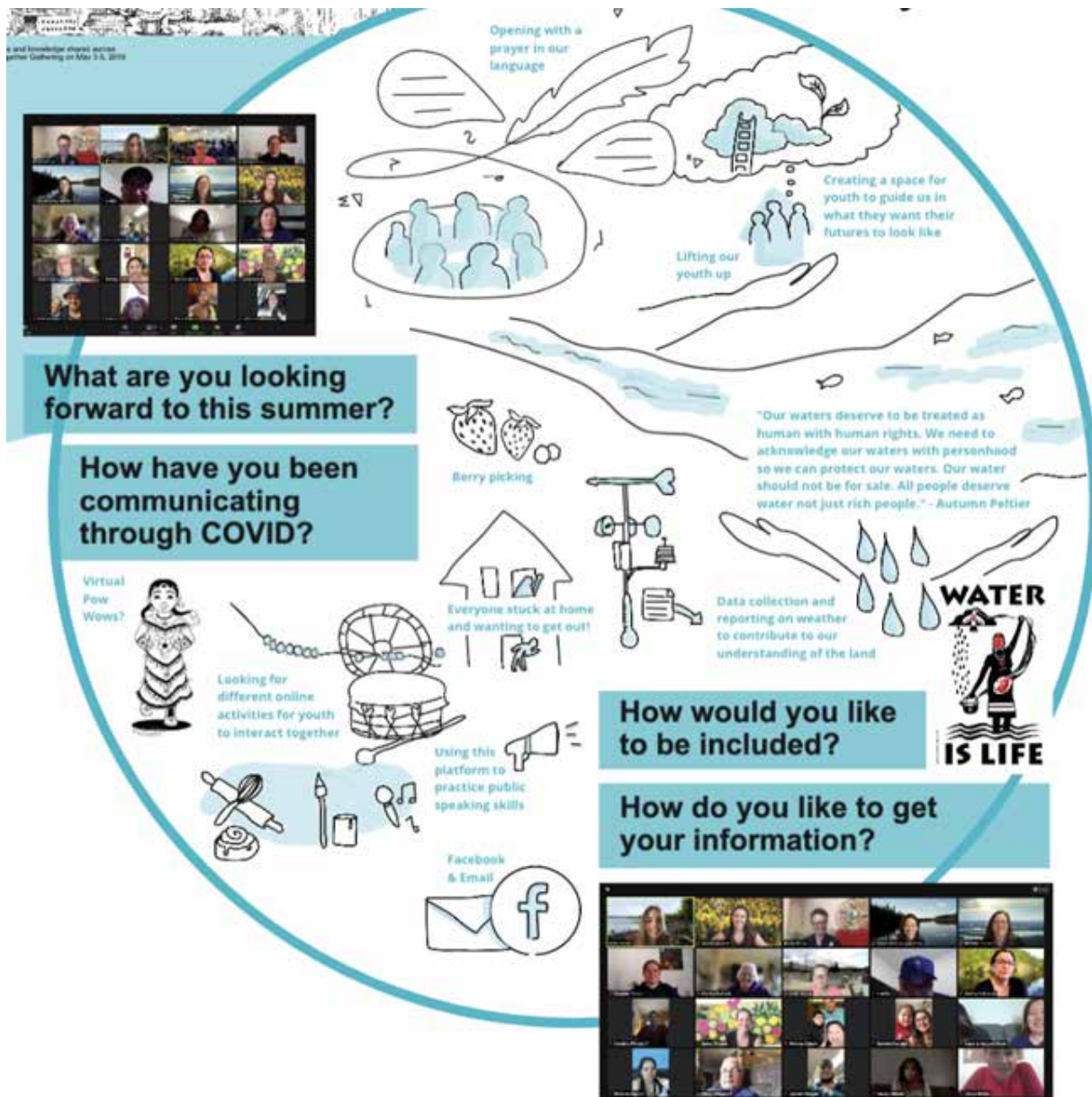




# Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction

## OPPORTUNITIES:

- Continue regional strategic planning and support for Matawa member First Nations while ensuring each community's autonomy is respected including respect for First Nation positions, individual jurisdictions within and outside Matawa communities.
- Accurate, timely and comprehensive communication of all projects will assist in moving towards a self-sustaining, self-sufficient and self-determined future
- Assist with creating certainty for Matawa members with "community first"-based plans including community infrastructure needs.
- Matawa Development Corporation has potentially lucrative project proposals to explore moving forward.
- Work with Watershed Partners on a youth-designed wellness/healing retreat(s) for Matawa youth and possible funding to make them a reality.







# Health Co-operative

*Circle of Belonging*



**MATAWA HEALTH  
CO-OP**

## **STAFF:**

Frances Wesley, Executive Director  
Crystal Bell, Director of Nursing and Clinical Services  
Dr. Golding, Physician  
Dr. Koo, Physician  
Dr. Oyella, Physician  
Charles Ross, Nurse Practitioner Clinic Lead  
Pierrette McLeod, Community Health Nurse Lead  
Leola Bouchard-Penagin, Public Health Nurse Lead – Long Lake #58  
Kelly Kabatay, Certified Diabetes Educator  
Kerri Koski, Certified Diabetes Educator  
Farren Tropea, Dietitian  
Nick Kwiatkowski, Certified Diabetes Educator  
Allison Palmer, Foot Care Nurse

Justin Chapdelaine, Community Health Nurse  
Noreen Moskotaywenene, Community Health Nurse  
Tammy Dubé, Ginoogaming Public Health Nurse  
Chelsea Luxton, In City Public Health Nurse  
Gloria Hendrick-Laliberte, Public Health Promotion Planner  
Waverly Puurenen, Mental Health Counsellor  
Noel White, Mental Health Counsellor  
Lorraine Keough, Medical Reception  
Jaimie Petri, EMR Privacy Officer  
Margaret Capon, Privacy Officer/Administrative Support  
Lorraine Nabigon, Finance Support/Vaccine Clinic Support  
Lady Avellana, Registered Practical Nurse

## **COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT:**

Nishnawbe Aski Nation – Health Human Resource Working Group – Crystal Bell  
Indigenous Primary Health Care Council – Frances Wesley  
Northern Ontario School of Medicine Remote Residency Stream – Crystal Bell, Frances Wesley, Paul Capon  
Regional Diabetes Partnership Committee – Charlie Ross  
Matawa Quality Assurance – Justin Chapdelaine  
Matawa Health and Safety Committee – Justin Chapdelaine, Dr. Golding  
National Federation of Health Cooperatives Board – Frances Wesley  
Sioux Lookout area First Nations COVID-19 Regional Planning Table – Crystal Bell, Dr. Golding  
Ontario Health North Covid-19 Indigenous Health Community Working Group – Crystal Bell, Frances Wesley  
Matawa Health Cooperative Board of Directors – Frances Wesley, Crystal Bell, Gloria Hendrick  
Our Health Counts – Thunder Bay Reference Group – Crystal Bell, Frances Wesley  
Matawa Health Co-operative Knowledge Keepers – Gloria Hendrick-Laliberte  
Matawa Health Co-operative Staff Enrichment – Charlie Ross, Kerri Koski, Kelly Kabatay, Waverly Puurunen  
Matawa Health Co-operative Policy/Medical Directive Review – Charlie Ross, Crystal Bell, Lorraine Keough, Dr. Koo  
Matawa Health Co-operative Forms/ISO review – Charlie Ross, Crystal Bell, Kerri Koski, Jaimie Petri  
Matawa Food Security Committee – Farren Tropea  
Thunder Bay Urban Vaccine Clinic Strategy – Crystal Bell, Charlie Ross  
Indigenous Food Circle Advisory Committee – Farren Tropea  
Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy – Emergency Food Response Table – Farren Tropea  
Northern Ontario Dietetic Program Indigenous Curriculum Development Committee – Farren Tropea  
Matawa Homelessness Taskforce – Waverly Puurunen

## OVERVIEW

### Diabetes

- To teach Matawa members how to make healthy changes to better manage their diabetes diagnosis.
- Increased rate of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus with younger adults, adolescents and children
- Increased evidence of diabetic complications such as higher rate of retinopathy, nephropathy, and neuropathy leading to increase lower limb amputations
- Lack of diabetes management programs and diabetes follow up services in Matawa communities.

### Foot Care

- Foot care is provided to all of our 9 Matawa communities and to off reserve members residing in Thunder Bay or those that come to Thunder Bay on medical appointments.
- The MHC foot care nurse collaborates with multidisciplinary teams throughout the Northwestern area to provide optimal foot care.
- Working towards developing basic foot care training to community support workers.

### Community Health Services

- Community Health Nurses work with our Matawa communities to provide education about illnesses and disease prevention. Other areas of education awareness include safe health practices and nutritional education.
- Programs include pre/post-natal, healthy babies and healthy children program, school supports and education, well woman and well men programs and elder health support.
- Programs and services are not limited to these areas. Assistance in other areas or community needs (home care, pediatrician visits, footcare)
- The goal of the Community Health Program is to enhance the existing health services which already exists in our First Nation communities.
- Nursing Support Line established to support Matawa members.

### Physician Services

- Physician services provided in Marten Falls, Aroland and Eabametoong First Nations
- Physician services to off-reserve members in Thunder Bay offered through the nursing support line.
- To begin more supportive physician services to our

road access communities.

- Expansion of primary care services to the new temporarily clinic at 101 Syndicate Ave N – Suite 510A, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 3V4.
- Nurse Practitioner and Physicians to be offering primary care services to off reserve members in Thunder Bay at the clinic.

### Matawa Education and Care Centre

- Prior to the pandemic, we had established a clinic at the Matawa Education and Care Centre offering students access to nursing services and to walk-in services – looking forward to schools opening in the fall to resume services.

### Physician Services (NOSM)

- We have 1 resident who completed the Northern Remote Residency program. She is completing her return of service in Eabametoong First Nation.
- 2 residents are in their final year
- The Matawa Health Cooperative will be looking at expanding our residency program to other Matawa communities.
- Regular medical students and resident rotations through the Matawa Health Cooperative Clinic and to the communities.

### Mental Health and Addiction Services

- Counselling and psycho-education in areas like:
  - Stress management
  - Family Stress
  - Managing emotions and coping skills
  - Substance abuse
  - Unresolved trauma
  - Grief and loss
  - Self esteem
  - Critical incident debriefing
  - School education sessions on bullying, and health balance lifestyles
- Complement existing services for mental health and addictions
- Support communities and their existing programs – Choose Life, Victim Services, Traditional Medical and Knowledge Keepers
- Work with other service providers and provide support with external services (Nodin, Dilico, Nishnawbe-Aski Nation).



# Health Co-operative

*Circle of Belonging*

## Nursing Transfer

- Promoting Nursing Transfer to our First Nation communities. Our goal is to work with communities to assist and manage nursing services.
- Successful with hiring and managing nurses in 3 Matawa communities (July 2021).
- The Nursing Devolution Project has been put on hold until the global pandemic is over and until we hire a special project coordinator.

## Walk-in Clinic Services

- MHC has reached out to road access communities to provide walk-in clinic services. Services were halted due to COVID-19 but have resumed.
- Walk in clinic services include – allergies inquiry, prescription renewals, cold and flu assessments, gastrointestinal issues, earaches, rashes and wound infections, sinus issues, breathing assessments, query sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy tests, strep throat, and urinary tract infections.
- Walk in clinic offered by the Physicians and the Nurse Practitioner have resumed virtually and will continue

## Matawa Support Centre

- Opened the Matawa Support Centre which provides support to off-reserve members in Thunder Bay
- Grocery support – to those that may need emergency food support.
- Elder support – providing transportation, grocery, medical support.
- Homeless support – providing temporary housing for those in need.
- COVID-19 support – providing personal protective equipment support as well as grocery and isolation support to those in need.

## Public Health Support

- COVID assessment trailer set up at the Matawa main office with testing 5 days a week
- Rapid testing machines in Matawa communities offering COVID-19 testing and support with training

workers as well as medical directives.

- COVID-19 Health education and information
- Virtual health promotion activities
- Off-reserve vaccination clinics
- Assistance with on reserve vaccination clinics
- Outbreak management support – Wequedong Lodge, Long Lake #58
- Public Health Nurses in 3 Matawa communities and 1 in Thunder Bay
- Public Health program development and partnerships.

## COVID-19 Support

- Established a Matawa Support Centre to support off reserve members affected by COVID-19 (funding, grocery support, isolation support, mental health support)
- Outbreak Management – Wequedong Lodge, Long Lake #58
- COVID-19 testing and health education.
- Rapid testing machines in Matawa communities offering covid testing and support with training workers as well as medical directives.
- Established a 1-833 nursing support line to offer covid supports.
- Off-reserve PPE distribution
- Distributed PPE to all Matawa communities
- Food Distribution – Food hamper distribution, Project Brown Bag
- Elders Support
- PPE Distribution
- Traditional food distribution
- Elders Advisory Committee established – Elders from Matawa communities meet monthly. The committee is being established and will assist and provide guidance to the Matawa Health Cooperative as needed.

## Land Based Healing and Mental Wellness

- Health promotion staff working with the communities to ensure supplies and resources are in place to support cultural healing practices.
- 6-week Mental Wellness Webinar series
- Virtual community activity challenges

## Food Programs

- Food hampers are delivered to those in need to help reduce food insecurity.
- Good Food box distribution monthly to 40 off





# Health Co-operative

reserve Matawa homes

- Monthly cooking with Aunty G reaching 15 off-reserve Matawa homes
- Gift card distribution to off-reserve members in need
- Milk voucher distribution to off-reserve members in need

## Matawa Garden

- A joint effort intended to provide healthy, organic produce to Matawa members to reduce food insecurity.
- Food workshops for harvesting, storage, and distribution
- Team building activities

## OVERVIEW PARTNERSHIPS

- Anishnawbe Mushkiki – physician services and vaccination clinics
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation – Program partnerships and funding partners - Personal Protective Equipment Distribution
- Centre for Complex Diabetes Care – patient navigation and patient support
- Wequedong – Outbreak management and testing support
- North Star Air – testing, vaccination, and client support
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit – partnerships with Covid-19, vaccination clinics and health information.
- Health and Social – partner to service Matawa clients
- Dilico – partner to provide health services to Long Lake #58 and Ginoogaming First Nations
- NOSM – partnership for the Residency programs
- Geraldton District Hospital – renal service for Matawa members as well as primary care
- Indigenous Sport and Wellness Council of Ontario - Personal Protective Equipment Distribution
- CN Rail – Personal Protective Equipment Distribution
- Semple Enterprise - Personal Protective Equipment

## Distribution

- Matawa Health Departments
- Regional Priorities & Jurisdiction – Personal Protective Equipment Distribution
- Indigenous Primary Health Care Council – Program support
- Sioux Lookout Health Authority – Program support
- Ontario Health North – Rapid testing support and testing supplies distribution
- Ornge – vaccine support to northern communities
- Trucks for Change – Personal Protective Equipment Distribution
- Unilever – Personal Protective Equipment Distribution
- Public Health Agency of Canada – Gene Expert Rapid Testing support and training



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

### Clinic Development

- Includes: 4 exam rooms, 5 offices, 2 labs; 3 physicians; 1 Nurse Practitioner; 1 Registered Practical Nurse; 1 Medical Receptionist; Foot Care Nurse; 3 Certified Diabetes Educators; 1 Dietician; vaccine supplies, equipment and training

### Staff Recruitment and Other Accomplishments

- Additional staff complement took place as follows: Charles Ross – Nurse Practitioner Clinic Lead; Loraine Keough – Medical Reception; Jaimie Petri – EMR/Privacy; Leola Bouchard Penagin – Public Health Nurse Lead/Long Lake #58 First Nation; Tammy Dubé- Public Health Nurse – Ginoogaming First Nation; Tracy Binkley– Public Health Nurse – Aroland First Nation; Gloria Hendrick-Laliberte – Health Promotion Education Planner; Dr. Koo – Physician; Keri Koski – Certified Diabetes Educator Nurse; Farren Tropea – Dietician; Dr. Oyella - Physician; Chelsea Luxton – Public Health Nurse In-city; Noreen Moskotaywenene – Community Health Nurse; Lorraine Nabigon – vaccine clinic support/finance support; Lady Avellana – Registered Practical Nurse
- Funding approved to hire 6 additional physicians (waiting on funding to start)
- Program development – forms/ISO, policy, medical directives
- Dawson Court Development - ongoing
- COVID-19 Assessment Trailer – testing daily
- Access to additional resources from the Provincial Government to address Public Health Support and COVID-19 Support in our Matawa communities – Established a Matawa Support Centre
- Matawa Health Co-operative Community Garden
- Virtual programing to address Mental Wellness
- Vaccination Clinics – clinics offered to off-reserve and on-reserve Matawa members

## CHALLENGES:

- COVID-19 has put a burden on all services being provided from the Matawa Health Cooperative due to lack of travel.
- Food security – clients unable to eat proper meals required for disease management according to Diabetes Canada Guidelines.

- Lack of accommodations in Matawa communities (short community visits, visits being cancelled, medical personal safety).
- Language barrier – sometimes there is no translator available when needed.
- Lack of community worker communication which makes community planning difficult.
- No preventative eye services offered in our Matawa communities.
- No preventative dental services offered in our Matawa communities – some children are going without this year due to lack of services.
- No proper internet which is now a little better in some of our community health centers.
- Some communities have multiple care providers and multiple electronic medical records making patient care difficult and unsafe.
- Mobility issues at times – rentals not available.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

Matawa Health Cooperative has opportunity for further growth and development in the following ways:

- Increase in developing partnerships with other health services providers
- Increase in physician support – ongoing
- Increase in Public Health support – ongoing
- Recruitment of Special Projects to complete outstanding needs and community requests
- Purchase a vehicle for program support





# Information Technology (IT) Services

## STAFF:

Rob Wesley, Manager IT Services  
Stefano Fata, IT Helpdesk Analyst

## OVERVIEW:

### *1. Ensure corporate information technology is accessible and equipped with current hardware and software*

- Perform professional, technical and analytical tasks to identify business requirements and to procure information technology-based enhancements that meet our corporate business needs and objectives
- Identify, select, design, and implement policies, conventions, and standards for server and network technologies and infrastructure
- Plan, organize, direct, control and evaluate the operations of information systems
- Meet with Program Managers to discuss system requirements, specifications, costs and timelines
- Hire and manage information technology personnel and contractors where required to design, develop, implement, operate, and administer computer and telecommunications software, networks and information systems
- Manage the IT Services budgets and expenditures
- Troubleshoot hardware, software and network operating systems
- Be familiar with all hardware, software and network operating systems
- Provide orientation to new users of existing technology
- Train staff about potential uses of existing technology
- Provide individual training and support on request
- Provide recommendations about accessing information and support
- Maintain current and accurate inventory of technology hardware, software and resources

### *2. Manage, monitor and maintain technology to ensure proper and secure access*

- Troubleshoot all technology issues

- Maintain logs of required repairs and maintenance
- Make recommendations about the purchase of technology resources
- Research current and potential resources and services
- Provide network access to all staff and students
- Maintain servers
- Install work stations
- Connect and setup hardware and install all required software
- Provide network accounts and passwords as required
- Configure and maintain network access requirements
- Implement and monitor security of all aspects pertaining to the network infrastructure
- Advise staff of security breaches and/or a change in passwords or security status
- Identify and prepare hardware for disposal by ensuring removal of all corporate data

### *3. Assist with overall management of corporate information technology and computer systems*

- Assist with planning, organization, direction, control and evaluation of the operations of information systems
- Implement policies and procedures for IT management and computer systems operations and development
- Meet with program managers to discuss system requirements, specifications, costs and timelines
- Supervise information technology personnel and contractors who design, develop, implement, operate and administer computer and telecommunications software, networks and information systems
- Operate within identified computer systems



budgets, policies and procedures

#### 4. Quality Management System (QMS)

- Adhere to, implement, review and improve Matawa First Nations Management's Quality Management System as it relates to all duties of the department

5. Prepare progress reports, briefs, work-plans, budgets and other reports as requested or required for the Chief Executive Officer and/or Board of Directors.

### KEY PRIORITY AREA:

The IT Services department's key priority area is to provide secure, reliable and continuous access to Matawa's data and information systems to support the sustained delivery of Matawa First Nations Management programs and services to its partners and communities. IT Services strives to ensure connectivity to such resources by providing a well-designed and reliable network infrastructure.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Adaptation of new management tools regarding our email system change.
- Working with several new departments to ensure their IT requirements exceeded expectations.
- Assisting the Education department with new servers and their deployment.
- Manage and maintain 20+ individual servers
- Community Email Systems (have for life) with over 400 email accounts.
- Community Web Sites.
- Network reconfigurations necessary to keep up-to-date with newer technologies.
- Adapting to new recommended ways in server use and server management.

The Matawa IT department oversees the maintenance of the following in-house hosted web sites:

- <http://www.matawa.on.ca/>
- <http://community.matawa.on.ca/>
- <http://www.ginoogamingfn.ca/>
- <http://www.gatheringofrivers.com/>
- <http://www.moccasintrailsadventures.com/>

### CHALLENGES:

Learning technologies that have not been in use at Matawa First Nations before, including:

- Working on issues the Matawa Education was having regarding email connectivity.
- Moving all Mailboxes (emails) to the cloud.
- Continuation of the management of our network and the deployment of new equipment or new services during staff working from home due to COVID-19.
- Assisting the Health Coop with their move and an impending KKETS and Health Coop move to an additional new location and the setup of their required networks.
- Adapting to the Microsoft365 Administration tools.

### OPPORTUNITIES:

- Could easily host additional community web sites.
- Intranet site (Document Sharing site) can now be implemented in a limited capacity using Microsoft365 and their SharePoint solution.



# Four Rivers Environmental Services Group

*Community Focused Environmental & Professional Services Centred in the North*

## STAFF:

Sarah Cockerton, Manager, Four Rivers Environmental Services Group  
Peter Moses, Mineral Development & Information Support Officer  
Kevin Wabasse, Linguistics Officer  
Laura Prior, Communications Specialist  
Kimberly Jorgenson, Environmental Services Coordinator  
Ema Cristina Ross, Climate Change and Adaptation Specialist  
Erin Desjardins, Stewardship Intern & Matawa Water Futures Student  
Jennifer Duncan, Geomatics/Project Manager  
Jasmine Baxter, Geomatics Intern & Matawa Water Futures Student  
Kerrie Mazinakouskang, Administrative Support  
Graeme Saukko-Sved, Geomatics/Environmental Technician  
Dinesh Gunawardena, Environmental Information & Systems Specialist  
Amanda Misnakoshkang, Geomatics Intern



## OVERVIEW:

Four Rivers was established in 2011 as an environmental services group within Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) to provide environmental support and technical services to the Matawa member First Nation communities' facing unprecedented development within their shared traditional territories. In early 2017, Four Rivers Inc. was created as a stream of Four Rivers to expand our service offerings beyond the Matawa member First Nations in a cost-effective and competitive manner.

Four Rivers supports capacity building in communities throughout northern Ontario by coordinating and supporting initiatives aimed to assist community-based land and resource management. Four Rivers uses a holistic, community-based approach to projects and strives to:

- Be open and honest in all aspects of our work;
- Be responsive to individual community needs and capacities;
- Build capacity through training and create legacy projects for communities; and,
- Provide innovative and sustainable community-based solutions.

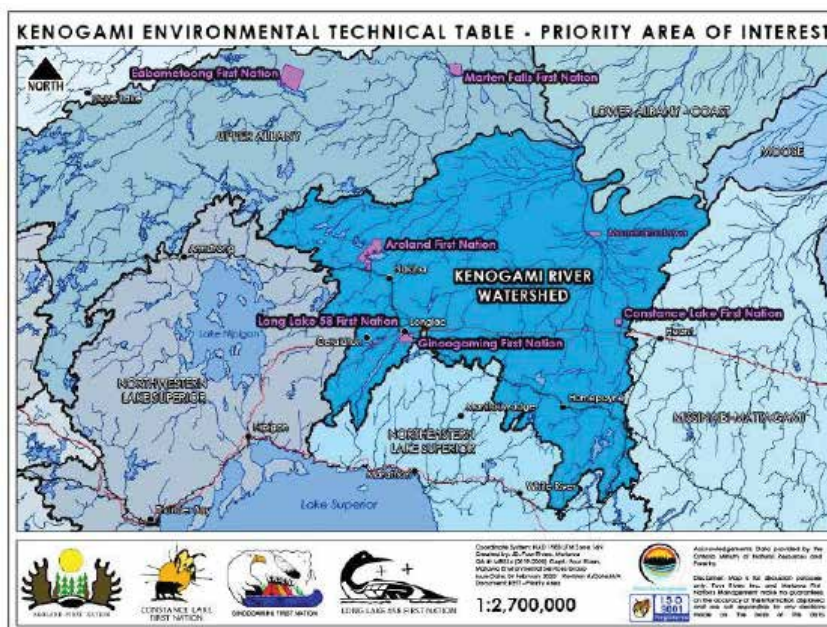


*Four Rivers Staff participate in drone pilot training activities, in preparation of advance pilot licensing (Summer 2021)*

## DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE: Kenogami Environmental Technical Table (KET Table)

The KET Table is an emerging committee of technical staff from Matawa member First Nation road access communities who all reside within the Kenogami watershed and who have come together in an ad-hoc fashion to address common environmental issues impacting their watershed. Recognizing both the need and the potential for collaboration, the KET table was assembled following the Matawa Environment Gathering in December 2019.

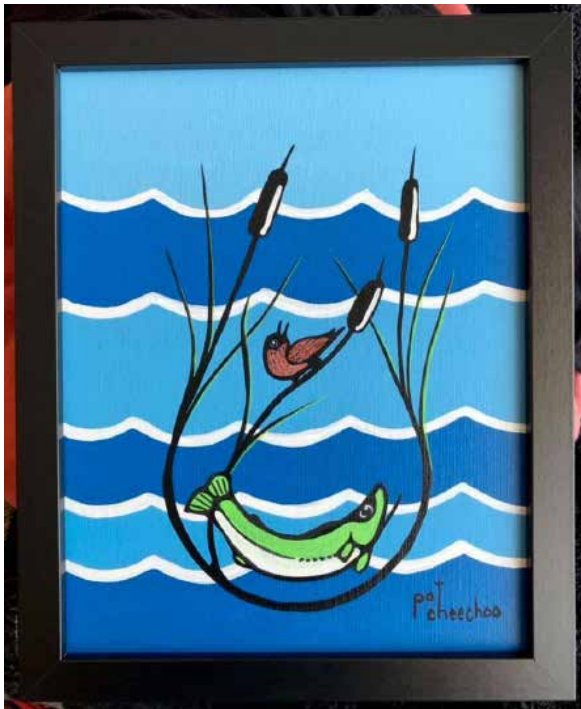
As the group is in its infancy, and the primary focus is to be solutions oriented, membership is fairly fluid at this time. That membership includes up to two technical representatives and two alternates each from Aroland FN, Long Lake #58 FN, Ginoogaming FN, and Constance Lake FN, who have significant existing capacity in environmental stewardship and lands & resource initiatives. The group welcomes participation from other member First Nations who are interested, and have welcomed neighbouring member First Nations to join past meetings as observers.



### KET Table Contributing Participants

Aroland First Nation	Ernie Gagnon, Sam Kashkesh
Constance Lake First Nation	Darius Ferris (Chair), Bertha Sutherland, Wayne Neegan
Ginoogaming First Nation	Calvin Taylor, Jason Chapais, Conrad Chapais, Leslie O'Nabigon, Peter Rasecych
Long Lake #58 First Nation	Darcy Waboose, Ervin Waboose, Anisa O'Nabigon





*Matawa Water Futures project conducts outreach to collect community water values and priorities in the form of artwork. Paintings by Patrick Cheechoo.*

#### KEY PRIORITY AREA #1: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Four Rivers has developed and delivered numerous environmental programs to support community capacity in the areas of:

- Environmental monitoring;
- Environmental research;
- Environmental governance; and,
- Environmental planning.

Four Rivers aims to help position communities into a place of active leadership relative to the stewardship of their lands and waters. Armed with the knowledge, working relationships, tested techniques, advanced partnerships, and expanded environmental networks, Four Rivers is well-situated to work with communities to advance their environmental projects and program visions.

Four Rivers has provided over 100 environmental presentations, training sessions and workshops at various events including community open houses, environmental conferences, university forums and Elder

gatherings. Environmental support services have been focused in the areas of environmental assessments & policy; water, soils and sediment samples; vegetation surveys and assessments; acoustic surveying technology for monitoring frog, bird and bat populations; GIS/GPS for values collection & monitoring, benthic biomonitoring; and contaminated sites assessments. Four Rivers actively partners with organizations and institutions to bring enhanced environmental services to communities.

#### KEY PRIORITY AREA #2: GEOMATICS AND MAPPING SERVICES

Four Rivers offers award winning mapping and geomatics services which are comprehensive in nature. The goal of these services is to provide the support that communities need to gather, store, analyze and display important land, resource, and values data to ultimately make informed decisions about their lands and waters. These customized services include map creation, data



# Four Rivers Environmental Services Group



*Matawa Water Futures project conducts outreach to collect community water values and priorities in the form of artwork. Photographs by Andy Beaver.*

collection/storage and project support, as well as training opportunities.

Four Rivers has established secure data storage solutions for information including: GIS data, environmental research data, and traditional knowledge & values data. It is crucial for communities to have access to an organized bank of environmental information in order to guide/participate in environmental stewardship & monitoring; climate change adaptation planning; community-based land use planning; source water protection initiatives; impact/environmental assessment processes; and resource development processes.

Four Rivers also assists with Traditional Values Collection projects for the Matawa member First Nation communities. Four Rivers has developed a number of different methods for collecting community data depending on community and Elder preferences. Recently we have started to experiment with virtual engagement applications so that Elders can share their stories without having to leave the comfort and safety of their home.

## KEY PRIORITY AREA #3: PROJECT SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Four Rivers works with communities to build internal capacity in the resource development sector to 'bridge the gap' from the community outwards. Major barriers often exist for communities in their efforts to lead lands and resource development projects in their homelands. These challenges are often based in the absence of established communication processes to successfully link community members to the information required for informed decision-making. Communities also often seek support in developing project proposals, project coordination and reporting.

The ultimate goal of all Four Rivers' services is successful communities who are well-informed, knowledgeable, and able to fully participate in projects and initiatives that are happening within their homelands. Four Rivers has developed proven models of community communication and engagement processes that have been effectively applied by a number of member communities for years. We work directly with communities to identify their capacity needs, which can include the development of lands & resource offices; environmental youth outreach and engagement; traditional knowledge values collection support; environmental monitoring training courses; and the development of



# Four Rivers Environmental Services Group

community specific communication outreach/engagement initiatives.

Four Rivers' project support and communication services are wide-ranging, and apply a holistic approach to community barriers. Every community's or project's unique constraints are considered when developing appropriate implementation strategies, and we regularly apply creative or innovative solutions in addition to tried and tested strategies to convey information. Our team has a proven track record of organizing and facilitating many successful large and small scale meetings, events, workshops and conferences. We are comfortable working with many different types of communication media and languages.



*Four Rivers mapping field tools range from handheld GPS units to new technology including advanced drones (M300 Drone pictured here)*



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

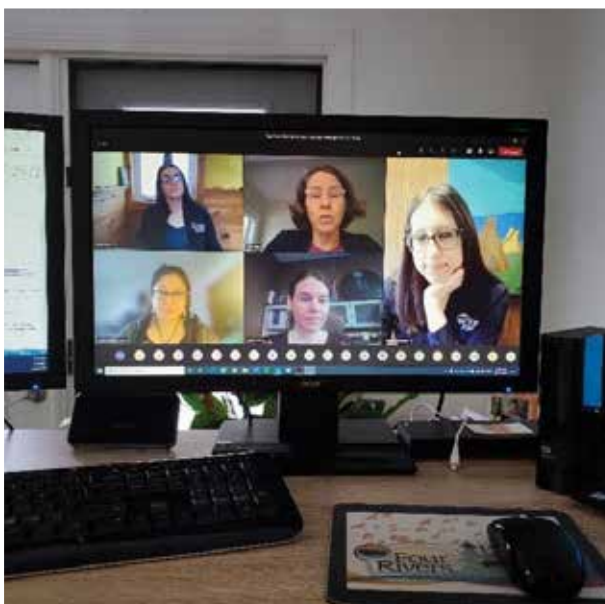
Four Rivers successfully carried out numerous projects and initiatives throughout the year both as part of Matawa First Nations Management's publically funded environmental program as well as through Four Rivers Inc. An overall summary of projects and initiatives is shown in the table on the next page.



<b>Four Rivers Environmental Services Group 20-21 Project List</b>	
<b>Project</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
Four Rivers Webinar Series (#20-4444-01)	Broadcast of environmental information that can help build capacity or inform on environmental issues through webinars to Matawa member First Nations.
ENDM MDISO (#19-1117-07)	Support to communities on mineral industry & plans and permits through the Mineral Development & Information Support Officer.
CBLUP Support (#19-1117-08)	Legacy project tailored by MNRF to support identified Community Based Land Use Planning needs. Efforts in 2020-21 focused on support for Marten Falls First Nation.
Garden (#21-1117-07)	Support of garden capacity building, and food security discussions through development of Matawa potato garden, support of Matawa wellness garden, and support of community gardens.
Broadband Support (#21-5007-01/02)	Support of Rapid Lynx's broadband project engagement, including overall engagement, engagement through environmental monitors, and engagement during specific project initiatives.
IAAC Capacity Support Program (#19-1117-10)	Support of Matawa member First Nations participation in the Impact Assessment Act by supporting capacity building activities. Support of ad hoc committees, hosting information & training sessions.
IAAC Regional Assessment (#20-1117-05)	Support of Matawa member First Nations in engagement, capacity building, and education surrounding the Regional Assessment (RA) in the Ring of Fire area.
Climate Change ADAPT (#18-1117-07)	Phase 1 of a Climate Change Assessment, Planning and Adaptation Initiative, aiming to develop vulnerability assessments for Matawa member First Nations. Funded through CIRNAC.
Climate Change BRACE (#19-1117-09)	Supported through Laurentian University, this project aims to develop a network of Climate Change Specialists who can channel technical knowledge on Climate Change to member First Nations.
ISC Climate Change Health (#21-1117-05)	Regional support to community-based climate change coordinators who are engaging members to better define impacts of climate change on community health with the aim to support adaptation planning.
ISC Climate Change Monitoring (#21-1117-06)	Regional coordination and support of community-based climate monitors and the development of climate monitoring stations.
Drone/GeoHub (#21-1117-04)	Overhauling GIS/mapping program through development of drone program for sustained image acquisition, and GeoHubs for better data compilation and sharing/display with member First Nations
Matawa Water Futures (#19-7005-01)	Working in collaboration with Wilfrid Laurier, Lakehead and Laurentian Universities, this project is intended to capture community priorities for community-based water monitoring and stewardship and create substantive learning and capacity building opportunities.
ECCC Caribou (#18-1117-10)	Project aims to support caribou research and research capacity building within Matawa member First Nation communities.
ECCC AFSAR Bats (#19-1117-02 & MOECP SARSP Bats (#20-1117-03)	Projects aim to identify at risk bat species with participating member First Nations through the use of acoustic recorders, as well as to deliver outreach and training/capacity building opportunities to increase awareness of at-risk bat species and their ecological importance.
ECCC CWS Acoustic (#20-1117-04)	Project aims to support the development of acoustic baseline monitoring programs with interested northern Matawa member First Nations, by working with individual communities to identify monitoring priority areas, and to design acoustic monitoring programs to support their vision.
ECCC Regional Guardians Network (#19-1117-05)	Project aims to support community capacity development to empower member First Nations to actively manage their traditional homelands. The long-term vision is to establish a network of employed community environmental monitors that are the eyes and ears on the lands and waters, supporting our communities to leverage available opportunities to effectively respond to contemporary environmental challenges.
DFO Indigenous Habitat Protection Program (#21-1117-01)	This 2-year project will expand on the established fisheries monitoring capacity and will assist in coordinating 5 community DFO projects (WFN, EFN, GFN, LL58 & CLFN). Four Rivers will coordinate outreach, training and research programs on fish and fish habitat in the Matawa member First Nation homelands, with a focus on specified community priorities.
MOECP Great Lakes Local Action Fund (#21-1117-03)	This co-developed project will work with four member First Nations (AFN, LL58, GFN and CLFN) in a technical capacity (through the KET table) to advance baseline data collection/ water monitoring priorities on Long Lake and its connection to Lake Superior.
Four Rivers Inc.	Support of over 20 projects to eight clients throughout the year.

## HIGHLIGHTS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIE:

We believe the year overall was defined by our efforts to create new opportunities in the face of overwhelming challenges. Due to the restrictions associated with COVID-19, many programs required a full overhaul. We had to find new ways to communicate, and new ways to work. While progress and momentum on environmental programs was slowed, some of the changes that had to be made, especially as they pertain to enhancements to our communication & data systems, should greatly benefit member First Nations in the years to come.



*Four Rivers adapts to and advances during COVID-19 Pandemic, using new tech and virtual solutions for most programming throughout the year*

As Four Rivers' overall projects and initiatives are too numerous to share in detail, we wanted to share some highlights of the year, and provide some narrative on how they addressed a challenge or realized an opportunity.

### SUCCESSFUL JOINT REGIONAL & COMMUNITY PROPOSALS

In the last couple of years, the federal government has started to bring back environmental program funding for Indigenous groups. Most of this funding had previously been cut 6-10 years ago amongst various changes in government at the federal level. Building on over a decade of work supporting the Matawa member First Nations and over a decade of discussions related to community-based environmental priorities, Four Rivers developed and submitted over 21 proposals over the last 2 years in cooperation with member First Nation communities. All proposals were designed to capture resources to support in-community environmental monitoring/guardians efforts, backed by a regional support system. Overall, these proposals were successful and we now have environmental monitoring/guardian's programs in multiple communities across several different streams: Environmental Guardians; Fisheries; Climate Health; and Climate Monitoring. Four Rivers is now in the process of supporting the finalization of contribution agreements between various participating communities and funders, in addition to working on procurement of equipment at the community and regional level.





# Four Rivers Environmental Services Group



*Erin Desjardins, Stewardship Intern, water sampling in Matawa Homelands.*

## ACOUSTIC PROGRAMS

Building on years of pilot monitoring programs with acoustic monitoring devices (song meters), Four Rivers, through a revived relationship with Environment and Climate Change Canada's Canadian Wildlife Services, is embarking on a bird and bat monitoring program across the northern portion of the Matawa member First Nation homelands. In the last year, Four Rivers has been working to procure updated monitoring devices, some of which were deployed in participating community homelands this past winter/spring. The long-term aim of these programs is to have all monitoring carried out by trained community-based monitors, contributing to the communities' own community-based environmental baseline data library, and ultimately contributing to long-term capacity. Where appropriate, it is also an aim to inform the Ontario breeding bird atlas which lacks accurate information, and ultimately support informed decision making related to the environment.



**The Power of Unity, The Dignity of Difference**



*Four Rivers field staff deploying an autonomous recording unit (ARU) in the Matawa homelands to support monitoring programming*

## GARDENS

The Matawa Garden project was an exciting initiative lead by Four Rivers throughout Summer 2020 as the first steps towards increasing knowledge and capacity to actively support future gardening projects in Matawa member First Nation communities. The project goals also included alleviating food scarcity and supporting overall well-being among Matawa membership, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The success of the project allowed Four Rivers to harvest approximately 10,000 pounds of fresh produce from the Matawa Garden by the fall of 2020. Harvests were scheduled frequently to ensure the vegetables were delivered to Matawa members during their peak of freshness. Distribution methods included tailgate giveaways as well as the Matawa food hamper project, and scheduled air delivery. Four Rivers was extremely thankful for all the help received from countless volunteers. The Matawa Garden not only provided the opportunity to get outdoors and connect with the land, but was also a place to share knowledge and build lasting memories.



Building on this success, in 2021 Four Rivers expanded efforts to support several gardens in multiple locations. This included once again planting a large Matawa garden in Slate River Valley with potatoes (our most successful crop in 2020), as well as helping to build and support new raised-bed gardens at the Health and Wellness Centre, and in Marten Falls First Nation. Due to interest and requests from other communities and departments, Four Rivers is currently seeking funds to continue to support and expand these efforts at the health and wellness garden site and in member communities.



*Collection of the 2020-2021 Four Rivers support; Matawa Garden, Matawa Health and Wellness Garden, & Marten Falls First Nation Community Garden*

## REFLECTIVE REPORTS

COVID-19 prevented us from regularly travelling to member First Nations and to have the in-community discussions and dialogues that have been the cornerstone to guiding all environmental programming. Nonetheless, we strongly felt that it was important to continue to advance environmental programming during this time. Four Rivers undertook a few special projects where we went back to our wealth of documented notes and conversations, captured over our previous decade of initiatives, to produce summarized reports that recommended best practices or approaches to programming based on the voices of our member First Nations. Where we were able, we virtually interviewed community members who had been the main participants of various initiatives, to reflect on lessons learned and potential improvements, as well as to share insight on current situations. The output of these efforts included reflective reports on the Cultural Impact Assessment as a process that can support involvement in resource development, and on Valued Ecosystem components that represent 10 years of knowledge and the benefit of hindsight on assessing lessons learned. We believe these reflective reports will be highly beneficial in supporting continued initiatives moving forward.

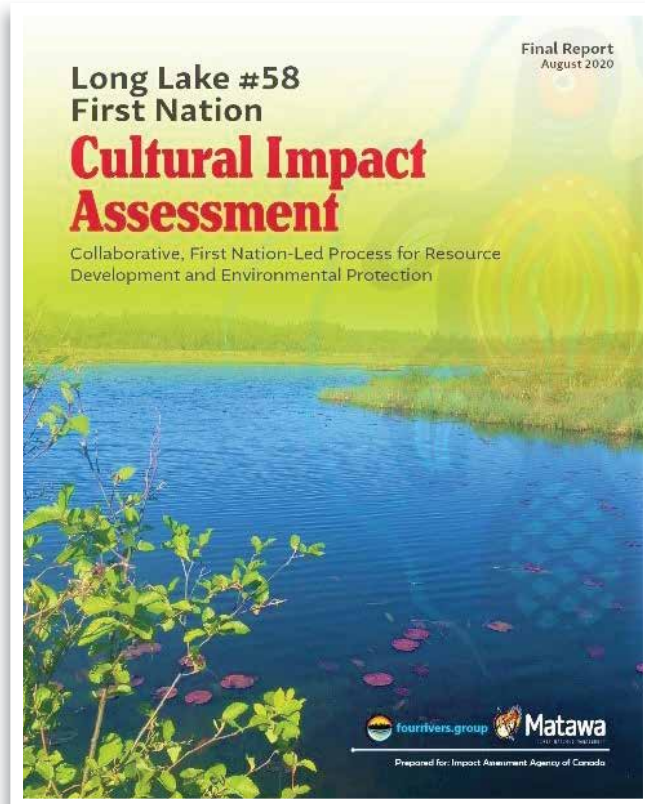


# Four Rivers Environmental Services Group



*Left: Draft Report Cover of Valued Ecosystem components project.*

*Right: Report Cover Cultural Impact Assessment*



## MDISO JOURNAL

Since 2014, Peter Moses, Mineral Development & Information Support Officer has been supporting communities in their understanding of, and involvement in, the minerals industry. Since the program's development, a huge part of his efforts has involved travelling to communities and meeting with members, lands & resource staff and Chiefs and Councils to provide information on the mineral sector and to provide training on related processes.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions have not allowed Peter to travel to communities since March 2020, and he has had to find new and alternative ways to support communities. In March 2021, Four Rivers introduced the "Mineral Development Information Support Officer Journal", straight from the pen of Peter Moses. This journal aims to provide some insights into the current state of the mining in Northern Ontario in an effort to spread awareness and build knowledge on the mineral sector. Peter releases a new journal monthly (sent to the extensive established environmental email list), and has received positive feedback on the information and insights provided.



*Matawa Messenger/Facebook Advertisement promoting the new MDISO journal, providing access to past journals and encouragement to join journal mailing list*

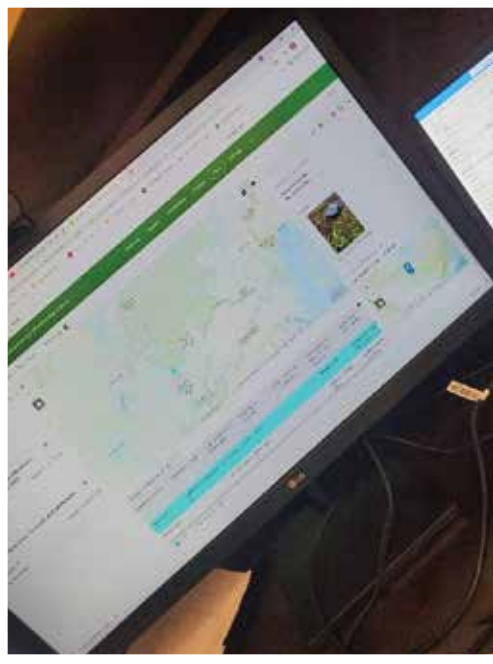
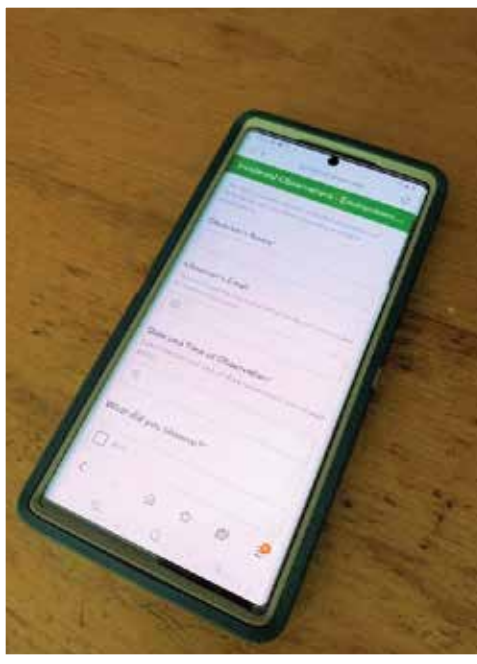


## GEOHUBS & COLLECTOR APPS

Once it was established that it was unlikely that Four Rivers staff would be able to travel for some time with COVID-19 restrictions, we made efforts to renegotiate environmental programs and redirect travel budgets that had been earmarked for travel to communities and in-community work. We negotiated heavily for a reallocation of funds towards supporting linking communities to information through other means, thus resulting in the need to overhaul our mapping and geomatics program. Longer term, we felt the efforts initiated to upgrade our geospatial information systems would have substantive lasting benefits to all communities, especially as travel and field programs come back online. At the heart of this development is the creation of GeoHubs and the development of new surveys under the in-field collector app called Survey 123, as well as the intent to integrate these two systems (both based in ArcGIS).

Currently in development is a GeoHub for each member First Nation, in addition to a regional GeoHub, where environmental information can all be safely stored within visual data portals and accessed by participating Matawa member First Nations. We are currently working on version 1 of this platform which is slated to be launched before winter. The platform itself will focus on making regionally important data available and organized in one place, while also linking to other available and relevant hubs. This includes a northern Ontario climate data hub being developed by northern Ontario First Nations and Laurentian University. We expect these hubs to be the future access point to environmental monitoring/guardians' data.

Linked to this initiative is the development of in-field data collection forms that directly link into geospatial databases and ultimately to the GeoHubs. These can be deployed on smart phones and tablets, so that anyone with a device can participate in these user-friendly programs. Developed surveys currently include water monitoring, animal/plant sighting surveys, and environmental monitoring reports. Climate monitoring, harvesting and fisheries surveys intend to be added before year's end to support in-community monitoring efforts. Currently several community members in the field are already testing existing forms and successfully capturing important information for their communities.



*Left: Incidental Observations - Environmental Monitoring Survey (App: Survey 123) on smartphone.  
Right: Survey data analyzed and stored in Four Rivers*





# Four Rivers Environmental Services Group

## DRONE PROGRAM

The absence of high-quality environmental data has always been a challenge for environmental programming within the Matawa member First Nation traditional homelands. For a number of years, Four Rivers has been exploring the potential of drones for the initial and ongoing capture of high quality aerial imagery for terrain analysis, and enhanced mapping and monitoring capacities. After extensive research and testing of a Mavic 2 Pro drone in 2020, Four Rivers made the decision to acquire an enterprise quality DJI Matrice 300 RTK quadcopter, and fixed-wing Wingtra drone. We also acquired the necessary software for image processing and post map development. All together, these drones, software, and some new skilled team members, will allow Four Rivers to capture survey quality aerial imagery that can be used for 3-D mapping, infrastructure planning, or large area mapping including mapping of corridors. Four Rivers is currently pursuing regulatory licensing and approvals associated with the drone flights with the hopes that we can see the aircraft launched before fall.



*Four Rivers Drone Fleet, including: DJI Matrice 300 RTK with Zenmuse P1 camera, WingtraOne 42MP, DJI Mavic Pro 2, DJI Phantom, DJI Mini 2*

## Matawa Education Authority and Department Staff



<b>Matawa Education Authority</b> Ennis Jacob – Webequie First Nation Education Director George Whitehead – Webequie First Nation Elder Annmarie Magiskon – Aroland First Nation Education Director Mary Oskineegish – Nibinamik First Nation Education Director Vacant – Marten Falls Education Director Nancy Waswa – Eabametoong First Nation Education Director Melanie Moonias/Tony Sakanee – Neskantaga First Nation Victor Chapais – Ginoogaming First Nation Education Director	<b>Advisory Services &amp; Administration</b> Sharon L. Nate – Executive Director Stephanie Gerrie – Education Coordinator Angela Wapoose - Executive Assistant Jeffrey Yellowhead – Education Receptionist Tracy Ostamus - Casual Education Receptionist Vacant - Budget Officer Vida Baxter – Accommodation Care Centre Supervisor
<b>Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS)</b> Nick Shaver - PASS Program Administrator Gowtham Gajawada – System Administrator Douglas Gagnon - Cultural Education Coordinator Katherine Hughdie - School Success Lead Kelly Soulias – Junior/Intermediate Lead Mary Ann Nawagesic - Mental Health Lead Rafal Zgolak – IT Technician Skylene Metatawabin –EPP Liaison Officer Susan Zgolak – Primary/Junior Lead Tymor Davis – Database Helpdesk	<b>Matawa Post-Secondary Program</b> Georgette O’Nabigon - Post Secondary Coordinator Carly Perras - MPS -Student Support Worker
<b>Indigenous Language</b> Aroha Watene – Indigenous Language Revitalization Specialist Michael Graham – Indigenous Language Revitalization Specialist Lawrence Therriault – Indigenous Language Specialist - Ojibwe Nancy Ritch – Indigenous Language Specialist - Ojibwe Lois Whitehead – Indigenous Language Specialist – Oji-Cree Tracy Spence – Indigenous Language Specialist – Oji-Cree	

## Matawa Education & Care Centre Staff

Brad Battiston – Principal Vacant – Vice Principal Adam Cousins – Math Teacher Allyson Gilmour - Guidance Counsellor Alyssa Wood- Mental Health Land-Based Coordinator Ashley Edwards – Special Education Classroom Assistant Brittany Kennedy – Choose Life Coordinator Brent Russell – IT Technician Brett Desomine – PLAR Teacher Caitlin McKeich – Distance Education Coordinator Carly Ducharme-Skinner – Student Safety Support Coordinator Cheryl Ugray – Special Education Coordinator Faith Jacob – Special Education Classroom Assistant Fabienne Spiess – Wellness System Navigator Jackie Corbett – Teacher Jeremy Oxford – Teacher Coach Vacant - Outdoor Education Teacher	<b>Mental Health Staff</b> Malinda Staal - Mental Health Coordinator Jennifer Loranger - Mental Health Worker Katy McGuigan – Mental Health Worker
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Joseph Willis - Co-operative Education Teacher Keshia Teddy - Student Transition Coordinator Moreen Misewace – Indigenous Language Coordinator Paul Colosimo – Science Teacher Phyllis Goodwin – Teacher Rebecca Sutherland – MECC Receptionist Samantha Bachynski – Life Skills Teacher Savannah Beardy – Special Education Classroom Assistant Shilpa Dhankhar – Math Teacher Stephanie Powell – Mental Health and Based Coordinator Steve Lipson – Cooperative Education Teacher Steve St. Jean – Student Achievement Officer Tracy Dore – Special Education Classroom Teacher	
<b>Elders</b> Emily Jacob - Elder Sarah V. Moonias - Elder	<b>Student Nutrition</b> Olivia Merko – Student Nutrition Program Coordinator Charlotte Baxter- Student Nutrition Support Worker
<b>Student Support Workers</b> Tim Sofea – Student Support Worker Norman Sid Okeese – Student Support Worker	<b>Cultural Workers</b> Steve Achneepineskum – Cultural Worker Cathy Fobister – Cultural Worker Dakotah Meshake – Cultural Worker
<b>Youth Inquest</b> Stephanie Ritch – Youth Inquest Coordinator Camille Ferris – Youth Inquest Assistant	<b>On-Call Workers</b> Aaron Beardy – On Call Worker Supervisor Amanda Irvine – On Call Worker Ashley Nate – On Call Worker Kayla Baxter – On Call Worker Matilda Suganaqueb – On Call Worker Tyson Wapoose – Casual/Relief On-Call Worker Joey Baxter – Casual/Relief On-Call Worker
<b>MECC Safe Sobering Site</b> Amanda Kavalchuk - Youth Residential Worker Joseph (Brad) Meeseetawageesic – Addictions Crisis Worker Levi Yellowhead – Youth Residential Worker Maigan Edwards - Addictions Crisis Worker Timothy Fox – Addictions Crisis Worker Marilyn Misewace – Casual/Relief Addictions Crisis Worker Shyanne Packulak – Casual/Relief Youth Residential Worker	

Support and advisory services to community schools and local education authorities | school improvements and positive impact | quality of students' learning | liaises with Indigenous organizations, governments and education institutions at all levels | continues to develop its capacity to provide second-level services to schools in the Matawa First Nations | IT support under the Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS!) program | Post-Secondary Student Services | community liaison | education partnership program liaison | Education Conference | professional development





# Education

*We Work Together to Make a Change*

## OVERVIEW:

The Matawa Education Department provides support and advisory services to Matawa First Nation community schools and Education Authorities that result in school improvements and have a positive impact on the quality of students' learning. The Education Department staff support local education authorities, schools and teachers, and network with Indigenous organizations, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) the Provincial Ministry of Education, School Boards, and Post Secondary and Secondary/Elementary institutions. The Department continues to develop its capacity to provide second level services to schools, including IT support, under the Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS!) program which will sunset March 2022.

In addition, the Department operates the Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC), an alternative secondary school approved by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Matawa Post Secondary Program has responsibility for Post Secondary Administration for five Matawa First Nations; Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake # 58, Neskantaga, and Webequie. Support Services are available as well to other Matawa First Nation students upon request.

## ADVISORY SERVICES:

The Education Department continues to provide technical support for Matawa leadership both directly and through the Matawa First Nations Education Authority. The Education Department continues to provide technical support for the Matawa First Nations communities. Within the Matawa Education are programs such as the Matawa Education Centre, Pathways to Achieving Student Success, Post Secondary, Matawa Waka Tere Language Revitalization, Matawa Education Charity Achieving the Dream, and beginning February 2022, the Accommodation and Care Centre will be completed and ready for occupancy of students.



## Matawa Education & Care Centre Overview

The Matawa Education & Care Centre (MECC) had 142 students enrolled during the first semester, and 156 students for the second semester for the 2020-2021 school year. There were 6 graduating student this year with celebrations being conducted at the homes of the students with family members, and a small number of staff due to COVID-19 restrictions.

This was the fourth year of our partnership with St. Joseph's Care Group, which continued to provide two full time Youth Workers, four Trauma Counsellors/Specialists, and a part time Family Therapist for the school year. Our partnership also includes off-site primary care with academic and behavioural assessments with appropriate specialists. St. Joseph's Care Group provided extensive training for our teaching and mental wellness staff in trauma based education approaches and working with students dealing with addictions. Our students continued to have primary access to the Sister Margaret Smith Centre to deal with substance abuse addictions.

During the past year, the Executive Director of Education, Principal, and Youth Inquest Officer were active in meetings, discussions, and proposals based on the Jury Recommendations resulting from the First Nations Youth Inquest. The work includes advocating for the implementation of community based recommendations and the continuation of Choose Life and Jordan's Principle funding. Before the MECC closed to in-person learning, the On-Call Workers provided overnight support for students in need of safe transportation home, keeping intoxicated students out of the police station, and ensured students in need of medical care were taken to the hospital. It was also the second year the Safe Sobering Site was able to operate at full capacity and offers support services to students under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

The MECC completed the year with its second highest credit count to date, despite being closed to in-person learning due to COVID-19 for over half the academic school year. The MECC also had six graduates, with celebrations being held with each student and their immediate families. Formal celebrations will be conducted

when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. The MECC also completed the fourth year of our partnership with St. Joseph's Care Group providing extensive mental wellness, addiction and primary care supports to our students. This past year included additional professional development and training for school staff, and additional programming for students. Next school year will also include the development and implementation of a Mental Health and Well-Being credit for students. This funding is currently in its last fiscal year. The MECC also completed the second year of our five-year Youth Inclusion partnership with the City of Thunder Bay. This included food hampers for participating students and their families, personal wellness checks for some students, virtual employment training opportunities, and coverage of transit fees for 25 of our students for the school year.

The MECC also began work on the development of three new credits (Grade 10 Canadian History, Grade 9 Canadian Geography, and General Learning Strategies) with the Critical Thinking Consortium. These credits will be based entirely on Indigenous resources and materials, many of which will be from our communities. We were also able to expand our Special Education services and supports with additional specialized teachers (Life Skills and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition).

The MECC was able to deliver remote academic programming for all students after the Matawa Chiefs Council closed the school to in-person learning due to a COVID-19 outbreak in Thunder Bay and at the school. Our academic program was delivered on-line by supplying Chromebooks to applicable students and also through traditional methods to students without reliable internet services. Tutoring supports were provided four evenings a week by teachers volunteering their time. Mental Wellness supports also continued during the school closure through the phone or on-line. In person wellness checks were conducted by St. Joseph's Care Group staff in Thunder Bay, and through Nishnawbe Aski Police Services (NAPS) and/or the Nursing Station for students who went back to their home communities. Cultural and Recreational programming were also provided through on-line sessions Monday to Friday.



# Education

*We Work Together to Make a Change*

## CHALLENGES:

The primary challenge for the MECC was the closure due to COVID-19 in December. The pandemic has been difficult for students and staff, especially with the uncertainty of what will happen in September 2021, and the start of the next school year. The continued renovations were also disruptive for the students and staff. There is growing excitement amongst all students for what the MECC will look like when they return to in-person learning. The Seven Youth Inquest recommendations continues to require a lot of time from staff to attend various meetings, complete proposals and follow up reports. As we are now in the last year of funding scheduled through Choose Life and Jordan's Principle, there is immense concern about the negative impact this will have on our Special Education, Mental Wellness, Outdoor Education, Cultural and Recreation programs, as well as On-Call and Safe Sobering Site services. We will continue to work with Matawa leaders, communities and partners to advocate for the continuation of funding for these vital programs.

While many of the urban based recommendations have been completed, continued funding is necessary to ensure our students receive the various supports they deserve to be safe and successful while attending school. Many of the community-based recommendations still need to be implemented. MECC has been working with our communities and leadership to advocate for these recommendations to receive the necessary funding to be completed. More work is necessary to ensure predictable and reliable funding is provided by the government.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

With renovations expected to be completed in January 2022, the MECC will be able to offer the students and staff a greater variety of learning spaces, expanded programming, as well as a sense of personal ownership of the school. This will further provide students a sense of belonging and connection with the school space, leading to increased engagement and participation in the learning process. With the expected lifting of COVID-19 restrictions next school year, we can offer expanded Land Based programming, Cultural and Recreational opportunities, and enhanced academic and mental wellness supports. For those students deciding to stay home, we can also deliver more effective and relevant academic programming due to increased internet connectivity within the communities. We will also be offering new courses through a partnership with Outside Looking In (OLI), a dance orientated credit, an expanded Co-operative Education program, as well as opportunities within the Skilled Trades.

### First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy (FNIYES) Overview

Indigenous Services Canada First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy (FNIYES) supports initiatives to provide First Nations and Inuit youth with work experience, information about career options and opportunities to develop skills to help gain employment and develop careers. Matawa Education has received funding through the FNIYES in the Skills Link and the Youth Employment Strategy for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The Skills Link funding was used to support our land-based learning programming by purchasing science and land-based equipment to use in the Matawa Education and Care Centre with the annual canoe trip. The materials bought lead to credit accumulation through our land-based programming. The activities promote science and technology as an educational choice and a career choice in the future.





## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

The Youth Employment Strategy funding allowed Matawa Education to employ 12 Students during the 2020-2021 School Year to work in various positions throughout the department. Students gained experience in food preparation, custodial and maintenance work, project assisting, graphic design, cultural and student activities. The students completed a 12-week contract with the Education Department and worked a variety of after school hours to complete their duties.

Another facet of the FNIYES is the Co-operative Education Program through the Matawa Education and Care Centre. Due to COVID-19 restrictions this year our Co-operative Education Program did not place students in work placements. The Co-operative Education Teacher oversaw the Dual Credit Program through Confederation College and worked on applications for the High Skills Major Program. We have retained an Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) Co-operative Education Teacher and hope to enroll students in work placements for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year.

## CHALLENGES:

The funding for the FNIYES program was delayed in the 2020-2021 year due to COVID restrictions. This delay affected the student work from happening during July and August. Matawa Education, instead,

hired students to complete after school work for an extended period of time to complete the required hours.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

The students gained experience in a professional interview situation, filling out hiring documents, and completing work related training, such as Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHIMS) and Workplace Safety Training.

## Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS) Overview

The Matawa PASS program provides support services and resources for Matawa schools and Education Authorities, primarily in the areas of Literacy, Numeracy, Information Technology, and Student Retention with funding generated by the federal Interim Funding Formula which replaced proposal-based funding programs like the First Nation Student Success Program (FNSSP) and New Paths for Education. Regular feedback on PASS activities is typically received from on-site visits by PASS staff, from school principals (through the Principals Working Group), and through the Matawa First Nations Education Authority Board of Directors, which is comprised of Education Directors, or designated representative, from each of the Matawa First Nations. On-site visits by the PASS team in the past year were limited to emergency purposes only and involved either community crisis support or IT support.

During the 2020-21 fiscal year, the PASS team was comprised of a PASS Administrator, Primary/Junior Lead, Junior/Intermediate Lead, Parent-Student Engagement/Intermediate Lead, Mental Health Lead, Cultural Education Coordinator, School Success Lead, Student Nutrition Program (SNP) Coordinator, Performance Measurement team (System Administrator, Database Helpdesk, IT Technician), Human Resources Policy Officer, the Language Revitalization team (two Indigenous Language Revitalization Specialists and five Indigenous Language Specialists – two each for Ojibway and Oji-Cree and one for Cree), and a Community & Education Partnerships Program (EPP) Liaison. Sadly, our Cree Language Specialist, Suzan Sandau, passed

away in February 2021.

The **Primary/Junior Lead** (P/J Lead) went on maternity leave in September 2020 and we have been unsuccessful in hiring a replacement despite continuous advertising. The duties of the P/J Lead have been assumed by other PASS staff.

The **Junior/Intermediate Lead** (J/I Lead) has been supporting the Matawa schools and their staffs this past year by researching new virtual opportunities that develop knowledge and skills as well as sharing information of various seminars, conferences, and resources with Matawa schools' staff and students (grades 4-8). The J/I Lead co-coordinates the Matawa/Bowmanville Rotary Bursary Program and its awards presentation.

The **Parent-Student Engagement/Intermediate Lead** (PSE/I Lead) has continued working with the Matawa schools to support engagement of parents and students in the learning process. The PSE/I Lead position became vacant in January 2021 and, like with the P/J Lead, we were unsuccessful in filling the position. The duties of the PSE/I Lead have been assumed by other PASS staff in the meantime.

The **Mental Health Lead** provides professional direction and support through ongoing community/school visits. The Mental Health Lead has identified and implemented strength-based programs and strategies that support and promote student and staff mental health and wellness while encouraging the use of cultural and traditional methods of addressing mental health and wellbeing. The Mental Health Lead is part of a NAN partnership with the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board (KPDSB) to be a "Mental Health Champion". The Mental Health Lead coordinates annual Youth Life Promotion funding that supports youth life promotion and suicide prevention activities for each of the Matawa schools.

The **School Success Lead's** main responsibilities are to support literacy, numeracy and student retention in Matawa Schools and identify strategies to engage and support students and staff. The School Success Lead also assists with standardized testing (EQAO, CAT-4), and working with other PASS staff to ensure tools are in place to improve literacy, numeracy, and performance standards. The School Success Lead supports

the Matawa schools' principals. The School Success Lead created a variety of virtual workshops for school use that cover professional development, particularly in the areas of literacy and student well-being.

The **Cultural Education Coordinator** provides support to Native Language Teachers and Cultural Education/Outdoor Education Teachers in the Matawa schools through developing and/or purchasing resources. The Cultural Education Coordinator supports the Matawa language revitalization team.

The **Matawa Performance Measurement** (IT) team saw the addition of a newly created position, MECC IT Technician, beginning in January 2021. While stable for most of the past year, some turnover resulted in short-term disruptions to service to the Matawa communities as the new staff became familiar with the systems in place and/or their new roles. Despite this, the IT team provided support to Matwa schools for the student database, networking issues and maintenance, and other troubleshooting and deployment supports. As in the past, challenges were faced with the continued development of the Education Department's network and systems as new department staff were hired and as construction continued.

**Matawa's Student Nutrition Program** (SNP) aims to provide nutritious food to support learning and healthy child and youth development, as well as enhance students' traditional food wisdom through food and nutrition related cultural activities. Matawa's participating schools and communities are:

- Simon Jacob Memorial Education Centre (Elementary and Secondary) in Webequie First Nation
- Nibinamik Education Centre in Nibinamik First Nation
- Neskantaga Education Centre in Neskantaga First Nation
- Migizi Wazisin Elementary School in Long Lake #58 First Nation
- Migizi Miigwanan Secondary School in Long Lake #58 First Nation
- Busing Program in Ginoogaming First Nation
- Matawa Education & Care Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario

The other Matawa First Nation communities operate their SNP independently.



# Education

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Matawa's SNP Coordinator continued to provide program services and administration to the Student Nutrition Programs operating in our participating schools/communities. The SNP Coordinator has represented Matawa First Nations during the Indigenous Food Circle meetings, and represented the Education Department for Matawa's food security task team meetings.

## Matawa Education Conference 2021

After consulting with the MFNEA Board of Directors, the Annual Matawa Education Conference was cancelled for 2021 with the intent to hold it again in March 2022 should public health recommendations for the COVID-19 pandemic allow. Planning for the 2022 conference will begin in the fall in preparation should the event be able to be held. Additionally, PASS staff have been adapting their training and certifications for virtual delivery where possible, and will offer their training virtually to Matawa schools in the future as an alternative if travel to communities is again limited in the upcoming year.

The **Education Partnerships Program (EPP)** supports the collaboration among Matawa First Nations, the Ontario Ministry of Education, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and other stakeholders to advance First Nation student achievement in First Nation and provincial schools. Partnership arrangements aim to share expertise and resources and assist in the development of practical working relationships between the various stakeholders at the District School Board (DSB), school and First Nation levels. In 2020-21 Matawa Education specific approved

activities included the continuation of the EPP Liaison position, hosting youth events with provincial schools focusing on Indigenous Role Models, and Indigenizing provincial curriculum for the MECC. Other activities were funded through EPP that support education in Matawa communities but were common across Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) territory included Best Practices Forum, Student Orientation Sessions, On Call Worker Training, Youth Outreach Extracurricular Activity Strategy, Tuition Agreement Training, Accommodation Provider Training, Seven Youth Inquest Coordinators, Seven Youth Inquest Assistants, Provincial First Nation Designation meetings, school board Aboriginal Liaison and EPP Liaison Worker meetings, EPP Liaison staff training and reporting coordination, EPP Partnership Table, Principal Mentoring/Coaching, NAN-KPDSB School Mental Health Champion Program and training, and Student Information Database Pilot.

The **EPP Liaison's** objective is to advance and support Matawa First Nation students' achievement in Matawa First Nations' and provincial schools. Through a Joint Implementation Plan with NAN, we continue to share expertise and services, coordinate learning initiatives and implement school-based activities. In this past year, a focus has been on continuing to maintain a cooperative partnership relationship with four of our affiliated District School Boards (Lakehead, Thunder Bay Catholic, Superior-Greenstone, and Superior North Catholic) through collaborating with their First Nation, Metis, Inuit (FNMI) Leads/Liaisons in hosting virtual educational engagements within the Matawa communities as well as in secondary schools of the district school boards. The EPP Liaison continues to advocate within the school boards through their Indigenous/Aboriginal Education Advisory Committees.







# Education

*We Work Together to Make a Change*

Under the 2020-21 **Structural Readiness** proposal, despite other activities identified, Matawa Education only received funding sufficient to maintain the Education Coordinator position and offer transfer payment agreements to the seven Matawa First Nations that the Education Department supports through the Interim Funding Approach for the purpose of hiring a Community Activities Officer, whose role is to help engage parents and community members in education matters and share information within the community about Regional Education Agreements (REA) and other education matters.

A new **Matawa Regional Education Strategic Plan** is still in the process of being developed by a consultant. It will be presented to the MFNEA Board of Directors in August, and following any changes coming about from their input and feedback, will be presented to Matawa Chiefs for approval. The plan will then be used to guide the activities of the Matawa Education Department.

With respect to **Regional Education Agreements**, Matawa Education submitted a proposal for 2020-2021 to visit each applicable Matawa First Nation in order to continue to share information about REAs and federal Education Transformation, gather input and feedback, and begin the development of a draft REA for partici-

pating Matawa First Nations. COVID-19 restrictions prevented the visits, but Matawa Education created a website for use by Education leadership, Community Activity Officers, and community members so that information flow could still continue while travel was limited to emergency purposes only. The unspent funding has been carried forward to 2021-2022 to carry out the community visits in the fall should the COVID-19 situation become safe enough to do so. The information sessions will help Matawa First Nation communities determine whether or not a REA is the right funding mechanism for them. They will also help Matawa Education to identify priorities to be used to develop an agreement that can then be used to advance to the next phase of the REA process, which is to establish a technical table to prepare for negotiations with the federal government. Alternatively, an individual First Nation can use the work Matawa Education has completed and move on to the next phase independently of Matawa Education.

## OVERALL ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

With travel to the Matawa communities limited by COVID-19, the PASS staff have used the additional time to collaborate on some new initiatives. When the COVID-19 pandemic first led to school closures, the PASS team began assembling learning packages for various grades and covering various subjects. This led to developing a Matawa Education variety show on Wawatay Radio, and ultimately the Matawa Education YouTube channel. Content is educational in nature and can be used by educators, students, or parents, and it covers different topics including Ojibwe language. Another initiative is the development of holistic curriculum built around traditional crafts or activities and will include lesson plans that cover multiple subjects, including language, and involve Elders and/or other community experts. A third initiative is developing an engagement or re-engagement strategy for supporting the return of students to school and helping them stay engaged in their learning regardless of what delivery method is used (ie, in-person, virtual, blended). A fourth initiative within the PASS team was the creation of the Matawa Education Indigenous Book List a curated collection of fiction and non-fiction books written by Indigenous authors and corresponding teachers'



guides). All four initiatives are still being developed, although many videos are already uploaded to the YouTube channel and are available for viewing and the Book List has been made available to our schools.

Delivery of the Matawa Waka Tere (language revitalization) Year One Ojibwe Pilot Class was completed by September 2020. Nine students passed the program earning an unaccredited certificate. Please refer to the Language Revitalization section on page 64 for more information about the past year.

Due to the pandemic the Matawa/Bowmanville Rotary Bursary Program and its awards presentation was postponed in 2020, but all qualifying entries have been added to the 2021 literacy award contest. This year a new language award, Suzan Sandau Language Hero Award, was created to honour the late Suzan Sandau, an Elder and Cree language speaker of Constance Lake.

In addition to providing workshops in areas of literacy and numeracy, PASS staff are able to provide training or certification to Matawa schools' staff in the following areas:

- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST)
- Mental Health First Aid
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention
- Stop, Now, and Plan (SNAP)
- Physical Literacy
- The Third Path
- Classroom 180
- Trauma Informed Care

PASS staff will be in communication with Matawa schools' leadership about delivering these programs to their schools in the new school year.

The PASS team also continued to provide support to Matawa members or communities for various purposes including: during times of community crisis either by purchasing resources or going to the communities to help there; assisting with Indian Day School settlement applications; driving Matawa members to and from vaccination clinics; food hamper packing and delivery to Matawa members living in Thunder Bay; and delivering bagged lunches to the more vulnerable people living in Thunder Bay.

## CHALLENGES:

Community travel to the Matawa communities was not possible for significant portions of the year due to COVID-19 except by our IT staff to address network related issues to help support schools with their chosen method of learning or for emergency purposes. This, along with insufficient internet capacity, limited the supports PASS staff could offer to the Matawa schools.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the IT team was the failure of the Education Department's email system. Following a required software update by MFNM's IT Department, Education's email server could no longer communicate properly which led to several months of intermittent email access either on work laptops or cell phones. This situation was finally resolved but many man hours were put into finding a solution

Due to COVID-19, neither the Education Quality & Accountability Office (EQAO) nor the Canadian Achievement Tests, 4th Edition (CAT-4) standardized tests were administered in Spring 2020. Each school may have conducted their own testing to help determine literacy and/or numeracy levels. All indications show that the EQAO testing will resume in the 2021-2022 school year. CAT-4 testing can be done by schools at their discretion, although there is expected to be a new version available that is more relevant to Indigenous students.

Internet connectivity continues to pose a challenge for delivering education and even more so for schools that had to close to in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Matawa Education has been supporting the use of dedicated satellite internet (Xplornet) in the fly-in community schools and has been making network changes to increase efficiency but bandwidth demands outweigh the bandwidth availability.

Attendance was greatly impacted by COVID-19. Schools planned for in-person learning, virtual learning, and blended learning, and each community implemented each delivery model to varying degrees with varying success. Engagement of students quickly became a major factor in attendance and student success when schools had to move away from in-person learning. Each school will have their own attendance results for a more direct comparison.



# Education

*We Work Together to Make a Change*

Matawa schools continues to see varying levels of turnover in staffing and difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates. COVID-19 did not make recruitment or retention any easier and the provincial schools struggled to hire teachers to meet their increased needs with multiple modes of learning (ie, online, in-person, and blended) being implemented.

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen unusual and significant interruptions to the education system and will likely have significant impact on learning in the foreseeable future.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Matawa Education will continue seeking culturally appropriate means of assessing the education system within each school and across the region, and will support schools who wish to use any assessments to measure progress in their school.

Matawa Education will continue seeking culturally appropriate means of assessing the education system within each school and across the region, and will support schools who wish to use any assessments to measure progress in their school.

The new provincial math curriculum will begin the destreaming of Gr. 9 subjects to help address racism and discrimination by increasing opportunities and eliminating barriers that currently exist for certain student groups. PASS staff will be ready to help Matawa schools with the implementation of the destreamed Gr. 9 math curriculum in September 2021.

A new regional education strategic plan will provide Matawa Education and its PASS team with an updated direction to meet the needs and priorities of the students of the Matawa First Nations.

Future plans for the IT team include upgrading servers in several of the Matawa schools; upgrading firewalls and networking components in some of the Matawa schools; deploying new learning devices for remote learning and/or regular schooling upgrades; and helping schools take advantage of the Starlink satellite internet service and the eventual arrival of the Rapid Lynx fibre optic internet in the Matawa First Nations.

Mental health and wellness is gaining more focus in schools, partly as a result of COVID-19. Schools across the province have been facing low engagement and reports are showing an increase in mental health supports being accessed and needed. Matawa Education staff have the qualifications required to train school staff in a number of programs related to mental health and wellness. PASS staff continue to seek out new and innovative ways to address the wellbeing needs of Matawa First Nations educators and students.

Matawa's language revitalization project (Matawa Waka Tere) is expected to be launched in applicable Matawa communities pending sufficient government funding.

One Matawa school is still waiting to have their Book Launch Party for the Matawa Book Translation Project, as travel to the community was not possible due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As mentioned in the highlights section above, the PASS team is working on an engagement strategy to help Matawa schools address the attendance and engagement issues being heightened due to COVID-19. Individual schools may have, or be developing, their own strategy to re-engage students in their learning. Matawa Education staff will be available to support schools in the implementation of an engagement strategy.





## OTHER SPECIFIC EDUCATION REPORTS

**Photo Credit: Maria Baxter, Marten Falls First Nation**

Specific reports on Education programs including Post Secondary, Matawa Waka Tere (Indigenous Language Revitalization) and the MECC Construction Update continue in this Annual Report from pages 62 - 66.



# Education

## Matawa Post Secondary Program (MPS)

### OVERVIEW:

The Matawa Post-Secondary (MPS) Program services the following five communities: Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake #58, Neskantaga and Webequie First Nations. The MPS program was established in March 1997.

### MATAWA POST SECONDARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Annamarie Majiskon	Aroland First Nation
Victor Chapais	Ginoogaming First Nation
Patrick Patabon	Long Lake # 58 First Nation
Tony Sakanee	Neskantaga First Nation
Ennis Jacob	Webequie First Nation

The MPS Advisory Committee was established to ensure that their First Nation has decision making with their own post-secondary funding. The MPS Advisory Committee representatives are chosen by their own respective First Nations.

The MPS Advisory Committee meets 2 -3 times per year and are in continuous contact via: email and telephone throughout the year. Other roles include:

- Liaison with Matawa Post-Secondary Program and their own First Nation
- Liaison for their students and Post-Secondary Staff
- Decision making with their Education Authority for Student Applications, request and budget



### KEY PRIORITY AREA:

The MPS program is responsible for administering the post-secondary program for Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake # 58, Neskantaga and Webequie First Nations. The program staff provides financial, counseling support services, maintains a database, a liaison for the MPS Advisory, Students and Post-Secondary Institutes. The MPS staff continues to be a member on various committees to represent our students throughout the year.

For the 2020 – 2021 year the MPS have 18 Post-Secondary Graduates from the five participating Matawa Post-Secondary Communities. Due to covid restrictions the MPS Program hosted a virtual zoom event on June 16th to honour the graduates from 2020 & 2021.

As for the Matawa/Bowmanville Rotary Awards the deadline date has been extended to October 1, 2021 for students and schools to submit applications for the bursaries. The Bursary Award winners will be honored via zoom, tentative date November 1, 2021.

For the 2020 -2021 Post-Secondary School year the MPS program had a ninety-five (95) students enrolling. However due to Covid-19 the Post-Secondary Institutes programs were on-line. Therefore, some students decided to defer their applications until September 2021 as well as after the Fall term, some students decided to withdraw due to on-line learning difficulties.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

This year the Matawa Post-Secondary program successfully held a virtual grad recognition event for the 2020 – 2021 graduates.

Due to Covid pandemic the students had online classes. The Post-Secondary staff took part in several professional development zoom information sessions with the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) to assist students with online learning.

## CHALLENGES:

One of the biggest challenges is not having enough funding for all student applicants. For the past year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students had to attend their programs on-line which worked well for some students, but not too good for others. The Post-Secondary Institutes provided support and kept in contact with the sponsoring agencies.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

Both Post-Secondary staff have the opportunity to sit on various Committees locally to represent the Matawa Post-Secondary Program.

The Post Secondary Student Support Worker has the opportunity to spend time during the week at the local Post Secondary Institutes to meet with students and take part in student activities which helps with getting to know the students and staff. However due to covid restrictions there was no in person events only by Zoom.

The Post-Secondary Coordinator in addition to other Committees sits on the Negahneewin Council which is part of Confederation College. (Negahneewin Council Members vision is to create Aboriginal educational and training programming at Confederation).







# Education

We Work Together to Make a Change

## Matawa Waka Tere (Indigenous Language Revitalization)

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### Matawa **Waka Tere** A fast-moving canoe on the rivers that meet

**Matawa** in Ojibway refers to the meeting place of the rivers  
**Waka** in Maori is the word for canoe  
**Tere** in Maori means moving fast

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The Indigenous Language Revitalization Project started in March 2018 with the arrival of two Maori, Aroha Watene and Mike Graham, from New Zealand to assist Dr. Rongo Wetere in establishing language programs for Matawa First Nations Management. By adapting Dr. Wetere's delivery methodology, Ako Whakatere, that helped learners learn the Maori language quickly, 'Matawa Waka Tere' (translation: the merging of the rivers on a fast-moving canoe) emerged and informs the development of Matawa's very own Ojibwe, Ojicree and Cree language curriculums. The Conjoint-Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor's degree are designed to be delivered in the 9 Matawa First Nations communities' dialects, including Thunder Bay, by fluent community-based language speakers in the near future once completed and accredited when secured funding is made available.

The Matawa Waka Tere – Indigenous Language Revitalization Project would like to acknowledge the sudden loss of our dear friend and colleague, Suzan Sandau (nee Stephens), in February 2021. She was from Constance Lake First Nation and joined the project team in May 2019 as the Cree Language Specialist. Her loss only emphasized the need to cherish the fluent language speaking champions remaining from this community and the importance of this project as a Nation-building tool toward unity and to keep the language(s) alive.

On September 15th, 2020, the Certificate Language Program (unaccredited version of Year One – Certificate III) celebrated the Graduation of nine (9) participants from the project's first Ojibwe Pilot Class amid the global COVID-19-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

Following the completion of the Year One Pilot, the language team set about reviewing and evaluating the Pilot using Instructor observations, student program evaluations and mentor feedback. Everything done by the Instructors for the Pilot program became development examples for our Ojicree program using observation as the platform in which to learn and understand the delivery methodology component of the program.

To date, the Language Specialists have been trained in various administrative duties and more effective use of office software, as well as to develop and conduct lesson plans. Recently, they wrote abstracts about the Pilot and Review so that they can present at a global conference virtually organized by the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC), which they hope gets accepted.

Aroha and Mike have received temporary residency until April 2023, and are applying for Permanent Residency which will allow them to work alongside Matawa indefinitely and whenever the need arises.

Since the loss of our Cree Language Specialist, there have been no applicants to fill the two Cree Language Spe-

cialist positions, which means the curriculum and resource developments for the Cree program are incomplete and on hold. We have also been unsuccessful at filling the Matawa Waka Tere Program Administrator position advertised in September 2020. Due to COVID-19 pandemic disruptions, there has been no set dates for the joint certificate program to be submitted for accreditation. COVID-19 had an impact on the training of our team in 2020 with Matawa staff being confined to working from home and this also meant that physical trainings were no longer an option. Securing the funding needed to develop digital content and deliver the programs in the Matawa communities continues to be a challenge for the project.

Academic and Student Protection policies need to be created and or collated between the Matawa First Nations Management departments to support the language program new admission application for accreditation under the Six Nations Polytechnic guidelines. The Ojibwe and Ojicree Year One Certificate language program will be available to be delivered in the communities this October 2021. This means Instructor training would need to commence in September, however, the program may not be accredited which will present challenges. The Team will develop the Year two Curriculum content in consultation with a Program Advisory Committee of Language Speakers.

**The 2021 Susan Sandau Language Hero Award**

**MATAWA EDUCATION & BOWMANVILLE ROTARY CLUB PROUDLY PRESENT**

**THE ANNUAL MATAWA LANGUAGE HERO CONTEST**

Contest entries should be attached to bursary application and submissions due: **October 1, 2021**  
1 prize of \$250 to be awarded to each category  
Our 3 categories are: Grades: K-6: 7-12: & Post Secondary

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS TO: [KSOUFIAS@MATAWA.ON.CA](mailto:KSOUFIAS@MATAWA.ON.CA)  
OR [GONABIGON@MATAWA.ON.CA](mailto:GONABIGON@MATAWA.ON.CA) OR FAX TO (807) 868-3501

**THE CRITERIA!**

**GRADES K-6**  
CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:  
- WRITE AND ILLUSTRATE A BIOGRAPHY OF SOMEONE YOU CONSIDER A LANGUAGE HERO FROM YOUR COMMUNITY  
- USE MULTIMEDIA TO HONOUR YOUR LANGUAGE HERO THROUGH A SONG, INTERVIEW, PHOTO ALBUM, SLIDE SHOW, OR MOVIE  
"USE OF TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE IN PART OF WHOLE OF THE SUBMISSION IS ENCOURAGED"

**GRADES 7-12**  
ENTRIES MUST BE BASED ON THE STORY OF SOMEONE FROM THE COMMUNITY THAT THE STUDENT FEELS IS A TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE HERO. "USE OF TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE IN PART OR WHOLE OF THE SUBMISSION IS ENCOURAGED" EITHER WRITTEN IN SYLLABICS OR ROMAN ORTHOGRAPHY, OR CAPTURED AS AN ORAL TELLING AND SPOKEN IN THE TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE THROUGH THE USE OF MULTIMEDIA

**POST-SECONDARY**  
WRITTEN BIOGRAPHY HONOURING A LANGUAGE HERO FROM YOUR COMMUNITY. SHARE HOW THIS PERSON AND THE TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE HAVE ENCOURAGED YOU TO MAKE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUR HOME AND COMMUNITY (750 WORDS).  
"USE OF TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE IN YOUR SUBMISSION EITHER IN PART OR WHOLE IS REQUIRED"

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS TO: [KSOUFIAS@MATAWA.ON.CA](mailto:KSOUFIAS@MATAWA.ON.CA) OR [GONABIGON@MATAWA.ON.CA](mailto:GONABIGON@MATAWA.ON.CA) OR FAX TO (807) 868-3501 TO ENTER SUBMISSIONS



# Education

*We Work Together to Make a Change*

## Matawa Education and Care Centre Construction Update

Phase I construction of D & E Wings was completed by Lois Pradal and Sons on January 15, 2021. This Phase consisted of classroom space and student accommodations. The area is currently being occupied by Education Department staff while the remainder of the building renovations (Phase II) are completed. The classroom space is scheduled to be occupied with the intended programming in September 2021, and the accommodation space will be occupied with students starting in 2022.

On January 26, 2021, M Builds was awarded the Phase II A, B, and C Wing Renovation. This Phase includes accommodation rooms, administrative offices, classrooms, mental health program space, reception upgrade, main lobby upgrade, kitchen and dining room construction, mechanical system upgrade, and construction of meeting boardrooms. M Builds began site mobilization on February 16, 2021. M Builds current schedule shows their substantial completion date is November 26, 2021, and their total completion date is December 17, 2021. M Builds has employed a phased approach to ensure the building is ready to accept students in September 2021, by scheduling completion of the main lobby, reception, meeting rooms, dining room, kitchen, and safe sobering for August 2021. The remainder of Phase II will be completed between September and November 2021, but this will not affect the educational or administrative programming for the building.

The accommodations will become occupied in January 2022. At that point, the entire main and second floors will be fully functioning, and will be furnished to allow for the desired programming to operate as planned.

The entire Phase II construction zone is currently at various stages of construction. It is tracking on schedule to be delivered at the dates identified above. It is not anticipated that COVID-19 will have an impact on the ability to deliver this project on time. Please see the following schedule:

<b>Task (areas completed, deficiencies completed, areas cleaned)</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
A100, S100-Reception, Main Lobby, Meeting Rooms, Dining Room, Kitchen, Safe Sobering Site	September 3, 2021
B-100 Boiler Room	October 1, 2021
A200 Mental Health Wing	October 15, 2021
C100, C200-Student Accommodations	November 26, 2021
Total Completion	December 17, 2021





# Quality Assurance

## STAFF:

Shelly Boudreau, Quality Assurance Coordinator

## OVERVIEW:

Matawa First Nations Management is ISO 9001-2015 registered and has held an ISO Certificate of Registration since 2012. ISO is an internationally recognized certification which assists the organization to provide quality services, increased credibility and consistency in services. Transparent workplans ensure that the goals and objectives of the organization are being monitored and achieved.

## QA REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE:

The Quality Assurance Department has a committee made up of Quality Assurance Representatives from each of the Matawa Departments. The QA Reps. meet to discuss issues/concerns, review current processes and identify areas which may require improvement to the Quality Management System. They are a great resource for other staff in their department.

## KEY PRIORITY AREA:

Our Member First Nations are our number one priority. Their requests, community needs & wants and their comments & concerns must be addressed in a timely manner to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome.

The Quality Assurance Department's key focus is to ensure that ISO 9001:2015 requirements are being implemented and followed in each of Matawa's departments. This is done through training of all employees, department visits, communication and promotion of the Quality Management System.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Although this year was quite different from other years, the department did manage to still provide training to employees, policy & procedure reviews, one-on-one virtual sessions with staff/management, support to assist with crisis issues faced by some of our Matawa communities, virtual professional development and the collection of necessary information.

## CHALLENGES:

The pandemic, and all that came with it, was certainly the greatest challenge this year. While essential staff were quick to work with whatever that was thrown their way, following set processes were often difficult or impossible to do.

Department visits were also a challenge at times since many staff worked from home and lock-down periods prohibited any sort of meeting.

The Plan/Do/Check/Act cycle was also a challenge to follow as there were often times when things needed to be done very quickly and there was not much time for planning in many cases.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

Matawa First Nations Management has been taught a great deal this year with regards to how to still provide essential services in a Worldwide Pandemic. The management and employees have worked tirelessly to ensure that the member First Nations all receive the services they need and deserve.

Matawa departments have learned to work together as a group to make things happen, even when several hurdles and challenges exist. New technologies and virtual platforms have also given us the opportunity to realize that we can work with what we have and still accomplish our goals.

Sharing information and working with other departments has been vital to Matawa's feat in achieving the successes of this past year. Future activities and objectives would benefit greatly if this continued.



# Economic Development

*Advancing Economic Opportunities by Helping Create Opportunity-Ready Matawa Communities*

## STAFF:

Jonathan Neegan, Economic Development Advisor  
Brent Edwards, Energy Workshop Facilitator  
Alexandra Kavalchuk, Economic Development Assistant

## OVERVIEW:

The Matawa Economic Development Department works with our membership communities to promote and foster sustainable economic development through the delivery of quality information products capacity building initiatives and collaborative working projects throughout our region.

We believe in sustainable economic development and that what we do today will impact the next seven generations and we wish to leave them a testimony of our commitment to business excellence and a legacy for which our people will be renowned for.

We also assist our membership communities and aspiring entrepreneurs with business planning, financing, negotiating and strategic planning.

## KEY PRIORITY AREA:

1. Matawa & Membership Economic Development Strategies
2. Community Capacity Building
3. Matawa Business Centre
4. Sustainable Micro-grid Development
5. Renewable Energy Workshops
6. Tourism Business Plan
7. Business Support Program
8. Economic Development Conference

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Renewable Energy Workshops

## CHALLENGES:

Coronavirus – While there is no way to tell exactly what the economic damage from the global COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic will be at this time, there is a widespread agreement among economists that it will have severe negative impacts on economic growth.

Community Resources and Capacity – Communities have their own purposes and there are opportunities for communities to engage with researchers or develop their own agenda. However, a major limitation facing our membership communities is the lack of time and resources to do this work.

## OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Economic Development Strategy
2. Community Infrastructure
3. Community Capacity Building
4. Relay North Renewable Energy Capacity Building

### **MATAWA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:**

Sam Kashkeesh (Aroland First Nation), Vacant, Economic Development Officer (Constance Lake First Nation), Ben Waswa, Economic Development Officer (Eabametoong First Nation), Leslie O’Nabigon, Economic Development Officer (Ginoogaming First Nation), Darcy Waboose, Economic Development Officer (Long Lake #58 First Nation), Robert Moonias, Economic Development Officer (Marten Falls First Nation), Edward Moonias, Economic Development Officer (Neskantaga First Nation), Byron Wapoos, Economic Development Officer (Nibinamik First Nation), Glen Wabasse, Economic Development Officer (Webequie First Nation).

### **MATAWA ENERGY WORKING GROUP:**

Sam Kashkeesh (Aroland First Nation), Lorraine Wesley and Wayne Neegan (Constance Lake First Nation), Ben Waswa (Eabametoong First Nation), Leslie O’Nabigon (Ginoogaming First Nation), Darcy Waboose and John Onabigon (Long Lake #58 First Nation), Robert Moonias (Marten Falls First Nation), Lawrence Baxter (Marten Falls First Nation), Byron Wapoos (Nibinamik First Nation), Edward Moonias (Neskantaga First Nation), Gary Quisess (Neskantaga First Nation), Glen Wabasse (Webequie First Nation), James Suganaqueb (Webequie First Nation).

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# Rapid Lynx Telecommunications GP Inc.



## STAFF:

Wayne Slipperjack, General Manager in Training

## OVERVIEW:

Matawa First Nations Management (“MFNM”) and Matawa First Nations (“MFN”) leaders elected to take control of their communities’ broadband future in 2013 after learning that the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation project would not have sufficient funds to connect the remote MFN communities as planned. MFNM formed a Broadband Working Group (“BWG”) of representatives appointed by the communities to support and oversee the effort.

## DEPARTMENT COMMITTEES:

### Rapid Lynx Board of Directors

- Aroland – Sam Kashkeesh
- Marten Falls – Robert Moonias
- Eabametoong – Vacant
- Neskantaga – Edward Moonias
- Webequie – James Suganaqueb
- Nibinamik – Matthew Sofea

Election of Offices for President, Treasurer and Secretary have not been done, waiting for Official appointment from Eabametoong First Nation

### Broadband Working Group

- Aroland – Sam Kashkeesh
- Marten Falls – Robert Moonias
- Eabametoong – Charlie O’keese
- Neskantaga – Edward Moonias, Gary Quisses
- Webequie – James Suganaqueb, Glen Wabasse
- Nibinamik – Matthew Sofea, Byron Wapoose, Harvey Yellowhead, Gershom Beaver



# Rapid Lynx Telecommunications GP Inc.

## KEY PRIORITY AREA:

- Build Rapid Lynx Fibre Optic Backbone to 5 remote Matawa Communities and light the network for service.
- Obtain grant funding for Rapid Lynx Phase 2 to connect the road access communities to the Rapid Lynx network.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROJECT MILESTONES:

- Overall construction of the Rapid Lynx Backbone Network was 52% complete as of July 8, 2021.
- Equipment Shelters were procured and delivered to the five remote communities and Aroland in the Spring. Site preparation and set-up will take place in the summer of 2021.
- MFNM located an alternative carrier fiber-optic route to interconnect the Rapid Lynx backbone network with the global Internet backbone running through Canada. Interconnection and high-capacity service at 10 Gigabits per second and higher were negotiated at pricing and terms highly favorable to Rapid Lynx, lowering Rapid Lynx's nonrecurring cost by 91% and recurring monthly costs by approximately 75%.

The route will connect the Remote communities and Aroland to the global internet at Toronto over a route from Aroland to the carrier interconnection point near Ginoogaming. Funding has been requested to build the route between Aroland and Ginoogaming.

The communities of Long Lake #58 and Constance Lake would also be connected to Toronto through Ginoogaming when additional grant funding for Rapid Lynx Phase 2 is obtained.

This route will place the Matawa First Nation communities only 1 hop off of Canada's global Internet backbone and allow Rapid Lynx to obtain ultra high-speed wholesale service at Toronto where competition is robust and service costs are at the lowest levels in Canada. This will support the business

plan of Rapid Lynx while keeping service costs to the communities at an affordable level.

- Three qualified and experienced operating partners have expressed interested in bidding on start-up support for Rapid Lynx. A Request for Proposals has been developed and reviewed by the Rapid Lynx Board of Directors and is expected to be released in late Winter.
- Electronics to light the network will be procured after selection of an operating partner to make sure that the operator's electronics will seamlessly integrate with Rapid Lynx electronics.
- MFNM developed and submitted applications for funding for Phase 2 of Rapid Lynx deployment to connect Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake #58 and Constance Lake to the Internet over high-capacity fibre-optic cable and deploy fibre-to-the-premise community distribution networks. Decisions by Ontario and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED Canada) are pending.
- As part of its application for Phase 2 funding, MFNM included a request for funds to connect the Rapid Lynx backbone from Nibinamik to a second interconnection point to the global Internet near Wunnumin Lake. If funded by Ontario and ISED, this route would form a Rapid Lynx backbone ring and maximize network security and uptime.

**MFNM mitigated major risks to the project in 2020-2021 by:**

- Terminating the engineer retained in 2017 after design errors and omissions were discovered, and the engineer failed to provide qualified and experienced inspectors at the work site.
- Addressing the errors and omissions discovered and working with the contractor and electronics providers to find and implement feasible solutions.
- Retaining a Quality Assurance Manager to oversee construction and inspection in the field.
- Revising the rock construction unit specification and negotiating the contractor's pricing to reduce the cost of rock overruns caused by the engineer's omission of rock units from the Bill of Materials issued for construction bids.
- Notifying the grant management teams of MENDM and ISED of the issue and obtaining their support to assist in finding additional funding, if required, to complete the community distribution networks as part of the project.
- Working with the grant management team from Ontario ENDM and Canada's ISED, and with Ontario MTO, MENDM and MNRF to overcome delays to the project due to Ontario's re-route of the Anaconda/Painter Lake Roads between Aroland and Marten Falls. The ministries extended the deadline for completion by up to 12 months to allow time for Ontario to finalize the design of the re-route and construction of that section when caribou migration is not underway.
- To avoid extended delays due to design changes by the communities and additional permitting, MFNM re-sequenced construction and the contractor agreed to remobilize personnel and equipment to Nibinamik from Eabametoong and work backwards from Nibinamik while awaiting permits for the design revisions.



- To date, MFNM has been able to overcome delays caused by the Anaconda Road re-route, requests for design changes by the communities, community and border closures due to the pandemic, and winter road instability blocking mobilization of materials, equipment and personnel.
- Backbone network construction is expected to be completed by September, 2022 and placement of electronics to light the network for service by March 31, 2023.
- To date, MFNM has been able to maintain production within the existing budget. Overruns are expected and will be managed by utilizing funds for fibre-to-the-premise distribution networks within the communities, utilizing existing cable or deployment of wireless connectivity to premises until the Ministries can





# Rapid Lynx Telecommunications GP Inc.

assist with additional funds for fibre-to-the-premise deployment within each community. The priority is to complete the backbone network and light it, without which Internet service cannot be delivered to communities' fibre-to-the-premise networks. MFNM is on track to deploy the backbone network and light it.

## CHALLENGES:

- Keeping communities engaged and informed during the construction process. This year with the pandemic, US/Canada border closure and community protocols, the project team could not visit First Nation communities to provide project updates and answer community questions.
- Maintaining project continuity during a global pandemic. Project meetings and updates are being conducted via teleconference.
- Warmer than usual temperatures impacting winter road conditions, transporting shelters and cable reels to Matawa FN communities was extremely difficult. Similar conditions next year could slow progress.
- Obtaining clearance from community pandemic teams with at least 72-hour negative test result was required before approval to enter winter road network. Construction crews are now being tested before travel, housed outside the MFN communities, and tested again upon arrival at their accommodations to avoid delays due to COVID-related restrictions.
- Coordination with other planned improvement projects and requests for reroutes to avoid sacred sites and sites of importance to the communities over the last year have slowed progress and increased costs in some areas. A reroute between Eabametoong and Neskantaga was requested from Neskantaga due to sacred sites along the route, requiring a costly resequencing of construction to avoid a serious delay awaiting permits for the new route. Fortunately, the alternative route agreed

upon by MFNM and the community will lower construction cost by avoiding large areas of rock. In some communities, re-routing has increased cost.

- Community lockdowns prevented work to be performed or entrance to the community, delaying delivery of shelter and material. Ongoing lockdowns due to COVID variants not prevented by vaccines may delay work; however, booster shots may resolve the issue.
- Recruiting community members to participate on the project through Working Warriors. Access to the portal was a challenge for community members. Job descriptions for available positions were posted on Facebook and sent via fax to the communities to assist in the recruitment efforts

## OPPORTUNITIES:

- Opportunities for direct employment through Working Warriors include the following construction related positions:

Labourers – 3  
Environmental monitor – 1  
Medic/Safety Officer – 1

- Rapid Lynx Board of Directors agreed that these will be shared positions with all communities in the project.
- Communities will also benefit indirectly by providing support services and resources such as accommodations, fuel, meals, cleaning, waste management and other camp services to the construction and inspections teams throughout the life of the project.
- Future opportunities for direct employment on this project including brush cutting and clearing, technical and operational support services when the network is active.



# Membership

## STAFF:

Barb Rabbit, Membership Indian Registration Administrator (IRA)

## OVERVIEW:

Matawa Membership program provides membership services in areas of status card issuance (laminated Certificate of Indian Status), any changings occurring in the life of an individual registered as a status Indian such as reporting birth, marriage, divorce and death events. Other reports include miscellaneous amendments to amend, add and update information from an individual's existing Registry page. Assisting parents with Indian Registration and birth registration if required. Matawa administers and coordinates membership services to the following First Nation communities:

- Aroland First Nation
- Eabametoong First Nation
- Marten Falls First Nation
- Neskantaga First Nation
- Nibinamik First Nation
- Webequie First Nation

The mandate is to provide an accurate and updated Indian Registry. The Membership Indian Registration Administrator manages internal and external events required for Indian Registration reporting in accordance with the *Indian Act*, federal and provincial statutes and the policies and procedures of the Indian Registration System.

*"The Indian Act is the Canadian federal legislation first passed in 1876 that sets out certain federal government obligations. It provides for the registration of person as Indians, identifies who is entitled to be registered and who is not, sets the requirements of Band Lists (membership) and makes provisions of protests of decisions concerning registration and membership and for appeals."*

- ISC Indian Registration Administrator Manual

## KEY PRIORITY AREA:

### Certificate of Indian Status (CIS) Paper-Laminate Card

Membership Services-IRA provides the laminated paper status card to the card holder that is still in circulation. The following reasons for issuance are as follows:

- Lost/Stolen/Damaged card
- New First card – New registrants such as infants, toddlers, etc.
- Renewals – Expired dated cards for both adult and children
- Replacement – Events for marriage, name/birth transfer changes, etc.

Certificate of Indian Status Cards issued from September 2020 to June 2021 were:

First Cards	27
Lost Cards	266
Renewals	248
<b>Total Cards Issued</b>	<b>541</b>

### Event Reporting

Any changes occurring in the life of an individual registered as a status Indian are entered in the Indian Registry System (IRS). These changes are called events such as reporting a birth, marriage, divorce and death. Other reports include miscellaneous amendments to amend, add and delete information on the individual's existing registry page.

### Birth and Indian Registrations

To register a child with Indigenous Services Canada a long form is required with parental information.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

### Community Visits

Matawa Membership Services had previously provided annual community visits to the six First Nations communities. The visits ensure updates on status card issuance and registration of minor children. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no travel to the six First Nation communities for 2020-2021.

## CHALLENGES:


### Birth Registration

This issue of not registering a child after birth has been an ongoing matter within the First Nations level. The problems stem from different issues such as:


- Lack of understanding the birth registration procedures
- Confusion with Indian registration and requirements
- Lack of monetary support (payment of birth certificates and delayed reimbursement of fees)
- Unable to access the necessary birth documents
- Oral and written communication issues
- Procrastination to apply for birth until last minute medical situations

### Identification Issues

Many people don't have proper identifications and may not be aware of what is required to get proper IDs when applying for a Certificate of Indian status (laminate card) or the new Secure status card. Many individuals are unable to get IDs due to lack of monetary funds or other situations. Matawa Membership Services is working on developing identification awareness by Media, newsletter, etc. We are currently working on a committee with Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic and other organizations to address this identification issues.

**CERTIFICATE OF INDIAN STATUS LAMINATE CARD**  


- Currently in circulation until product (card) is terminated by INAC
- Most FN offices/Tribal units still carry the laminate card
- CIS expires 5 years for Adults
- CIS expires 3 years for Children

**NEW SECURE CERTIFICATE OF INDIAN STATUS CARD**  


- Applications available at any regional INAC offices across Canada
- SCIS expires 10 years for Adults
- SCIS expires 5 years for Children

## OPPORTUNITIES:

### Birth Registration Venue

There are now programs for new mothers/caregivers to access programs with their communities such as Healthy Baby/Healthy Children program, Ontario Works, Service Ontario Outreach visits to the community.

### Collaboration with First Nations Representatives for Indian Registration Awareness

Matawa Membership Services along with First Nation Liaisons or Representatives who have been working on promoting and bringing awareness with First Nations programs in both the birth and Indian registration process. The Healthy Babies/Health Children program is an essential venue as the program is geared toward expectant mothers/caregivers that have children under six years old.



## Notes

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal pink lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook or composition paper. The background is white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.

# Notes



# Matawa First Nations Management

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**The Power of Unity**  
**The Dignity of Difference**