



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA FIRST NATION EDUCATION AUTHORITY AND LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ESTABLISH LANDMARK PARTNERSHIP

EABAMET LAKE, ON – On March 17, 2025, the Matawa First Nation Education Authority (MFNEA) and Lakehead District School Board (LDSB) signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) in Eabametoong First Nation, launching a collaborative effort to enhance educational opportunities for First Nation students. Witnessing the MOU signing were Eabametoong First Nation Education Authority Officials Nancy Waswa and Elizabeth Atlookan. From Eabametoong First Nation Chief and Council included Councillors John Louie Oskineegish and Michael Slipperjack. From the LDSB, Director of Education Sherri-Lynne Pharand and Trustee Ellen Chambers were also in attendance.

Included in the MOU are several principles such as a focus on culturally supportive education, a commitment to reconciliation, cultural integration and empowerment (which will include the development of curriculum modules to embed First Nation history, culture, perspectives, and language, while fostering parental empowerment and increasing First Nation staff and elder participation in LDSB schools.) The MOU identifies priority areas for collaboration with target areas that include student support services (safety, mental health, career planning), special education support, culturally integrated curriculum, professional development, communication, human resources, and parental participation to address the holistic needs of MFNEA students.

A MFNEA-LDSB Collaboration Steering Committee has been formed to oversee the implementation, of the MOU with meetings planned at least three times annually to review progress, address challenges, and plan next steps, with senior executives from both organizations involved. The date of the inaugural Steering Committee meeting is to be determined.

On the landmark MOU, Nancy Waswa of the MFNEA said, "Through our Memorandum of Understanding with the Lakehead District School Board, we are forging a powerful partnership rooted in mutual respect and shared vision. This collaboration strengthens our ability to provide culturally responsive education and holistic support, ensuring our students thrive academically, socially, and spiritually while staying connected to their First Nations culture."

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Director of Education for the LDSB said, "As part of Lakehead Public Schools' Indigenous Education Framework, it is our commitment to create meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities. This MOU is a great partnership and I look forward to the great work that the Collaboration Steering Committee will accomplish in the years to come."

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