



MEDIA RELEASE

AUGUST 8, 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA HEALTH CO-OP CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING OF WELLNESS GARDEN

Thunder Bay, ON: Today the Matawa Health Co-operative celebrates the grand opening of our Wellness Garden, a mindfully designed community and cultural hub located at the Matawa Training and Wellness Centre at 523 Algoma St. N. in Thunder Bay.

"We're so excited to welcome the community to our garden, which is already so much more than just a greenspace," said Crystal Bell, director of clinical and nursing services with Matawa Health Co-operative. "Countless staff, Elders, and volunteers have come out to start seedlings and water and tend to the plants, enjoying the fresh air and connecting and learning from one another."

The Matawa Health Co-op, with support from Matawa First Nations Management and the Matawa Training and Wellness Centre, has developed a functional, creative, and accessible garden aimed at promoting health and wellness and food sovereignty. The garden, which is focused on perennial plants and centered around a geodesic greenhouse dome, features over 150 varieties of plants with medicinal, culinary, and ceremonial applications.

Designed in collaboration with Myles Armstrong, a horticulturalist with Wild Arrow Botanical, the Wellness Garden was developed using ecologically minded principles to create a self-sustaining "closed loop system" that relies on the organic waste produced by the garden to nourish the soil for future growing seasons.

"In designing the Wellness Garden, we focused on biodiversity and sustainability and creating a resilient, productive ecosystem," said Armstrong. "We also looked at creating a space that can be used as a gathering place, where people can come together and be empowered to learn new skills."

The Matawa Health Co-op has established a wellness program centered around the garden where staff and clients can experience the benefits of gardening, including increased physical activity, time in nature, and social connection, which can relieve stress and improve mood. Additional wellness and food sovereignty-related programming is in development, and there are plans to expand the garden in the future.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact: Charnel Anderson, Communications Generalist -
Matawa First Nations at (807) 621-9405 or by email at canderson@matawa.on.ca.