

Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC) Celebrate Grand Opening

[An artilce submitted by MECC Communication Committee] On September 29, 2023, the Matawa Education and Care Centre celebrated its much-anticipated Grand Opening. The event began with a Pipe Ceremony led by Elder Brenda Mason and a Pipe Song performed by the Matawa Education Drum Group. Elders George Whitehead and Emily Jacob led us in prayer.

The event was an emotional day for many - the creation of a school of this magnitude, with the purpose of providing a safe place for Matawa youth coming to the city of Thunder Bay, started as an idea many years ago. Matawa has provided high school education to students from Matawa's nine First Nations since 2010, but the need for a space with larger classrooms, more offices, a Student Care Centre, and a gymnasium became evident. In 2017, the City of Thunder Bay sold Grandview Lodge (a former seniors' residence) to Matawa First Nations Management, and renovations began shortly after. Although classes moved to the Matawa Education and Care Centre in 2018, the Grand Opening marks the completion of the construction in the building, finishing with the new gymnasium.

The gymnasium was showcased beautifully during the ceremony: The event was attended by hundreds of people, and there was still room for more. The adjacent kitchen was the perfect spot for our caterers to prepare the abundance of food provided to our guests, and the large stage ensured all attendees could see our honoured guests.

Remarks were shared by David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO Matawa First Nations and Sharon Nate, Matawa Education Executive Director. NAN Grand Chief, Alvin Fiddler, and Deputy Grand Chief, Bobby Narcisse, presented David Paul Achneepineskum and Sharon Nate with a gift to mark the grand opening. Remarks were also heard by Thunder Bay Mayor, Ken Boshcoff, and the Honourable Patty Hajdu.

With a performance by the Thunder Bay Mountain Dancers and a closing prayer and Tobacco Ceremony led by Elder Brenda Mason, the guests moved outside to complete the ribbon cutting and tree planting ceremony. Afterwards, guests were invited to come back into the school for a guided tour of the building.

Thank you to everyone who helped organize this event. And thank you to all who attended, especially the family of the late Jordan Wabasse of Webequie First Nation. We also want to express our gratitude to our MECC students who volunteered their time to help ensure the event ran smoothly - doing everything from helping to set up, answering guests' questions, and participating in the ribbon cutting and tree planting ceremonies. We are forever grateful to have this space for our youth, and we look forward to not only providing them with a safe, nurturing environment to learn and grow, but also a lifetime of memories of being cared for at MECC.



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Welcome New Staff



2023 Rotary District 7070 Conference



On October 20, 2023, the Matawa Education Staff, Georgette O'Nabigon and Oliva Merko traveled to Oshawa Ontario to take part and present at the 2023 Rotary District 7070 Conference. Georgette and Olivia were accompanied by 2022/2023 Bowmanville Rotary Club Post-Secondary Bursary recipient Gina Dore. Their presentation on Mattawa Education Services and Bowmanville partnership was accompanied by a student forum discussing stories, experiences, and insights through the student panel's educational journeys. The Bowmanville Rotary Club and Matawa Education Department have been in a long-standing partnership established back in 2007. The Bowmanville Rotary Club, provides financial assistance for awards and bursaries to encourage and support Matawa First Nations' students in their educational endeavours. The goal of these awards is to promote excellence in literacy, language and leadership. Matawa Education was very grateful for the opportunity to spread awareness and education during this conference and looks forward to our future with the generous support of the Bowmanville Rotary Club.

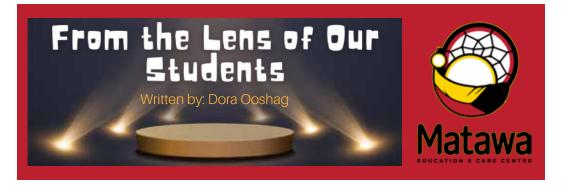
See page 7 to see how you can apply for these awards. Or scan this QR code:



Maadaadizi 2023

On September 9, 2023, the annual Maadaadizi event took place at Marina Park in Thunder Bay. Maadaadizi, which means "he/she starts a journey" is a post-secondary orientation and welcome for students who have come to Thunder Bay to attend Confederation College, Lakehead University or Oshki-Wenjack. The Matawa Post-Secondary Program, NNEC, 7 Generations and the three local post-secondary institutions collaborate in planning and organizing this event, which includes live entertainment, service and artisan booths, children's activities and refreshments. Ernest Moonias was the headliner and had the crowd dancing, singing and taking selfies with the "King of the North." Other entertainers included local artists Nick Sherman and Sara Kae, with Brent "Mooselegs" Edwards on stage as the MC. With an estimated crowd of 300 people, which included students, family, friends, teachers, faculty and community members, this year's event helped begin the school year in a good way with support and encouragement for our local Indigenous post-secondary students.





Shortly after I enrolled at MECC, I started going on land-based trips. This program gave me the opportunity to learn new outdoor skills, and to connect with my culture on a whole new level. I have had the opportunity to go on a variety of trips. Each season brings new adventures.

In the Spring and Summer, we go goose hunting, white-water rafting, and canoeing. One of my favourite trips was my second canoe trip, where I was in the bush for two weeks, with my peers and guides. I enjoyed having that drive mindset to canoe every day, all day.

In the Fall, we hunt for moose and other small game, hike, harvest medicines, and work on our canoeing skills. Our moose hunting trip last year at Makok Lake was one of my favourites. It felt so homey being out there with family members, and just sitting out on the boat and waiting was very peaceful.

In the Winter, we ice fish, dogsled, and learn about ice rescue and first aid skills. One of my favourite trips was the first annual dogsled expedition to Makokibatan Lake, on the Kitchi Siipi River (Albany River). Each day, we traveled by dogsled and students got to lead their own dog teams. The trip challenged us to work with one another, and to learn winter survival skills.

All of these experiences have led me to have a passion for outdoor land-based activities. During my final year of high school, I have joined the land-based team as a Co-op student to learn the ins and outs of a job in this field. I am also now working towards secondary education in an outdoor recreation program.



A Trailblazing Triumph: The First Football Player of the School



At the Matawa Education and Care Centre, history was quietly made this fall when a young and determined student decided to become the first football player to ever play the sport and represent Matawa here in Thunder Bay! This accomplishment has not only instilled pride within the student but also garnered immense admiration from the school and its community.

Desmond Yellowhead, of Nibinamik, joined the St. Patrick Fighting Saints football team as a Defensive linemen and excitingly made the roster. While other schools in the city have thriving programs, Matawa Education and Care Centre for the first time this year have been successful in joining the SSSAA (Superior School Sports and Athletic Association) and allowed for our students to participate in competitive sport. This is truly a monumental achievement for our school as it allows us to compete in organized sport at a high school level, which was not the case until this year. Because our school was not large enough to put together our own team, Desmond received the green light to join the St. Patrick's football team. It was a dream come true for him and an achievement that the entire school staff rallied behind him to make his vision a reality. The school's support was a testament to the power of a determined individual, and the pride to ensure our students succeed. Desmond and the St. Patrick's Saints made it all the way to the city championships but lost a heart-felt battle, ending the season as runner ups.

Desmond's journey to becoming the first football player for Matawa Education and Care Centre has been a story of unwavering determination, leadership, and the indomitable spirit of a young athlete with a dream. His accomplishment will undoubtedly leave a lasting mark on the school's history, serving as an inspiration for all those who dare to dream big and take the initiative to turn their dreams into reality.





Four Rivers drone team has been to many of the Matawa communities this fall mapping priority areas – to capture water levels, provide data for future developments, and to create elevation maps. Since drones don't work well in the winter, we will resume our flights this coming spring!



Advancing Indigenous Guardians

Four Rivers was invited by the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI) to participate in a Celebration of First Nations Guardians in Ottawa on November 1, 2023. As part of the Land Needs Guardians campaign, Guardians from across Canada gathered for a workshop on Guardians Advocacy and Strategy for Advancing the Guardians Movement, where communities across the nation discussed current programming and built on existing relationships while developing new ones. Afterwards, our Guardians were celebrated with an event on Parliament Hill, where we were also joined by several First Nations Leaders, Members of Parliament and Senators. The event took place in a traditional Innu shaputuan, which was the first time in history a structure like this was erected on the Hill. Four Rivers looks forward to what these new partnerships may bring and to future initiatives with the ILI.

See some pictures at the bottom of page 7.

MATAWA EDUCATION AND ROTARY CLUB BURSARY

Application deadline : May 1, 2024 by 4:30 pm EST

CRITERIA:

- This Bursary fund is for Matawa First Nations Community Members attending Elementary, Secondary, Post-secondary, Adult Education, Training, Apprenticeship, or Trades Programs
- Applicants are to complete the application form and attach required documentation
- The goal of these awards is to promote excellence in literacy, leadership, personal achievements and applicants who demonstrate determination, commitment with education and career goals

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR AN APPLICATION SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW OR CONTACT:

Matawa Education Department Tel: 807.768.3300 | Toll-Free: 1.888.283.9747









Four Rivers Presents at International Conference

Four Rivers was asked to present at 'Adaptation Futures' - a United Nations Climate Change conference held in Montreal in October 2023.

Representatives from every continent attended to learn and share their experiences, on innovative new projects and methods related to climate change adaptation and mitigation.



Marten Falls First Nation Opens Community Grocery Store and Invests in Majority Ownership of Thunder Bay-based Bay Meats

[Excerpted from Austin Campbell article in SNnewswatch.com - September 22, 2023] Chief Bruce Achneepineskum and members of the Marten Falls First Nation council were on hand Friday to celebrate the community's recent investment to purchase a 51 per cent ownership stake in Thunder Bay-based Bay Meats.

Marten Falls economic development officer Robert Moonias said the acquisition coincides with the repurposing of Marten Falls Community Hall into a community grocery store, a major step towards food security and accessibility for the First Nation. The store was outfitted with shelving and fridge units provided by the Mawachintoon Anishnabe Miijim division of Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (K.K.E.T.S.) in collaboration with Feed Ontario. Representatives from K.K.E.T.S., including partnership development coordinator Ulysses Lachinette and director Tracey Willoughby, were among the crowd gathered Friday to celebrate the move into the Thunder Bay market. Moonias called K.K.E.T.S. as instrumental in the current improvements happening in Marten Falls.

Marten Falls is located at the junction of Albany and Ogoki rivers, about 430 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay. It's a fly-in community and, as such, receives most supplies via plane – except during the winter months, when an ice road connects the First Nation to the highway. Among other recent investments, Bay Meats is another way for Marten Falls to stay connected and participate economically in a major market space, leaders said. "As you know, we're moving into economic development with our First Nation," said Achneepineskum. "This is a strategic move on our part... to acquire this really important business - food service - in the local community but also in the region... We have a longstand-ing relationship as customers with Bay Meats. We've purchased many of their products in the past for our social and community events, [...] so it was a natural choice for us to enter into this partnership."





Four Rivers Delivers Workshop at Northern Ontario First Nations Environment Conference



On September 27th, Four Rivers presented a workshop at the 2023 Northern Ontario First Nations Environment Conference (NOFNEC) held in Thunder Bay and co-hosted by Matawa.

Based at beautiful Mission Marsh, the workshop focused on tools that Environmental Monitors and Guardians can use on the lands and waters to respond to a range of challenges, from climate change to contamination concerns.

Four Rivers staff provided a drone demonstration and environmental monitoring tools presentation and were joined by Nokiiwin staff to showcase an underwater drone.

The workshop was appreciated by all delegates in attendance, who are looking forward to coming again next year!



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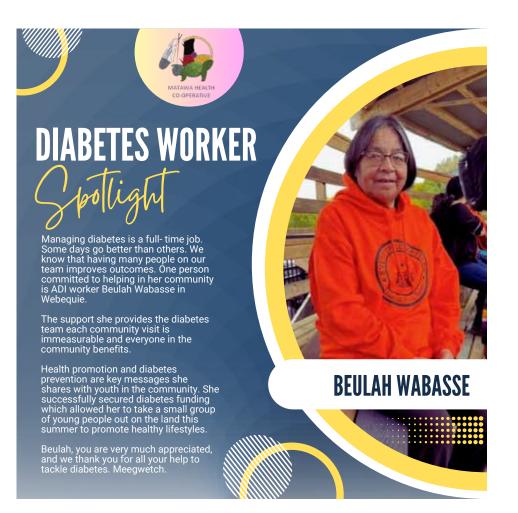




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Diabetes News

November was National Diabetes Awareness Month, It was a time communities across the country came together to bring attention to diabetes. This year's theme is "**Empowering Global Health**." The focus is taking action to prevent diabetes health problems like: diabetic retinopathy, kidney failure, lower limb wounds, amputations, and cardiovascular events such as heart attack and stroke. Living in the north adds to the challenges of managing diabetes to prevent complications.

On November 14, 2023, the Matawa Health Co-operative partnered with the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) in the 2nd annual Diabetes Walk to raise awareness. The walk took place at Intercity Mall in Thunder Bay. Several health partners joined with displays for a chance to talk about diabetes within a variety of disciplines.

In his remarks, Matawa First Nations Management CEO David Paul Achneepineskum said, "Just like Frances Wesley, the Executive Director of the Matawa Health Co-operative said last year—I am reiterating the call for more needing to be done to prevent and control diabetes which is growing amongst young Indigenous people within the Matawa region where access to quality resources, education and diabetes management teams are limited." He added that, "our people continue to exponentially experience the markers in pre-diabetes and Type 2 diabetes as a result of past/ongoing intergenerational trauma they are experiencing. This continues to cause physiological adaptations that increases the tendency towards obesity, greater insulin sensitivity, lower insulin levels, and lower basal metabolic rates." See pictures of this event at the top of the next page. >>>





Health Promotion at the Matawa Health Co-operative

The Matawa Health Cooperative continues to grow and has 3 sites in Thunder Bay: Court St, Chapples and Dawson. We have Physicians, Nurses, Diabetes team, Dietitians, Mental Health team, EMR Privacy, Health Promotion, Youth Workers, Health Transformation team, nurses at MECC, nurses in Ginoogaming, Eabametoong and Aroland along with our ever busy and dedicated administrative and leadership teams. The Matawa Health Cooperative has held many workshops and community events for Matawa members. Community awareness presentations, Keep Moving Mondays with Intrinsic Fitness Centre and Feel-Good Fridays continue for community members to participate in various activities. The Health Transformation and Nursing Transfer team has engaged with communities. Walk In clinics in Thunder Bay at the clinic location are every Tuesday 1-4 pm and Friday from 9-12 pm. Community presentations, in person and virtually include Cancer Screening 101, Prostate Cancer and Breast Cancer. Immunization, vaccines, footcare and education continue with Physicians, Nurses and Dietitians. The MHC has partnered with Cancer Care Ontario and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre to promote prostate health. The team has travelled to Webequie and Aroland to provide a presentation, education and informal conversation with the urologist and team, this engagement will continue to support Men's Health. The Youth Recreation workers have been to community and October was a month of Hallowe'en activities: Scary Skate, cupcake decorating and pumpkin carving. The staff held a Trick or Treat day for 0-4 yr olds in Thunder Bay. The Wellness Wednesdays included making a Haunted Feast, Nish Gnomes and learning about bones. The Screen for Life bus was at the Matawa office in Thunder bay, an information tent was set up along with lunch and attendance draws. Community Outreach continues to distribute food and assists with health care navigation. The Mental Health team has been busy travelling to Matawa communities to provide wellness support, counselling, interactive activities and identification clinics. The MHC is thankful to Matawa members and communities for their continued support and participation in health education, programming, and presentations. The Matawa Health Cooperative is community driven and understands that there are unique needs in each of the First Nations. You can contact the MHC by phone (807)346-2370 or, Confidential Fax: (807)346-2371, Toll Free: 1-833-625-3611, by email mhc-reception@matawa.on.ca via MHC Facebook or Facebook messenger. See the next page for pictures. >>>>



TUNE IN EVERY 2ND TUESDAY FROM 4:00 - 4:30 EST (3:00 - 3:30 CST)

www.wawataynews.ca/radio 89.9 FM in Sioux Lookout 106.7 FM in Timmins BelITV Channel 962

UPCOMING SHOWS

January 16 and 30 February 13 and 27 March 12 and 26







The Matawa Waka Tere Indigenous Language Revitalization Project (MWT) has continued to grow. We now deliver the **Certificate III in Indigenous Pathways to Speaking the Language - Year One** in all 9 communities and Thunder Bay with all 3 language groups represented: Ojibway, Oji-Cree, and Cree.

We were honored to welcome on board Marten Falls First Nation and Constance Lake First Nation.

This year's rollout also saw the start of the **Diploma I in Indigenous Pathways to Speaking the Language – Year Two**. The first classes commenced in October, and are currently being delivered in **Webequie**, **Eabametoong**, **Ginoogaming**, **Long Lake #58**, **Aroland and Thunder Bay (Ojibway and Oji-Cree)**. We hope to be delivering the Diploma program in all 9 communities and Thunder Bay (Cree) next year.

With growth in programs, comes growth in staff and we have had a number of Tutorial Staff (Tutors/Instructors and Assistants), join the MWT Language Revitalization family.

These amazing people are:

Tamara Suganaqueb Kerina Wabasse Judy Sakanee Elizabeth Achneepineskum Noreen Missewace Sophia Yellowhead **Connie Anderson Florrie Sutherland Nancy Wesley Brittney Mendowegan** Janelle Bear **Carla Kowtiash Chevenne Patabon** Hannah Meshake **Glenda Meshake** Wilma Goodwin **Shelley Meeseetawageesic** Rebecca Yesno **Shannon Slipperjack Queenie Earle** Krystle Suganqueb

Webequie First Nation Webequie First Nation Neskantaga First Nation **Marten Falls First Nation Eabametoong First Nation Eabametoong First Nation Nibinamik First Nation Constance Lake First Nation Constance Lake First Nation Ginoogaming First Nation Ginoogaming First Nation** Long Lake #58 First Nation Long Lake #58 First Nation Long Lake #58 First Nation **Aroland First Nation** Webequie/Thunder Bay Webequie/Thunder Bay **Constance Lake/Thunder Bay** Eabametoong/Thunder Bay Aroland/Thunder Bay Webequie/Thunder Bay

Diploma I Year Two Assistant Certificate III Year One Tutor Certificate III Year One Assistant **Certificate III Year One Tutor Certificate III Year One Tutor Certificate III Year One Assistant Certificate III Year One Assistant Certificate III Year One Tutor Certificate III Year One Assistant Certificate III Year One Tutor** Certificate III Year One Assistant **Diploma I Year Two Assistant Certificate III Year One Tutor** Certificate III Year One Assistant **Certificate III Year One Tutor Diploma I Year Two Tutor Diploma I Year Two Assistant Certificate III Year One Tutor Certificate III Year One Tutor Certificate III Year One Assistant Certificate III Year One Assistant**

We farewelled three of our staff this year, **Mary Meshake (Aroland)**, **Bernadine Mendowegan (Ginoogaming)** and **Coleen Moonias (Neskantaga).** We thank them for their inspirational contribution they made to the program and wish them well on their new pathways.

On behalf of all the staff of the MWT Language Revitalization Project, we would like to acknowledge the Chiefs Council, Board of Directors, Education Boards, Education Directors, Community Sites, all Matawa community members, Matawa CEO David Paul Achneepineskum, Executive Director of Education Sharon Nate, PASS Manager Skylene Metatawabin, Program Advisors Dr.Rongo Wetere and Marcia Krawll and all our students for believing in and supporting this project.

We wish you all a very safe and Happy Christmas, an amazing 2024, and may the presence of family outshine the presents of the tree.





Thursday, October 26th marked a spine-chilling and enchanting night at the Matawa Education and Care Centre gymnasium, as we hosted not one, but two scarily good Halloween Dances that brought students, families, and high school students together for an unforgettable evening of Halloween fun.

Both dances were held in our brand-new gymnasium, and they were the first big events to welcome all Matawa members to this amazing space. The atmosphere was electric with anticipation, as students, staff, and families alike couldn't wait to celebrate the spookiest season in style.

For the little ones and their families, the Matawa Family Halloween Dance was a fantastic opportunity to showcase their costumes and dance. With a parade of awesome costumes, the dance floor was a whirlwind of fun and laughter. Parents joined in on the excitement and captured precious memories.

Meanwhile, the high school students had their own fang-tastic party. Exclusively for Matawa students, the high school Halloween Dance brought a different level of excitement and enthusiasm. The gymnasium transformed into a haunted haven, complete with eerie decorations, a pulse-pounding playlist. This was the perfect setting for the older students to let loose, show off their creative costumes and dance the night away. The excitement in the air was palpable as students shared in the joy of celebrating Halloween. The staff, too, couldn't help but share in the enthusiasm, showing their dedication and support for the community by helping make these events a resounding success.

Matawa Education and Care Centre was thrilled to participate in these Halloween Dances. With the new gymnasium complete, these events promise to be just the beginning of many memorable gatherings and celebrations in this incredible space. We can't wait to see what the future holds for more fun and exciting events at the MECC gymnasium and school.

Matawa First Nations Management Welcomes New Staff

Matawa Health Co-operative

Youth Mental Health Resource Worker, Mandy Labelle



Boozhoo Kina-waya,Niin nindizhinikaaz, Waanishki Ma'iingan Ikwe, white wolf woman, niin nindoojii Ginoogaming First Nation. My name is Mandy LaBelle, and I am from Ginoogaming First Nation. I am the proud mother of two amazing, wiigis kids, Riley and Kane, and I have recently joined the Matawa Health Co-operative team, as the Youth Men-

tal Health Resource Worker (Land Based). For over ten years, I worked with children and youth in Ginoogaming First Nation and Long Lake #58 First Nation, as a Registered Early Childhood Educator and Educational Assistant. During that time, I learned the connection between mental health wellness and being out on the land. I'm very grateful for this opportunity, and thrilled to be working with the youth and communities of Matawa First Nations. When I'm not working, I like to spend time with family and friends, hunting, and binge-watching Friends. I'm excited for this new chapter and look forward to working with everyone! Miigwetch

Matawa Health Co-operative

Adult Mental Health and Wellness Worker, Brianna Beale



Hello, my name is Brianna, and I was born and raised in Ottawa Ontario. I moved to Thunder Bay when I was 18 years old to attend Lakehead University for my Social Work degree with a specialization in Indigenous Learning. I am a registered social worker and have been working in the community for eight years in social services. I am very excited to be start-

ing with Matawa Health Co-op as the new Adult Mental Health and Wellness Worker. In my spare time I love camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, and taking a good nap. I am looking forward to meeting everyone and seeing where this journey will take me!

KKETS

KAEP Cultural Activities Coordinator, Malcom Charles



Boozhoo! My name is Malcolm Charles. I am the new Cultural Activities Coordinator for the KKETS Adult Education Program. I was born in Orillia, Ontario, then raised in St Catharines. I moved back to my home community of Ginoogaming First Nation in the summer of 2015 to learn more about my culture & identity. I spent 5 years of my life learning the trade of

carpentry before I decided to go back to school to obtain my OSSD. The summer of 2021 was when I picked up my education journey where I left off and enrolled in the KAEP. After tackling my last few credits, I successfully became a graduate of the 2022 class. Once I was back in my home community of Ginoogaming with a diploma in my hand, I was able to earn the position of Cultural Worker in the education department. Throughout the year I became much more involved in the community with hosting/assisting in events and building relationships with the members. I also had the opportunity to return to my old high school where I was able to share my knowledge of tradition. I would often bring members of my drum group Walking Bear to assist as well. Today, I share a happy home with my partner and our 2 children, where I watch my favorite football team, the NY Jets, lose every Sunday. I look forward to working with you all.

Matawa Pets & People Social Media is Established



On November 6, 2023 'Matawa Pets & People' opened up as a safe space for pet owners in the Matawa communities to share their experiences. Followers will be engaged with questions to bring the issue of pets in our communities to light. The pages is not a rescue or lost dog/cat page. Stay tuned for the question of the week. We know there are a lot of good stories out there (and some not-so-good) that people need to know about. They also have a Pet Christmas Photo Contest with a prize of \$250 happening until December 15, 2023.

Living with Us... Short-Eared Owl - Gookookoo'hoo

Photo credit: Mark Peck (including gookookoo'hoo on front page)

The Short-Eared Owl can be found across most of North America, including most of Canada and the Matawa community homelands. Short-eared owls prefer open landscapes including grasslands, tundra, and wetlands. They are dark brown with buff-brown banding on the back and speckled white on the underparts. Their face is pale white gray with sharp yellow eyes highlighted with black outlines. As the name suggest, this owl has short ears and their wings are broad with rounded tips. Short-eared owls fly low to the ground while hunting small rodents and birds, and are able to hover momentarily when prey is spotted. They nest on the ground amid grasses and low plants, choosing dry spots with enough plants to conceal the nest. Their bowl-shaped nests are lined with grass and/or feathers.

Did You Know... Short-eared owls are listed as a 'species at risk' with a status of 'special concern', meaning that they may become threatened or endangered if recovery efforts are not made. One of the main threats to the Short-Eared Owl is the conversion of grasslands to non-native/invasive grass species

(often for agriculture), limiting the habitat available to them.



Seen something out on the land that you'd like to share with Four Rivers?

Scan the QR code & fill out the survey!



Think you've spotted a short-eared owl? Four Rivers is working with Matawa member First Nations to gather information on many species at risk that live in the Matawa homelands. If you come across a species at risk, please take a picture, note the location, and connect with Four Rivers at <u>communications@fourrivers.group</u>. Alternately, check out our community science survey at the QR code!















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