

*MEDIA RELEASE*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MATAWA FIRST NATIONS MANAGEMENT CELEBRATES POSTHUMOUS  
'JOURNEY TO OUR HOMELAND' FILM RESEARCH AWARD AT 2023  
YORKTON FILM FEST**

**THUNDER BAY, ON:** Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) celebrates the May 27, 2023 'Journey to Our Homeland Film's' *Golden Sheaf Award for Research* granted at the Yorkton Film Fest over the past weekend. The 24 minute documentary film follows two Elders and six youth traveling by canoe to the old village sites where their families lived from time immemorial. It is made with the support of Matawa First Nations, Shebafilms, and Four Rivers. There were four other nominees for this award. The trailer can be viewed: [here](#).

Sadly, one of the Elders behind the film, Tommy Yellowhead of Pinnae Mootang (the homeland area around Nibinamik First Nation), was not alive to celebrate this achievement having passed away in March 2023. The award will be presented to his family. One of the messages he left behind when the [film premiered on September 7, 2022](#) was that he wanted Matawa communities and First Nation members to 'think beyond the Indian Act' and start reconnecting with each other through their lakes, rivers and trails, as they have done for millennia. Stephen Neshinapaise of Pinnae Mootang is the other Elder in the film.

It took them 3 years to produce the film. It was directed/composed by Adrien Harpelle who mentored Derek Okeese who is a self-taught editor who was part of the film's colour correcting and music composition. Starting his journey in 2018 he has since edited over a 1,000 videos on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Since then, he has worked on multiple projects like, "Stories of Anishinabe Resilience Project", "Reel MemoÀries", and "Nishinabe-Aski Legal."

'Journey to Our Homeland' was also [nominated for awards in other categories](#) like *Best Emerging Director* for Adrien Harpelle and the prestigious *Kathleen Shannon Award*, named for the pioneering Montreal film maker who was the founder of the National Film Board's women's studio in 1974.

In recognition of this achievement, MFNM CEO David Paul Achneepineskum said, "On behalf of MFNM, I congratulate all those involved in the making of the documentary 'Journey to Our Homeland' and for receiving the Yorkton Film Fest's *Golden Sheaf Award for Research* this

past weekend. It is an acknowledgement well deserved albeit posthumously. As an original Board of Director of MFNM, and when he produced the documentary in 2022, the late Tommy Yellowhead left a mark on this world that can never be erased. His traditional knowledge of our Peoples, history and the needs of our communities is knowledge that will serve us all well today and into the future.”

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