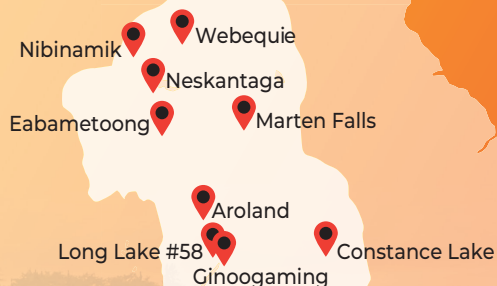




# Matawa

FIRST NATIONS



**We are Sovereign Nations  
with Distinct Languages**

**ANISHININUWUK  
(OJI-CREE)**

**ANISHINAABEG  
(OJIBWAY)**

**MUSHKEGOWUK  
(CREE)**

Matawa is an abbreviation of the Cree word “Mammamattawa” meaning a place of many rivers coming together. Our name recognizes that rivers are the foundation of the Matawa Peoples’ existence.

Located in 1855 Robinson-Superior Pre-Confederation Treaty, and 1905 James Bay Treaty No. 9 Post-Confederation Treaty.

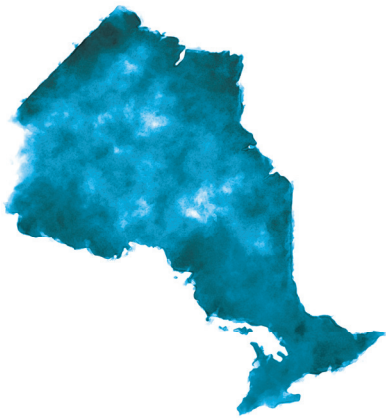




# ENVIRONMENT



**The watersheds associated with our community homelands encompass an area of 182,000 sq. km. This equates to roughly 20% of the province of Ontario and to 2% of Canada.**



## ENTITIES THAT SERVE OUR NATIONS:

**Four Rivers Environmental Services Group**

**Matawa Chiefs Council**

**Four Rivers Inc.**

- According to our Creation Stories, the Peoples of the First Nations in the Matawa Region have lived in large swaths of traditional territories surrounding the current Indian reserves since time immemorial (*reserves were created as part of the Indian Act, 1876*).
- The relationship between our Peoples and the environment is spiritual, constitutionally recognized and legally protected.
- Our connection to the land is not one of 'ownership' but of 'stewardship.'
- The lands continue to be used today for ongoing traditional/ ceremonial/sustenance purposes.
- Traditional knowledge, languages, cultural practices and oral traditions, built up over millennia, are all tied to the land.
- The lakes, rivers, waterways and animal populations continue to be monitored to ensure their protection.
- Indigenous laws and pre-existing jurisdiction/sovereignty pre-date provincial and federal legal frameworks and policies.
- Matawa member First Nations reject any Métis assertions being made on our homelands and territories.
- Some communities are in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> relocated area (*inhabited the land all over our traditional territories*).
- On July 13, 2011, the Matawa Chiefs Council passed **Mamow-Wecheekapawetahteewin** (*Unity Declaration*) through ceremony in Webequie First Nation. Mamow-Wecheekapawetahteewin establishes the relationship by which the nine (9) Nations in Matawa will work together, specifically around land, water and resource issues.
- First Nations are not opposed to development but are positioned to be meaningful partners with government and industry to deliver certainty for investment and development in the North.
- A regional assessment in the Ring of Fire area is currently underway.



Photo Used With Permission: Sheldon Oskineegish – Traditional Land User Around Nibinamik First Nation, Treaty No. 9

# EDUCATION



- The establishment of Indian residential schools began in the 1870s. While most Indian residential schools ceased to operate by the mid-1970s, the last federally run school did not close until the late 1990s.
- For over a century, Indigenous children were removed from their families and homes, sometimes forcibly, and taken to residential schools where they were housed and educated under the authority of the Government of Canada. Residential schools were operated along with various religious organizations including the Anglican, Presbyterian, United and Roman Catholic churches.
- Several Matawa First Nations **do not have local high schools**, requiring students to leave their home communities to pursue secondary education. Recognizing the challenges and risks this presents, Matawa First Nations Management established the Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC) in Thunder Bay to provide a safe and culturally-grounded learning environment.
- The **Matawa Education Authority** operates the MECC, offering Grades 9-12 with wrap around supports for students. The school was created in response to the critical need for a secure and supportive educational space, particularly following the **Seven Youth Inquest**, which underscored the urgency of ensuring the safety and well-being of Indigenous students who pursue their education away from home.
- Two primary objectives of the residential schools system were to remove and isolate children from their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.
- First Nations in Matawa have attended or are descendants of Indian residential schools with lasting impacts continuing to be felt.
- Residual effects include a gap between First Nations education outcomes compared to those of other Canadian learners.

## ENTITIES THAT SERVE OUR NATIONS:

**Matawa Education Authority**

**Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen  
Employment & Training  
Services**



**4 out of 9 First Nations  
DO NOT have daycares  
or early childcare  
education centres.**



**Funding is provided to some  
students for post-secondary  
education through the  
government of Canada but  
this funding falls short.**



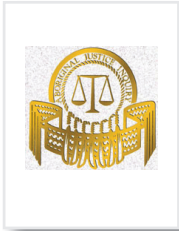
**Partnerships are being built  
with Canada and other  
education consortiums  
for the post-secondary  
certification and preservation  
of Indigenous languages.**



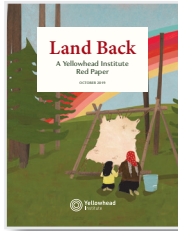
**Land-based and trauma-informed  
programming are improving  
mental and physical health,  
and creating positive learning  
outcomes for students.**

# JUSTICE

## KEY REPORTS:



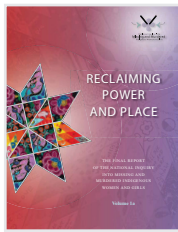
Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report and Recommendations



Land Back - A Yellowhead Institute Red Paper (PDF)



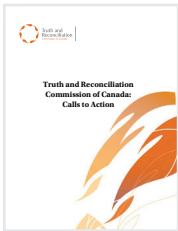
National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice (Page 167) (PDF)



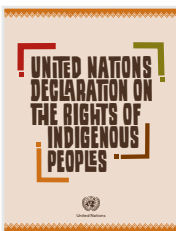
National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report



Royal Commission of Aboriginal People (RCAP)



Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action (PDF)



United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (PDF)

**Indigenous Peoples have “suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories, and resources.”**

*2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).*

- UNDRIP also recognizes the urgent need to **“respect and promote the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures, and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources.”**
- Indigenous Peoples experience the highest rates of missing/murdered Indigenous girls/women, inadequately funded community policing, high rates of incarceration, and contamination of lands (or potential storage/transportation of hazardous material) by outside sources, causing disease.
- There are current legal claims challenging the province of Ontario's Mining Act and against Canada/Ontario on the approach to Treaty No. 9.

7

**First Nations are served by Nishnawbe-Aski Police Services.**

1

**First Nation is served by the Anishinabek Police Services**

1

**Community is served by the Ontario Provincial Police.**





# HEALTH & SOCIAL



Indigenous communities represent about 5% of the world's population but make up 15% of the world's extreme poor.



Life expectancy can be 10-15 years shorter for Indigenous Peoples, and infant mortality rates can be two to four times higher.



Suicide rates among First Nations youth are around 5 to 6 times higher than the national average.

- Historically, the federal government has been responsible and provided funding for nearly all the social programs and services provided to Indigenous Peoples in Canada.
- First Nations Peoples registered with Indian status receive federal funds for social programs on reserves through the Indian Act—the funding is directed to the Nations.
- The causes for **high rates of suicide** are multiple and may include depression due to social, cultural or generational dislocation; drug and substance abuse; or lack of housing, food and access to opportunity.
- **Proper access to health care** is a concern (*there are no hospitals in First Nations, only under-resourced nursing stations and community health/social programs*).
- Proper access to **veterinary care** is a concern (*First Nations wait 8-10 years for spay/neuter and animal wellness clinics in community*).

## ENTITIES THAT SERVE OUR NATIONS:

**Matawa Health & Social  
Meno Biimadeswin**

**Matawa Health Co-  
operative**

**Matawa For-Profit Housing**

**Matawa Non-Profit  
Housing**

**Matawa Animal Wellness**

**Matawa  
Awashishewiigihiwaywiin  
Next Steps and Jordan's  
Principle**

**FIRST NATIONS IN MATAWA PLACE  
VERY LOW ON THE UNITED NATION'S  
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX  
COMPARED TO THE REST OF CANADA.**



# HOUSING, WATER & INFRASTRUCTURE

Unlike most Canadian towns and cities, First Nations lack modern and acceptable roads, plumbing, clean water and housing infrastructure due to a lack of suitable revenue to address critical infrastructure needs, specifically:

- **INADEQUATE HOUSING** *no access to hardware supplies, construction materials in remote First Nations.*
- **OVERCROWDED** *more demand for housing in communities than there is supply.*
- **INADEQUATE WATER TREATMENT PLANT FACILITIES** *no access to equipment, supplies and labour force to operate some of them. One remote First Nation has been under a 30+ year boil water advisory - the longest in Canada.*
- **LACK OF SERVICED LOTS FOR WATER AND SEWER.**
- **STAGGERING FUEL COSTS** *especially in remote areas for heavy equipment, small engines, vehicles, diesel engines and indoor furnaces.*

ENTITIES THAT SERVE  
OUR NATIONS:

**Matawa Technical Services**



No community energy development for those connected to the provincial hydro grid and diesel generation is used in remote First Nations.



Most First Nations do not have centres for youth, or cultural/ language centres.



Most First Nations do not have adequate fire protection services and/or fire halls.



# ECONOMY



**First Nations in the Matawa region are dynamic and sustainable communities. We integrate modern social and economic development practices with traditional culture and heritage. We are building capacity and economic wealth for present and future generations, and are well positioned to succeed in the national economy.**



## \$20,357

**2016 median  
annual income of  
Indigenous people  
living on reserve.**

- We face unprecedented pressure and demand for investment to run our communities.
- We have little to no ability to generate revenue and face significant barriers meeting our Peoples' critical needs — resulting in the lowest socio-economic conditions in Canada.
- We do not have a tax base like municipalities who are able to use portions of tax dollars to help pay for emergency services, animal control, law enforcement, water and sewer services, parks and recreation, community centres, etc.
- First Nations cannot use reserve land or traditional territory as collateral for financing.
- First Nations have never received a share of the direct and indirect revenue from resources on First Nation territories in accordance with our Treaty Agreements (*Resource Revenue Sharing*).
- Our First Nations face skills shortages and other labour issues.
- We face challenges accessing surety bonds.
- Our First Nations do not participate as key players in stock market investing anywhere in the world.
- We co-operated on a regional broadband project as an owner/operator of a high-speed internet network using the most advanced fibre-optic cable and optical electronics available. It will allow for the best speed, capacity, reliability, security and operating life that no other network technology utilizes today.
- Neither Canada nor Ontario have engaged First Nations on Treaty implementation, jurisdiction or self-government.
- Business partnerships are available with Indigenous entities like: Four Rivers Environmental Services Group, Rapid Lynx Telecommunications and Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services in the areas of environment, broadband, and training to meet labour demands.

### ENTITIES THAT SERVE OUR NATIONS:

**Rapid Lynx  
Telecommunications**

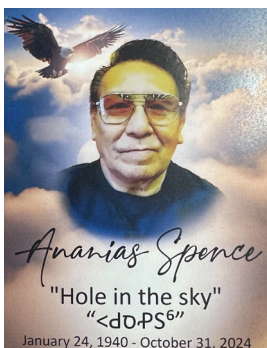
**Matawa Economic  
Development**

# NATIONHOOD

- First Nations are Indigenous Nations who are parties to Treaty Agreements in Ontario and should not be considered third-party stakeholders or special-interest groups.
- Indigenous Nations view the Crown as a Crown, whether it be the federal or provincial government as they were established in the formation of Canada.

## THE NATIONS WITHIN MATAWA HOLD THAT:

- 1 As we have always had, we have the right to be sustained by our territories in modern and evolving ways, and that this principle includes the right to equitable sharing of the wealth generated from our ancestral homelands.
- 2 We are the original occupants of our ancestral homelands.
- 3 We were never conquered and have always had our own laws and governance structures.
- 4 As many entered into Treaties—we did so as sovereign Nations.
- 5 The treaties were solemn promises between us and the Crown.
- 6 Our identity is deeply rooted in language, culture and the land and must be promoted, protected and respected as they have sustained us since time immemorial.
- 7 We have a vested responsibility over our lands that is inherent and includes the right and duty of stewardship, and the right to self-determination and governance. It is our belief that these rights and responsibilities were given to us by the Creator. They are exercised on the basis of laws that are not written, but rooted in the customary, traditional and cultural values, ceremonies and beliefs that connect us to the land.



© Matawa First Nations Management  
[www.matawa.on.ca](http://www.matawa.on.ca)  
Date Modified: February 28, 2025

