

## MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, March 21, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### MATAWA REGION WATER OPERATORS CELEBRATED ON NATIONAL INDIGENOUS WATER OPERATOR DAY 2025

**THUNDER BAY, ON** - Today, Matawa First Nation Management's (MFNM) Nibi Water Services (NWS) acknowledged National Indigenous Water Operator Day (NIWOD) by recognizing the Water Operators who work at community water treatment plants to bring safe drinking water to Matawa member First Nations. NWS' Water Operators are certified in accordance with Ontario Drinking Water Regulations and Federal Guidelines for Operations and provide ongoing water and wastewater support, including 24/7 emergency services, to all First Nations in Matawa.

NIWOD comes one day before World Water Day. MFNM CEO David Paul Achneepineskum said, "Today we celebrate NIWOD, and tomorrow we celebrate all water on our homelands, just as we have done for centuries as part of our way of life. The *Indian Act* of 1876 involuntarily placed our communities on reserves where the governments at the time did not have forethought on needed infrastructure then, and into the future (our present). We will continue to advocate for safe drinking water in our communities in consideration of the history we have experienced."

"Often, Water Operators are not recognized until something goes wrong. This year, we would like to let them know that we are very grateful to them for operating their community's water treatment plants to the best of their ability and resources," said Saverio Rizzo, Manager of MFNM's Technical Services, who oversees NWS with a staff complement consisting of Water and Wastewater Operators ranging from Class 1-4.

On March 21, 2022, the [Water Movement](#) hosted the inaugural NIWOD to celebrate the people who ensure water is safe to drink. There is shortage of Water Operators in Canada, and this gap also exists within Matawa member First Nations. To be a Water Operator, specialized training is available for those who have obtained secondary education and includes years 1, 2, 3 and 4 exams for an operator license, including hands-on experience through logged hours at a water treatment plant each year.

"Water Operators in the Matawa region are a very dedicated group of people who work under challenging conditions—I am proud to call them my colleagues. They have my full respect," said Michael Bazdarick, Overall Responsible Operator for NWS. "I encourage anyone interested to pursue a career in this rewarding field that keeps our communities safe."

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

