

MEDIA RELEASE

August 26, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA EDUCATION WELCOMES INDIGEOUS EDUCATORS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

THUNDER BAY, ON – Today, Matawa Education welcomes an international committee of Indigenous educators from the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) as Matawa seeks to earn institutional accreditation for its Matawa Waka Tere Indigenous Language Revitalization Program.

“We’re pleased to welcome Dr. Makalapua Alencastre and Dr. Cathy Kanoelani Ikeda from Hawai‘i, Lisa Johnsdatter Baal and Sara Ellen Anne Eira from Norway, and Dr. Sadie Heckenberg from Australia. They’ve travelled from all over the world to Thunder Bay to evaluate Matawa Education’s efforts to revitalize Ojibwe, Cree and Oji-Cree within Matawa First Nations and beyond,” said Matawa Education Executive Director Sharon Nate.

“Accreditation will formally recognize the Matawa Waka Tere program’s effectiveness and the credentials it grants, and it will allow access to sustainable funding to ensure we can continue to support and train language speakers and save our Indigenous languages,” said Nate.

The Matawa Waka Tere program was established in 2018 following a visit by former Nibinamik First Nation Chief Johnny Yellowhead to New Zealand, where he learned of Ako Whakitere, an accelerated learning methodology developed by Dr. Rongo H. Wetere to revitalize the Māori language. The Matawa Waka Tere program adapts this methodology to teach Ojibwe, Cree and Oji-Cree in a holistic way. This summer, Matawa celebrated 90 graduates of the Matawa Waka Tere program at the Oshki Maachita graduation ceremony.

While [statistics](#) show that the number of people in Canada who can speak an Indigenous language well enough to hold a conversation declined 4.3% from 2016 to 2021, the number of Indigenous language speakers learning an Indigenous language as a second language increased 6.7% from 2016 to 2021.

Established in 2002, [WINHEC](#) is a collective of representatives from Indigenous cultures across the globe who support Indigenous Peoples pursuing common goals through higher education. The international body offers accreditation to educational institutions that integrate Indigenous culture, language, and worldviews into their program, among other criteria.

The WINHEC visiting committee will also travel to Webequie First Nation and Long Lake #58 First Nation this week, where they will meet with Matawa community members from Aroland, Ginoogaming, and Constance Lake First Nations.

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