

The **Matawa Waka Tere Indigenous Language Revitalization Projects (MWT)** first Community Student rollout 2022 to 2023, recently completed the 32 Week Certificate III, in Indigenous Pathways to Speaking the Language, Year One in July. Under **Matawa Education**, the program rolled out three languages of Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Ojibwe in November of last year in 7 of the 9 Matawa First Nations Communities, including Thunder Bay. Graduates of the Year One Certificate program will celebrate their achievement in June, 2024 alongside the second rollout of Year One Students. The project is now accepting enrolments to start in all nine communities on September the 11th 2023. To understand a bit more about the MWTILRP experience, below is an article by a former Oji-Cree student, Becky Yesno from Constance Lake First Nation who attended 85% or more class lessons and achieved 100% of all assessment tasks.

MATAWA WAKA TERE

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION PROJECT

Boozhoo, gakina awiiyaa. Hello, everyone. I'm Becky Yesno and I completed the first year at Matawa Waka Tere. I was enrolled in Oji-Cree Year One and it is a 32-week course. The **FREE** language course was a rewarding experience that continues to be worthwhile to my language journey. In the beginning I questioned myself, "Can I do this?" With the help of the staff and believing the **Three Essential Principles**, my question was answered... yes, I could do it!

I have previously attended other schools and Matawa Waka Tere has been my favourite thus far. For students to learn the language, your Instructor will develop or alter resources to each of their **student's individual learning style**. This is to ensure each student is learning their community's language the fastest they can.



Photographed left to right: Becky Yesno,

ELIGIBILITY

- ✓ **YEAR ONE - CERTIFICATE**
LITTLE TO NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGE
- ✓ **YEAR TWO - DIPLOMA**
INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGE
- ✓ **ABILITY TO ATTEND IN-PERSON** ✓ **16 +**

The program has given me the courage to be who I really am and a sense of belonging in this world, which is a strong Indigenous woman that can proudly speak my language. Oshawa MehMehGwe Kwe ni-dishakkaas. Mamatawa Sipii nitam anishabek. Thunder Bay ni-dishadaa. Wigwahkeh Dodem. Mino bimatowin.

Becky Yesno
Oji-Cree Matawa Waka Tere Student

Three Essential Principles

Learning Anishinaabemowin is easy.

Being in a relaxed environment and having fun makes learning easier.

All language learners can succeed!

TOGETHER,
LET'S SPEAK ANISHINAABEMOWIN

OJI - CREE OJIBWAY OJIBWE CREE

DISCLAIMER: MATAWA MEMBERS WILL BE FIRST PRIORITY

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT **MATAWA WAKA TERE**, PLEASE CONTACT:

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

mwtsss@matawaeducation.ca

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENQUIRE!















Disclaimer: This certificate is a non accredited program at the time of rollout, however, it is currently seeking accreditation through a World Indigenous Institution.

In preparation for the second rollout of the Year One - Certificate and the new Year Two – Diploma, 25 pre-selected language speakers in Ojibwe/Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree were invited to a 2-day accelerated learning training to evaluate if they were suitable as full-time National Indigenous Kikinomaagewin Anishinaabemowin (NIKA) Tutor/Instructor and or part time Assistant Instructors. Successful applicants from all 9 Matawa First Nations communities were then invited to participate in the 2-week full training held in Thunder-Bay.

Some of the Matawa Waka Tere training workshops included NIKA curriculum lesson planning and presentations, relaxation techniques, research workshops, program administrative duties and language script activities. The full training was led by our Māori Language Revitalization Specialists from Aotearoa, New Zealand, supported and facilitated by our Anishinaabe Language Specialists and MWT Project Staff.

Below are some of the new trainees' thoughts! Miiqwech, Meeqwetch, Mee-kway(ch)

'First timer to training, very resourceful and excellent rollout of information.'



'After attending this training, I feel more confident in my new role.'



'I am very prepared.'

Training ... 'it helped me understand how to do the plans and work with students.'



Kitchi Siipi Youth River Trip

In July, Four Rivers was invited by the Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC) to join the Kitchi Siipi youth river trip. The trip was guided by Boreal River Rescue and the students learned a lot of valuable skills such as teamwork, camaraderie, preparing meals, water safety, and navigating river systems. Four Rivers staff Erin and Graeme joined the team as ecologists and provided western science teachings about the environment. Students learned about and participated in several hands-on activities around acoustic monitoring for birds, bats, mammals, and amphibians, compass and map orienteering, water quality, soils, fish health, and monitoring for Species at Risk such as bees and Lake Sturgeon. A different topic was discussed each day. Data collected from this trip will be provided back to the students to compile a report on the findings from the trip.



Nibinamik Youth Retreat

On July 17th to 21st, Four Rivers attended the 24th Annual Youth Retreat in Nibinamik First Nation. Staff delivered environmental programming to youth aged 7 to 16 on topics including mining, environmental monitoring, water science, species at risk and fish health. A special film screening and award presentation in memory of Tommy Yellowhead was also held for his 'Journey to Our Homeland' film, which was entered into the Yorkton Film Festival in the spring and won in the Research Category! Elder Stephen Neshinapaise accepted the award and had many kind memories to share of his friend and the trip, over 60 people attended the screening and praised the film and Tommy's legacy. We had such a great time with the kids and the whole community, everyone was so welcoming and fun, we can't wait to come back next year!

(See pictures on the next page >>>)



LU and KKETS Mindfulness Research Study - Continued from Front Page

- Gradual shifts in, and broadening of, treatment approaches from traditional medical model to wholistic understandings and approaches within the health and social services sectors
- Widespread empirical evidence of the benefits and effectiveness of mindfulness

One of the ways that Ray and Vaillancourt said this issue is addressed is through the new approach developed by Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, (an Indigenous Dean and Professor at the University of Manitoba) called 'neurodecolonization.' This is the part of KKETS mindfulness program. Some of the central premises of neurodecolonization are:

- Colonialism changes the brain's natural pathways and neurodecolonization must occur within a person impacted by colonization to generate positive, empowering thoughts
- Neurodecolonization is unsettling and replacing colonial thinking
- Indigenous people can overcome negative feelings created by structural oppression maintained through colonialism by exercising a practice called neurodecolonization

The goal is of the LU/KKETS research project is: "to evaluate the effectiveness of a newly developed neurodecolonization mindfulness program by KKETS designed as a holistic approach to foster embodied learning in emotional self-regulation (emotional regulation) and self-compassion through reinforced teaching and practice of specific mind-body mindfulness interventions." Some of the objectives include:

- Develop and implement an evaluation framework to assess the impact of the newly developed trauma-informed mindfulness program
- Measurement of of participation skill development and progress in relation to specific social, health, and behavioural outcomes related to program goals of fostering wellness and well-being through the teaching and reinforcement of mindfulness practices (like meditation, breathwork and positive affirmations)

Students' participation in the research study is voluntary. A pilot study will be conducted with the first cohort to establish a baseline and methods will include: semi-structured individual and/or focus group interviews with questionnaires and/or standardized scales. The findings from the study (**that will respect student confidentiality**) will be shared with KKETS, its affiliated organizations and community members as well as through traditional academic methods such as peer-reviewed publications.

Some Results from the Practice of Mindfulness Interventions

- Change in the number, duration, and severity of trauma-related emotional triggers experienced
- Change associated with the creation of thinking and response pathways/responses (e.g. coping mechanisms)
- Tools/strategies self-initiated to regulate negative emotions and actions (re: stress; impulses)
- Change in self-discipline techniques
- Change in self-control
- Self initiated strategies to sustain program-introduced skills and behaviours
- Change in health outcomes
- Change in self compassion
- Developed pathways to accepting and letting go of negative emotions
- Improved sense of wellbeing/wellness
- General quality of life – life satisfaction

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) Provide Support for Matawa Training and Wellness Centre's Cultural Space



On September 6, 2023, the Ontario government announced \$1,233,050 in funding for the Matawa Training and Wellness Centre's (MTWC) cultural space. MPP Kevin Holland presented on behalf of Minister Greg Rickford, Minister of Northern Development in his role as Parliamentary Assistant. Matawa CEO David Paul Achneepineskum said, "thanks to NOHFC funding we can complete 3,100 square feet of renovations to the MTWC which has been allocated and designed as a Cultural Room. It will be the only Indigenous-specific cultural space available in Thunder Bay that is year-round and will be a safe space for individuals to improve their quality of life and well-being to sustain life-long change." The funding will cover abatement, elevator improvements, room/lobby renovations, heating/ventilation/air-conditioning improvements, stage upgrades, installation of a new barrier-free washroom, furniture/audio/lighting and other design features to create a sacred space for Matawa people and others to do their healing.

In Memoriam

With profound sadness, the family announced that Alexander Missewace, 53, of Eabametoong First Nation, passed away on September 4, 2023 at Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, after a lengthy battle with cancer with loved ones by his side.

Alex is predeceased by his late father Joe, and late granddaughter Mariah Lee. Alex leaves behind his partner Doreen, children Madyson, Robinson and adult children Seth, Carolyn, Brandon, step children Ryan and Janey, mother Caroline, brothers Ron (Jemimah), Joseph (Marilyn), sisters Shirley (Roy) and Sharon (the Matawa Education Authority's Executive Director).

In a social media statement of September 8, 2023, Nishnawbe Aski Police Services (NAPS) said: *"In this moment of profound loss, we extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of the late Alex Missewace (Nate), an admirable police officer with 27 years of service. His tenure included commendable roles with OPP First Nations Policing and Nishnawbe Aski Police Service, culminating in the rank of Inspector. We express gratitude for his unwavering dedication to our Service, and we pledge to continue uplifting our frontline officers in their mission to safeguard our communities. As we say farewell to Alex, we hold dear the memories of a beloved member of our NAPS family. Miigwetch, Alex, for your unwavering commitment and may you find eternal peace."*

Alex was with NAPS since its inception. Having been the 1st Inspector for the Central Region (which consists of a majority of Matawa communities), Matawa is grateful for his service and the trail he left for others to follow both as an Indigenous man and police officer. We offer our sincerest condolences.



Matawa 35th Annual General Meeting

On July 25 & 26, 2023, Chiefs and Elder/Women/Youth delegations from the 9 Matawa First Nations came together for the 35th annual general meeting (AGM) in Long Lake #58 First Nation. Elders Veronica Waboose and Allen Towegishig led the AGM in prayer each day. The drum Walking Bear also opened and closed each day. Gideon Winters and Dawn Desmoulin were the Co-Speakers. The meeting was also livestreamed.

On July 25 (the corporate meeting day), they received Matawa First Nations Management Department Reports including:

- Awashishewiigihiwaywiin (Social Services Framework)
- Economic Development
- Education
- Four Rivers Environmental Services
- Matawa Health Co-operative
- Health & Social Meno Biimadeswin
- Rapid Lynx Telecommunications
- Technical Services

They received preliminary reports of the Matawa Non-Profit Housing Corporation, Matawa First Nations Property Inc., Matawa Project Management Group and Gathering of Rivers for Community Care. Unfortunately, they were not able to accept audited financial statements of Matawa First Nations Management and the audited financial statements and annual report of Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (KKETS) as the final audited financial statements were not available (alternatively, they will be reviewed/accepted at another date in the immediate future).

In addition, Ron Wesley, President of KKETS and Dave Neegan, KKETS Executive Director provided overall remarks. KKETS Program Managers from the following programs also reported: Adult Learning Literacy & Essential Skills Program, Indigenous Skills & Employment Training, and the Adult Education Program. A special presentation by Dr. Lana Ray and Dr. Anita Vaillancourt of Lakehead University also was provided.

On July 26, the first day of the Chiefs Council meeting started. Some highlights included:

- Presentation by Greenstone Gold's David Newhook, Director of Operations
- A tour of the Greenstone Gold mine site
- Presentation by Rachelle Lalonde, Sr. Consultation Advisor and Ian Ketcheson, Vice President of Indigenous Consultation Sector of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada

The Annual Report and Chiefs Council Report are available on the Matawa website at: www.matawa.on.ca - go to: Reports (in the footer at the bottom).

After the closing song on July 26, tragedy struck which claimed



the life of a 7-year-old boy in Grade 2 from a bicycle accident. His name was DeAndre Edward Peter Brown. The AGM, which was to have concluded on July 27, was suspended out of respect for the family and community. Before suspending, all Matawa Chiefs offered their personal condolences and offers of assistance. A sacred fire was burned for four (4) days and a community vigil was held at the baseball field, near the location of the fatality.

The 36th AGM is scheduled to take place in Neskantaga First Nation from July 30, 31 and August 1, 2024. All the photos on pages 8 and 9 were taken by Ethan Alatypko of Ginoogaming First Nation (see introduction on page 14).



Matawa Four Rivers 2023 Water & Environmental Gathering



On June 13th to 15th Four Rivers welcomed delegates from Matawa member communities to Fort William Historical Park for a Water and Environment Gathering. Various presenters working in water and environmental initiatives or programs were brought in from around the province, across Canada, and a Māori delegation from New Zealand, to share with everyone more about how they are working to advance Indigenous stewardship within their own homelands. This gathering featured workshops on water quality, seed collection, drones, marine conservation, bird, bat, and caribou monitoring, and much more!

This gathering marks the end of the Matawa Water Futures project, but was a wonderful celebration of the work accomplished by our communities, as well as by those we have worked with over the years, and our new partners we've met along the way. The spirit of the Matawa Water Futures project will carry on in the work of our member guardians monitoring the lands and waters in their communities as we formally launch and expand our network of River Guardians in the years to come.

Thank you to everyone who was able to join us for the week!





GATHERING OF RIVERS FOR COMMUNITY CARE

Matawa First Nations



YOUTH MATTRESS GIVEAWAY

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- Will include a new twin mattress, mattress cover and pillow
- Open to youth who are members of Matawa First Nations ages 16 - 29
- Two youth per Matawa First Nation will be selected
- Each youth requires a separate entry
- Enter at:
<https://forms.office.com/r/BuAPnumDe>
- Some conditions apply
- License #RAF1295296
- Deadline for submissions is January 8, 2024



Want to assist us in our fundraising? Scan here >>
to purchase a 50/50 ticket. Must be 18 years of age
and a resident of Ontario.





Evening **Bat Walk** with Dr. Craig Willis



During Four Rivers' Water and Environment Gathering in June, our guest bat expert Dr. Craig Willis led a group on a night time 'bat walk' to share more about bat monitoring. Earlier that afternoon, Dr. Willis shared with everyone the different tools and techniques used to look for and monitor bats in the region. During the walk, the group set out to try their luck at using some of these tools to locate some bats. It was a great opportunity to learn more about the acoustics devices used to pick up the bat calls, about bat behaviour at that time of night, and the ideal kind of environment to look for bats in. Thanks to everyone who joined us that evening, and a huge thank you to Dr. Willis for taking us on this night time walk!



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(3:00 - 3:30 CST)**

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89.9 FM in Sioux Lookout
106.7 FM in Timmins
BellTV Channel 962



Matawa Radio

Engaging First Nations over the airwaves

Upcoming 2023 Shows:

- October 10 and 24
- November 7 and 21
- December 5 and 19

Matawa First Nations Management Welcomes New Staff

Awashishewiigihiwaywiin

Jordan's Principle Navigator, Morgan Slipperjack



I was born in Kenora but have lived in Thunder Bay most of my life. I am a new Jordan's Principle Navigator at Matawa's Awashishewiigihiwaywiin at Matawa. I graduated from Lakehead University with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and I have previously worked for Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board for over a year before I came to Matawa. I enjoy spending time with my daughter and family especially when we're out on the lake swimming and fishing. I am looking forward to working with Awashishewiigihiwaywiin and the Jordan's Principle Team!

Awashishewiigihiwaywiin

Jordan's Principle Navigator, Sylvia Metzner



Sylvia Metzner is new to Matawa First Nations Management bringing with her many years of administration skills. She started on June 19th as Jordan's Principle Navigator under the supervision of Dionne Bear- dy. Sylvia was most recently employed at Dilico Anishinabek Family Care where she provided support for all Child Wellness teams. At Dilico, Sylvia developed a new procedure in reporting the monthly youth in care prescriptions, in which the finance department and pharmacy were appreciative of. Sylvia was also employed at Canadian Hearing Society for many years as Administrative Assistant where she worked with Deaf colleagues and communicates in American Sign Language. Sylvia enjoys singing as she sang with the choir at St. Anne's Church and at St. Patrick's Cathedral in combination of over 20 years. She enjoys travelling with her companion Alfredo, planting flowers, being with her animals; Shepherd Huskey cross, Lucia, Bernese Mountain Dog, Vicente and her Green Cheeked Conure bird, Roberto.

Awashishewiigihiwaywiin

Jordan's Principle Navigator, Sue Williamson



I one of the new Jordan's Principle Navigators. I have recently retired from my position as a Student Support Professional after 26 years. My ECE diploma and years of experience has gifted me with many skills and new learning opportunities. My husband and I are the proud parents of three daughters aged 25, and twins 24. We have recently welcomed our first granddaughter "Harper". I am in heaven being a new Kokum. I am thrilled to be able offering support in a different way through my new role. I love to bead and have goals to learn how to make moccasins next.

Matawa Health Co-operative

Adult Mental Health & Wellness Worker, Krista Graham



I was born in Minnesota, raised in Thunder Bay, and have lived in various places across Canada including Quebec, Alberta, BC and the Yukon. My background and experiences as they relate to here, include a BA in Psychology from Lakehead University, followed by research at the Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research

(Lakehead site) evaluating Suboxone programs in 10 Ontario FN communities, frontline work at Shelter House/ Kwe Kii Win Alcohol Management Program/Street Outreach Services, Harm Reduction and HIV/HEP C Education/ Community Health Worker at NorWest Community Health Centres, and most recently as a Crisis Addiction Worker with SJCG Balmoral Withdrawal Management Services. My main areas of work and focus have been with those experiencing mental health and addiction issues, homelessness/ precarious housing and food insecurity, human trafficking, and overall difficulties accessing and navigating health and social services. I look forward to meeting folks in the days to come – some familiar, and many new!

Health Co-operative

Mental Health Promotion Resource Worker, Ethan Alatyppo



Hello everyone, my name is Ethan Alatyppo, and I am the new Mental Health Promotion Resource Worker (Youth) for the MHC. I was born and raised here in Thunder Bay, and I have recently graduated from the Business Marketing program at Confederation College. I spend my free time doing photography and spending time with my family and friends. Many of you may already know me, as I have assisted the MHC in past events and projects. I can't wait to learn and grow with the Matawa community and look forward to work with all of you!

Matawa Health Co-operative

Youth Addictions Support Worker, Julianna Renzullo



Hi all, my name is Julianna Renzullo, and I am the new Youth Addictions Support Worker. I was born and raised in Ear Falls, ON, but I have always considered Thunder Bay as "home". I graduated from the Honours Bachelor of Social Work Program at Lakehead University in 2021 and worked as a Mental Health and Substance Use Counsellor at the Kenora Youth Wellness Hub for the past two and a half years, but I have worked with youth in various settings for over four years. I am beyond excited to be here and learn from all of you.

Matawa Education Post-Secondary Services

Post-Secondary Transition Coach, Courtney Strutt



Boozhoo! My name is Courtney Strutt, a settler woman of English, Irish, and Portuguese heritage born and raised on Algonquin territory. I have been living, working, and connecting on Anishinaabe land since 2009, and now call Thunder Bay home. I began my career in Eabametoong First Nation

as a teacher in 2011 and have since developed my professional background in education, youth work, and community development across Northern Ontario through a variety of organizations. As the post-secondary transition coach I will be putting to use my personal experiences with post-secondary education – from my Bachelor of Arts in International Development and Bachelor of Education to my Masters of Education for Change – in supporting Matawa students as they make their own transitions in lifelong learning. I'm excited to be back in the Matawa community, creating and facilitating engaging opportunities to support Matawa post-secondary students!

Matawa Health Co-operative

Adult Mental Health Lead, Ashley Jellema

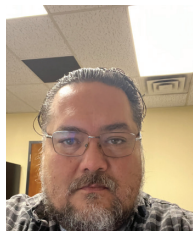


I was born and raised in Thunder Bay before leaving to study, work and travel. After 27 years, I returned home to Thunder Bay to be closer to family. I have 2 young sons who keep me busy. My background is in psychology and behavioural psychology and I have worked in the field of mental

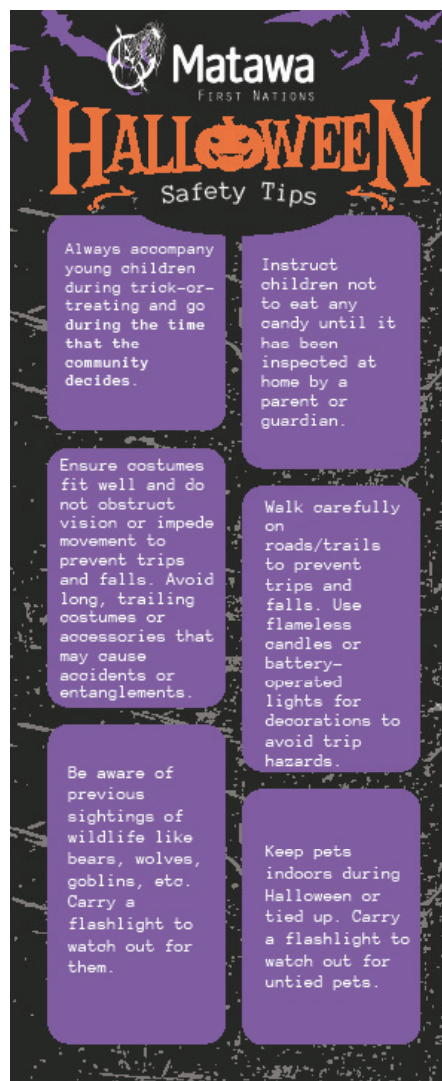
health for around 18 years. The focus of my experience has been in mental health, substance use, trauma, violence and working with people who experience homelessness. I have worked as an in home family therapist and then in positions of leadership. I spent the last 3 years travelling and working in Northern Communities to deliver training in Mental Health, Debriefing, Overdose Prevention and Response, Trauma Informed Self Care and other related topics. I have also supported crisis work in communities. I like trying new things, exploring with my boys, Guardians of the Galaxy, gardening, kayaking and sleeping. I am excited to be a part of the Matawa Team.

Health & Social Meno Biimadeswin

Mental Wellness Teams & Crisis Support, Aaron Tyance



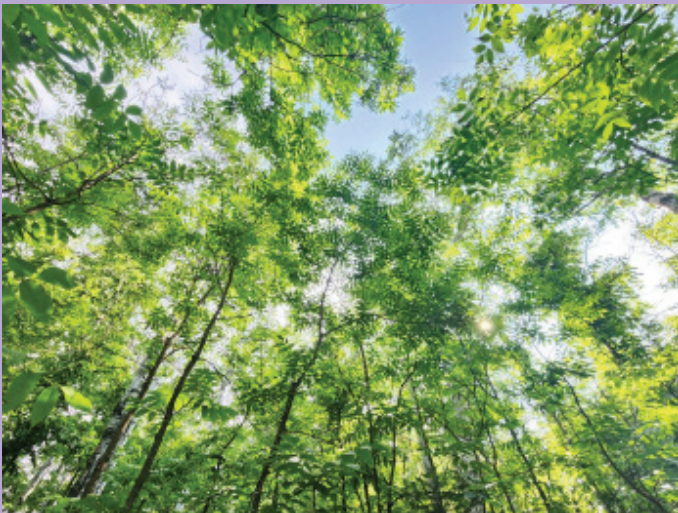
I started at Matawa on July 31, 2023. Joining the Matawa team has been an exciting time for me my family, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be an employee of this organization. In my previous employment I was the responsible gambling coordinator, in which I gained many skills and will transfer them into my new position. I have resided in Thunder Bay the majority of my life, but always return home to Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek where I return to my roots, friends and family. I enjoy the powwow trail each year and has become family affair, in which I get to spend time with my family and my powwow family. This has kept my family close and has given me the opportunity to learn the traditional teachings. I am proud to bring my life and work skills to Matawa and become strong team member. Ah-how, Chi-miigwetch.



Living with Us... Black Ash – Wiisagatigoog

The Black Ash tree can be found in many areas across the Matawa homelands. It is a moisture-loving tree, often found growing in pure and mixed treed stands along shorelines, seasonal creeks and nutrient rich swamps. Most Black Ash produce seed every year but produce significantly more once every 5-9 years, we call these “seed bank years”. Since Black Ash seed are not usually viable until late summer, seedlings often don’t start growing until the following summer. During the winter, seeds that are still on the trees or buried under the snow are a food source for small mammals, and new growth on the trees are a popular food source for deer, moose, snowshoe hare and other herbivores. The wood from black ash is strong and flexible, which is useful for making snowshoes, drums, tikinagans, baskets and hand tools.

Did you know... The Black Ash tree is considered a species at risk (SAR), due to the threat of the Emerald Ash Borer and habitat loss in Southern Ontario. In Matawa’s remote north, there are sporadic stands of Black Ash that may be genetically unique due to large spatial gaps in the range. These stands may be resistant to Emerald Ash Borer for a few reasons, and should be preserved through outreach activities, signage and seed collection. Four Rivers and community partners are working to identify healthy Black Ash stands that will be revisited each year to survey for the presence of Emerald Ash Borer and for seed bank years. If a seed bank year is identified, seeds will be collected through the Indigenous Seed Bank Program at the National Tree Seed Centre (NTSC), where it will be preserved for future planting if the stand is lost to Emerald Ash Borer.



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