



*MEDIA RELEASE*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MATAWA HEALTH CO-OPERATIVE SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AT SECOND ANNUAL SUMMIT**

**THUNDER BAY, ON**—This week, the Matawa Health Co-operative (MHC) hosted its second annual Youth Mental Health Summit aimed at enhancing the mental health and wellness of Indigenous youth in Matawa communities. The summit, which happened June 12 and 13 at the Best Western Plus Norwester Hotel & Conference Centre in Thunder Bay, featured keynote speakers Scott Wabano, a Cree stylist, and Nishinaabe fashion designer Ocean Kiana, plus a number of workshops and activities focused on cultivating resiliency through a cultural lens.

“Our Youth Mental Health Summit, like much of MHC’s programming, is designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of Matawa youth in a holistic way,” said Frances Wesley, Executive Director of the MHC. “First Nations youth experience unique challenges resulting from the effects of intergenerational trauma, and its imperative they have tools, like resilience and self-confidence, needed to overcome the barriers they will face.”

MHC’s Youth Recreation and Mental Health & Wellness teams—which promote physical and mental health through programming, support, and education—facilitated the workshops and activities, including the [Social Pow Wow](#) on June 13.

During scheduled breakout sessions, youth were asked to consider what makes them unique, and what they need to embrace their identity. “The workshops are an opportunity for youth to reflect on what makes them special, and how to cultivate community and other supports that ensure they feel safe, valued, and confident in taking on the world’s challenges,” said Wesley.

Walking Bear, a drum group from Ginoogaming First Nation, and Elders Arthur Moore from Constance Lake First Nation, Elizabeth Moore from Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation, and Peter Sackaney, a residential school survivor, attended the summit. Representatives from Nishnawbe Aski Nation’s Oshkaatisak (All Young People’s) Council also addressed the youth.

See the MHC’s Youth Mental Health Summit event program [here](#).

Established in 2017, the Matawa Health Co-operative is a First Nations-owned and operated health co-operative providing holistic healthcare services to nine Matawa First Nations with the goal of achieving long-term health and wellbeing for all Matawa members.

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