

# MATAWA MESSENGER

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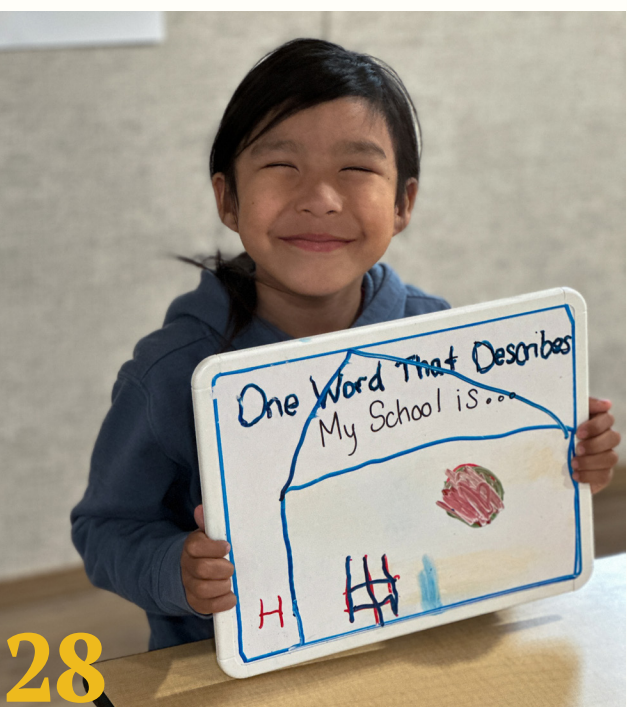
## Matawa's Future Leaders

Aroland hosts Matawa's  
37th Annual General  
Meeting

Matawa Health  
Co-operative's best  
practices

Rapid Lynx brings high  
speed internet to Matawa  
First Nations









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Questions or comments?  
Email us at  
[comms@matawa.on.ca](mailto:comms@matawa.on.ca)



# Understanding Blastomyces

## BLASTOMYCES: A FUNGI IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Fungi are all around us eating dead stuff & turning it into nutrients for the soil.

Blastomyces is a fungus that grows naturally in northern Ontario.

Also Manitoba, Québec & eastern USA

Its preferred habitat is not well understood.

Has been found in soil, wood, organics, on shorelines in forests & in yards.

There are millions of fungal spores in the air that we inhale without any ill effects.

Like all fungi, Blastomyces produces microscopic spores that get carried by wind to make new fungi.



It seems to be rare and short-lived in the environment.

## BLASTOMYCOSIS IN HUMANS: A FUNGAL INFECTION CAUSED BY BLASTOMYCES

- Some people who inhale Blastomyces spores get sick with blastomycosis.
- Blastomyces doesn't need to live inside humans or other mammals. Infection is accidental.
- Blastomycosis cannot be transmitted person to person.
- Symptoms include cough, fever, night sweats, chest pain. Blastomycosis can be diagnosed from saliva (sputum test).
- It can travel through the blood to infect other organs and can present as skin lesions

Sometimes a scratch from something with Blastomyces on it can cause a blastomycosis infection.



Treatment is with an anti-fungal medicine with a 95% recovery rate.  
Early diagnosis is important.

## WHAT SHOULD WE KNOW?

1. Blastomyces can't be controlled in the environment.
2. Climate change could increase its growth & range.
3. Know the symptoms, see a doctor & ask to be tested for blastomycosis.
4. Share blastomycosis info with friends & family.
5. Awareness & early diagnosis is key.



**UP NORTH ON CLIMATE**  
Climate Change Impact and Adaptation  
Study for the North of Ontario

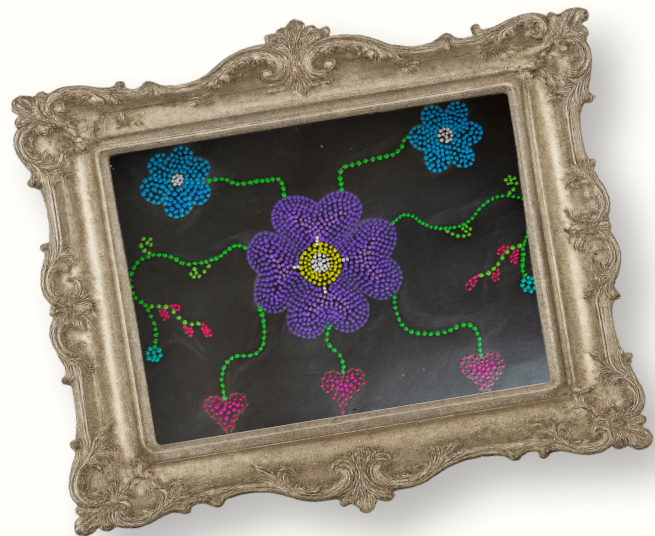




## GIKINOO'AMAADIWIN IN COLOUR: LEARNING THROUGH ART

A series of paintings, drawings and bead work crafted by students across Matawa and other First Nations

Submitted by: Kaleigh Caputo, Matawa Education & Care Centre's Distance Education Co-ordinator



*Clockwise from top left:* A multimedia drawing by a student in Marten Falls, flower bead work by a student in Eabametoong, dot painting by a student in Kasabonika, a multimedia piece by a student in Webequie, an acrylic painting by a student in Webequie, and flower bead work by a student in Marten Falls.





Rapid Lynx Telecommunications is laying nearly 1,000 kilometres of fibre-optic cable to bring affordable and reliable high-speed internet to all Matawa First Nations. (Photo credit: Adobe Stock)

# Rapid Lynx bringing high speed internet to Matawa First Nations

Guided by local leadership and Rapid Lynx Telecommunications, Matawa is turning years of planning into a fibre network owned and operated by its people

Submitted by: Rapid Lynx Telecommunications

What began as a bold vision to connect every Matawa First Nation to high-speed internet is now well on its way to becoming one of the most transformative infrastructure projects in our region's history.

Recognizing the urgent need for reliable internet across our nine communities, Matawa First Nations Management took action. A Broadband Working Group—made up of community-appointed representatives—was formed to guide the effort, laying the groundwork for something bigger. That vision took

shape in 2017 with the creation of Rapid Lynx Telecommunications GP Inc., a wholly Indigenous-owned, for-profit company built to own, govern, and operate a broadband network by and for Matawa First Nations.

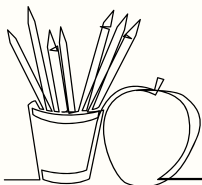
Since then, construction crews have been hard at work—often behind the scenes—laying hundreds of kilometres of fibre optic cable through remote terrain. As of July 2025, an incredible 71% of the fibre optic backbone is complete, with full connectivity across all Matawa communities expected in 2026.

While much of the work so far has gone unseen, that's about to change. The next exciting phase—Fibre-to-the-Home (FTTH)—will bring the network front and center, as fibre cables are hung from hydro poles and connected directly to every home.

This milestone is about more than just technology—it's about connection, opportunity, and sovereignty. It means better access to education, healthcare, business, and communication for every Matawa First Nation member.



# Education Assistants shine during PD day at John C. Yesno Education Centre



By: Rita Mannella

Matawa Education's Pathways to Achieve Student Success Student Academic Lead Rita Manella and Education Assistants at John C. Yesno Education Centre in Eabametoong First Nation. (Photo credit: Rita Manella)

On June 9, 2025, Education Assistants at John C. Yesno Education Centre in Eabametoong First Nation spent their Professional Development Day learning together, sharing experiences, and taking part in workshops designed to support both their work in the classroom and their connections with students.

As part of Matawa's Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS) team, I was invited to offer training sessions for the school's Education Assistants (EAs). EAs play an integral role in the classroom, often forming close bonds with students and becoming trusted adults that children feel comfortable turning to throughout the day. Professional development opportunities can help EAs build skills and boost their confidence, allowing them to best support a diverse set of students.

From the moment I arrived, the EAs' warm welcome and eagerness to participate were clear. Together, we

organized the day into two sessions, with breaks in between to allow for some much-needed downtime.

In the morning, I presented *Classroom Management: Addressing Behavior Concerns within the Classroom*, a session I had originally prepared for the Matawa Education Conference. The discussion was lively, with EAs openly sharing their experiences and best practices for addressing behavior challenges. Their honesty and insight made the conversation meaningful, and highlighted just how vital EAs are in supporting student success.

In the afternoon, I led a session on *Differentiated Instruction Strategies*—something that comes naturally to EAs, as they regularly work with students with diverse needs. By using a variety of methods and tools to reinforce classroom learning, EAs ensure students get the support they require.

The day also included a cultural workshop with Doug

Gagnon, PASS Cultural Education Coordinator, on traditional tobacco teachings. EAs learned how to identify natural tobacco, explored its importance to the Nishinaabe people, and made their own tobacco ties.

Meanwhile, PASS team members set up activity stations for children and families who visited throughout the day.

I am deeply grateful to the EAs who spent their PD Day with us. Their openness, professionalism, and depth of knowledge made the sessions engaging and inspiring. It was a privilege to be part of their learning journey.



Rita Manella is the Student Academic Lead with Matawa Education's Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS) team





# Meet the Wellness Warriors: Youth leading the way to healing and connection

Hired by KKETS, three students led culturally-rooted workshops to support holistic wellness



KKETS's Wellness Warriors delivering wellness programming in Aroland First Nation this summer. (Photo credit: Gloria Hendricks-Laliberte)

Submitted by: Gloria Hendrick-Laliberte, KKET's Wellness Coordinator

**T**his summer, Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (KKETS) hired three students to work as Wellness Warriors to facilitate wellness-related workshops and activities to support Matawa First Nations in developing and practicing their own perspectives of wellness.

KKET's Wellness Warriors are Kohen Chisel, a member of Lac Seul First Nation studying nursing at Lakehead University, Jasmine McGuire, spirit name Ozaawaa Miskwaadesi (Yellow Turtle), a member of Eabametoong First Nation and a recent graduate of

Confederation College's Social Service Worker program who will be studying at Lakehead University in the fall, and Carmelita Yesno, spirit name Nowkumagook (Centre of the Earth Woman), who is from Eabametoong First Nation and will be studying at Confederation College's Indigenous Community Advocacy: Naadaamaagewin Program this fall.

Kohen, Jasmine and Carmelita are helping community members bring awareness to their physical, mental, spiritual and emotional states through workshops that connect with Indigenous culture and teachings. The Wellness

Warrior's summer itinerary featured Aroland First Nation Nibinamik First Nation's Youth Wilderness Retreat, and Eabametoong First Nation's Summerfest, where they facilitated workshops that created a safe place for participants to learn and engage themselves holistically.



KKETS's Wellness Warriors (from left to right) Kohen, Carmelita and Jasmine are facilitating wellness programming including workshops and activities in Matawa First Nations this summer. (Photo credit: Gloria Hendrick-Laliberte)





# LIVING WITH US

## MUSKEG · ᐱᓄᓃ

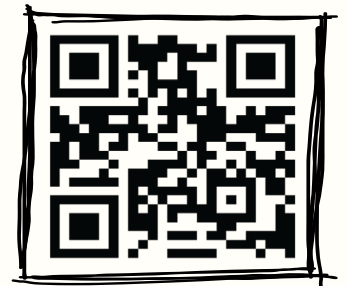


[mus·keg] · noun

From the Cree word [maskek] which translates to “low-lying marsh”

Muskeg, or peatland, is a type of wetland with soft, spongy ground made up mostly of partially decayed plants known as peat. These landscapes often feature mosses, trees such as black spruce, tamarack, and sometimes cedar, along with low-growing plants like cranberry and Labrador tea. They may also include open ponds that provide important habitat for migrating birds, like ducks and geese.

Canada’s peatlands store an enormous share of the world’s carbon, built up over more than 10,000 years from layers of dead trees and plant matter. When disturbed—whether by wildfires, melting permafrost, or human activity—this stored carbon is released into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), fueling climate change. That’s why environmental monitoring by community Guardians is vital: it helps us better understand muskeg ecosystems and track the changes taking place.



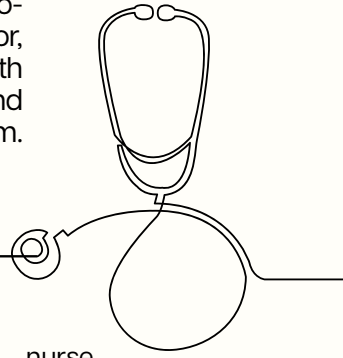
Have you seen the impacts of climate change in your area? If you would like to share, please consider completing Four Rivers’ Climate Monitoring Survey through the QR code





## Guiding patients through care: A Q&A with Matawa's new Indigenous Care Coordinator

Desiree Towedo, the Matawa Health Co-operative's new Indigenous Care Coordinator, is based at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre where she helps patients and their families navigate the health care system. (Photo Credit: Desiree Towedo)



**Matawa Messenger:** Desiree, congratulations on your new role. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what drew you to this position as Indigenous Care Coordinator?

**Desiree:** Thank you! My name is Desiree. I'm from Long Lake 58 First Nation, however, I was born and raised in Thunder Bay. I wanted to be an Indigenous Care Coordinator because I know how daunting it can be to navigate the health care system, and I wanted to support folks while they do so. Plus, I'm a Matawa member and I wanted to support folks from Matawa communities.

**MM:** Can you walk us through what your day-to-day responsibilities look like when supporting patients at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC)?

**D:** It varies depending on people's needs, but typically, the day starts with reviewing charts to see how patients are and filtering through referrals to triage the needs of folks. Advocacy, discharge planning, and arranging escort accommodations are prioritized.

**MM:** What does "patient-centered discharge planning" mean in practice? Desiree: Patient-centered discharge planning means the patient's voice

drives the plan. The patient's family is included, especially if the patient relies on them for daily support. Discharge planning begins at admission, and relies on an interdisciplinary approach involving nurses, doctors, social workers, Indigenous care coordinators—all other folks involved in the health care team.

**MM:** How does your role help patients and families connect to community-based health care services?

**D:** What I love about this role is that Matawa routinely travels to communities to provide health care and mental health supports, as well as traditional healing practices. I'm able to ensure folks are connected with Matawa Health Co-operative prior to discharge so they have someone to follow up for primary care, wound care, or mental health supports.

**MM:** Advocacy is a big part of this position. Can you share an example of what advocacy might look like in the hospital setting?

**D:** Advocacy looks different depending on the needs of the folks. Sometimes it's sitting in on a bedside meeting with the surgeon to ensure the patient understands the plan of care and their needs and wishes are put forth. Sometimes it's

speaking to a nurse and relaying information the patient wasn't comfortable sharing with their nurse directly. Sometimes it's sharing the realities of living in community a patient's health care team so their needs are met when they return home. Sometimes it's reminding someone of their rights and standing beside them while they advocate for themselves.

**MM:** How do you build relationships with patients and families so that they feel comfortable and supported, especially when navigating a complicated health system?

**D:** I build relationships with patients and their families by using native humour when it's appropriate to do so. I love joking around with Elders who come through the hospital and I especially love when they joke back. Native humour is the medicine I most commonly see patients and their families use.

**MM:** Looking ahead, what do you hope this role will achieve for Matawa community members, and how do you see it growing or evolving in the future?

**D:** I'd love for all Matawa community members accessing the TBRHSC experience safety in uncertainty.



# Matawa Animal Wellness Services responds to Neskantaga Evacuation with emergency pet care

From on-the-ground care in Neskantaga to supporting evacuees in Thunder Bay, Matawa's team worked to keep animals healthy and families supported during the community's crisis.

Submitted by: Matawa Animal Wellness Services



The Matawa Animal Wellness Services team helps to groom a dog who evacuated from Neskantaga to Thunder Bay this spring. (Photo credit: Judi Cannon)

On April 24, 2025, Matawa Animal Wellness Services, led by Indigenous animal wellness services specialist Judi Cannon and registered veterinary technician Jen Hughes, swiftly mobilized to support animals during the spring evacuation of Neskantaga First Nation. The community faced a crisis when flooding forced the closure of the local Health Centre and the evacuation of a large number of community members, raising concerns about potential fuel contamination affecting the animals. Reports of dogs smelling like fuel prompted an immediate response by Matawa Animal Wellness Services.

Upon arriving in Neskantaga, the Matawa team, along with a local animal advocate, conducted a thorough assessment, performing physical exams on a total of 77 animals. Efforts focused on ensuring the health and safety of both dogs and cats in the community, also a decision was made to provide preventative services of vaccines and micro-chipping. Sixty-six dogs and cats in the community were vaccinated to protect against common diseases, bolstering their resilience during the

crisis and a preventative measure to kept people safe as well. Additionally, the team performed wellness exams on 10 dogs and one cat, ensuring comprehensive care for as many pets as possible.

The scope of the response extended beyond Neskantaga First Nation to Thunder Bay, where evacuated pet families were temporarily housed in the Valhalla Inn. Matawa Animal Wellness

Services visited these families, where they examined five dogs, assisted with grooming, and provided food and supplies. These efforts offered much-needed relief to pet owners navigating the stress of displacement.

Due to College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO) regulations, the team was unable to vaccinate or microchip animals in Thunder Bay because of the the proximity to other veterinarian







During their trip to Neskantaga, Matawa Animal Wellness Services performed physical exams on 77 animals, vaccinated 66, and performed wellness exam check-ups on 11. (Photo credit: Judi Cannon)

clinics. This regulatory barrier underscores the challenges of accessing veterinarian services.

A significant breakthrough came through a Matawa Chief's resolution, which establishes a Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR) between Matawa and vet care providers, removing barriers to administering vaccines in Neskantaga and enabling the team to deliver critical services more efficiently in times of crisis. The use of telehealth facilitated remote consultations with vets, allowing for a continuity of care despite logistical challenges. These innovative approaches demonstrated the team's adaptability in addressing the unique needs of First Nation communities.

While pets are not currently included in Canada's national emergency evacuation plans, the Matawa Animal Wellness Service collaborated closely with community leadership, Matawa's Emergency Management Coordinator and the Provincial Emergency Operations Center to organize a

robust and appropriate response. This partnership ensured that human safety was prioritized while animal wellness services could be delivered, setting a precedent for future emergency responses. The seamless coordination highlighted the importance of integrating animal care and safety into disaster

response frameworks, recognizing the deep sacred bond between community members and their pets. This work underscores the need for inclusive federal emergency policies that account for the well-being of animals, ensuring no member of the community, human or animal, is left behind during an emergency.





# Matawa Safe Sobering Site team launches Purple Jingle Dress on Overdose Awareness Day

Submitted by: Stephanie Ritch, Youth Inquest Manager with Matawa Education's After Hours Student Support



Ardelle, Rebecca and Gia staffed Matawa's After Hours Student Support booth at the Shelter House's International Overdose Awareness Day event. (Photo credit: Stephanie Ritch)

On August 31, members of Matawa Education's Safe Sobering Site marked International Overdose Awareness Day at the Shelter House in Thunder Bay with the launch of their Purple Jingle Dress in honour those who have tragically lost their lives to overdose.



Ardelle Sagutcheway sewed the Purple Jingle Dress to honour those lost to drug overdose and to serve as a reminder that overdose is preventable. (Photo credit: Stephanie Ritch)

The purple dress, sewn by Ardelle Sagutcheway, Matawa Education's Indigenous Cultural Reintegration Youth Worker, represents a commitment to ending the overdose epidemic. Throughout the day, community members who've lost a loved one to overdose were invited to add a jingle cone to the dress in their memory. Guided by traditional teachings, the dress will raise awareness about drug overdose and serve as a reminder that overdose is preventable.

Ardelle, Outreach Nurse Rebecca Paavola and After Hours Support Worker Gia staffed Matawa's After Hours Student Support booth at the event where they met with community members who expressed gratitude for the support Matawa Education provides students. Youth Inquest Manager Stephanie Ritch and Youth Inquest Assistant Kathy Steele connected with front line staff from other organizations helping to fight the overdose epidemic in Thunder Bay and toured People Advocating for Change Through Empowerment's (PACE) new facility, which houses a transition home across the street from the Shelter House. Through the Purple Jingle

Dress, Matawa honours those lost, supports those still struggling, and spreads hope for healing.

## The Purple Jingle Dress

- **Why Purple?** The colour purple represents the commitment to ending the overdose epidemic.
- **Honouring Loved Ones:** Community members can add a jingle cone to the dress in memory of someone lost to overdose.
- **Handmade with Care:** Sewn by Ardelle, Indigenous Cultural Reintegration Youth Worker.
- **Carrying a Message:** The dress will travel through Matawa communities, raising awareness that overdose is preventable.
- **How You Can Help:** Matawa Education will soon be calling for donations of purple items to complete the dress's regalia. Honorariums will be provided. We are also looking for a mannequin or bust to better display the dress.





The annual International Dyslexia Association of Ontario's Literacy and Learning Educator Conference aims to help children who are struggling to learn to read. (Photo credit: Adobe Stock)

## Matawa Education's PASS team strengthens literacy knowledge at Toronto conference

Over two days of workshops and a keynote presentation, the PASS team explored evidence-based approaches to reading development, classroom supports, and educator well-being—knowledge they will use to support literacy growth across Matawa schools.

Submitted by: Marlee Poulin, Community Education Navigator with Matawa Education

**M**embers of Matawa Education's Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS) team attended the annual International Dyslexia Association (IDA) of Ontario's Literacy and Learning Educator Conference in Toronto on April 26–27, 2025, bringing back new strategies and insights to strengthen literacy instruction in Matawa schools.

Carly Perras, School Success Lead, Rita Mannella, Student Academic Lead, and Marlee Poulin, Community Education Navigator, attended the two-day conference, which covered topics such as reading development,

intervention strategies, and student mental health.

The conference's keynote speaker, Dr. Stephanie Stollar, an assistant professor in the online reading science program at Mount St. Joseph University, spoke about the Multi-Tiered System of Support—a framework to help educators provide academic and behaviour support for students with varying needs—and how it can be used to strengthen teacher's instruction and reduce the number of students needing intervention. Dr. Stollar's keynote focused on prevention and support, rather than intervention, explaining how

educators can transform their classroom reading instruction and thus reduce the number of students who require intervention.

The conference offered a diverse list of speakers who presented multiple strategies for supporting student success in reading and literacy, as well as strategies to support educators, and research and practices for providing structured literacy instruction within our schools.

The PASS team gathered valuable information that will help our educators in Matawa schools improve literacy development for all learners.





Marten Falls hosted a successful split toe moccasin training session on May 14-16, 2025. (Photo credit: Mary Ann Nawagesic)

## Matawa Education shares moccasin-making skills with Matawa First Nation schools and communities

Submitted by: Mary Ann Nawagesic, Mental Health Lead with Matawa Education

Mary Ann Nawagesic, Matawa Education's Mental Health Lead, is travelling to interested schools to teach staff, Elders, and parents how to sew split toe moccasins. Trainers will use the knowledge they gained to support local schools and assist Grade 7/8 students in designing and creating their own moccasins prior to graduation 2026. We want to honour our Indigenous identity and remember those who never made it home.

Want to host a split toe moccasin making session for your school?  
Contact Mary Ann by email at [mnawagesic@matawaeducation.ca](mailto:mnawagesic@matawaeducation.ca)  
or by phone at 807-631-6472







## Chiefs, Elders, Women and Youth gather in Aroland for Matawa's 37th Annual General Meeting

Three days of discussion, sharing, and celebration brought Matawa communities together to honour leadership, hear from partners, pass resolutions, and enjoy evening activities.

From July 29–31, 2025, Chiefs, Elders, youth, and staff from across Matawa came together in Aroland First Nation for the 37th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Matawa First Nations Management. Hosted by Chief Sonny Gagnon and the Aroland community, the gathering was held in the Johnny Therriault School gymnasium and welcomed three days of discussions, sharing, and celebration.

Each day began with prayers from Elders Elizabeth Meshake and

Nora Atlookan, along with songs from the Rose Bush drum group. In the evenings, attendees enjoyed bingo, fishing, and lively performances from Shades of Dawn, The Mosquitoz, and Juno Award-winner Murray Porter.

On the first day, Aroland leaders honoured community members who have made lasting contributions, including past and present Chiefs and those who worked to protect treaty rights in the courts. MFNM's finance team gave an update

on the organization's financials, and Ontario's Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Greg Rickford, spoke about provincial initiatives such as roads to remote First Nations and Bill 5. Delegates also heard updates from Mokwateh, the consultant leading an organizational review of MFNM.

The second day focused on community voices. Long Lake #58 First Nation Chief Judy Desmoulin spoke about child welfare and her community's progress in addictions





Matawa community members, leadership, Elders, youth and staff gathered in Aroland First Nation to share, listen and learn at Matawa First Nations Management's 37th Annual General Meeting. (Photo credit: Charnel Anderson)

treatment, while Eabametoong First Nation councillor Michael Slipperjack gave a powerful personal account of his recovery journey and the role of suboxone. Other Chiefs, councillors, Elders, and youth shared their thoughts on substance abuse, infrastructure challenges and solutions, and keeping traditions strong. The day closed with remarks from Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

The third day featured updates and comments from NAN Deputy Grand Chiefs Bobby Narcisse, Anna Betty Achneepineskum and Mike Metatawabin. Rapid Lynx Telecommunications management spoke about the broadband internet project's progress, and regional policing representatives—including

Thunder Bay Police Chief Darcy Fleury, Nishnawbe Aski Police Services Chief Terry Armstrong, and NAN Legal Services—shared updates on safety and enforcement. Matawa youth delegates also stepped forward, calling for more opportunities to be part of decision-making.

Throughout the week, delegates and community members also visited information booths set up by KKETS, Four Rivers, Matawa Technical Services, Matawa Animal Wellness Services, the Matawa Health Co-operative, Matawa Education, and Rapid Lynx. Matawa's Membership Services team was also on site, offering status card services. These booths provided helpful updates, resources, and one-

on-one conversations that supported the spirit of connection and learning.

By the end of the gathering, Chiefs passed 13 resolutions covering healthcare, youth programs, emergency preparedness for pets, renovations for the Matawa Education & Care Centre, the creation of Elders, Youth, and Women's Councils, rejection of herbicide spraying in Matawa homelands, and more.

The 37th AGM in Aroland was a time of reflection, debate, and planning, but also of laughter, music, and togetherness. It showed once again the strength of Matawa communities when we come together to listen, honour our ways, and build a path forward.





# Matawa Education and Care Centre Celebrates Class of 2025

Sixteen Matawa First Nation students, along with their families, community members and staff, celebrated their high school graduation at a June ceremony at the Matawa Education and Care Centre. (Photo credit: Chad Kirvan)

On June 18, 2025, the Matawa Education and Care Centre (MECC) celebrated the graduation of 16 students from across Matawa First Nations in a ceremony held at the MECC gymnasium in Thunder Bay.

Families, Elders, staff, and dignitaries joined the graduates for a day that included a procession, convocation, luncheon, and the presentation of awards. Principal Brad Battiston, Vice-Principal Jacqueline Carrier, and Dr. Sharon L. Nate, Chief Executive Officer of Matawa First Nations Management, shared messages of pride and encouragement.

Graduates Everett Baxter, Carey Echum-Wesley, Lyn (Kayla) Spence and Landon Yellowhead represented their peers as valedictorians,

delivering speeches that reflected on their experiences and aspirations.

The ceremony included the presentation of several bursaries, scholarships, and memorial awards recognizing student achievement in academics, athletics, performing arts, and outdoor education. The awards highlighted the dedication, perseverance, and talent of MECC graduates and their contributions to their communities.

The event was live streamed, allowing community members near and far to join in celebrating this important milestone. The Class of 2025 was honoured not only for completing their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas, but also for the resilience, leadership, and cultural pride they demonstrated throughout their journey at MECC.

## Awards, bursaries, and scholarships presented at the ceremony:

**Boonie Moore & Blanche Swalwell Bursary** – Carey Echum-Wesley, Christian Sutherland

**Jamie Campbell Bursary** – Everett Baxter, Clairia Jacob, Karma Thompson, Landon Yellowhead

**Achieving the Dream Through Education Board of Directors Bursary** – Mason Baxter, Lyn (Kayla) Spence

**Thunder Bay Community Auditorium Foundation Performing Arts Award** – Carey Echum-Wesley

**Susan Cochran Simonsen Bursary for Indigenous Students** – Clairia Jacob

**Jordan Wabasse Memorial Award (Outdoor Education)** – Carey Echum-Wesley

**Jordan Wabasse Memorial Award (Athletics)** – Everett Baxter, Lyn (Kayla) Spence







# Cheers to 33 bright futures: Matawa celebrates 2024–2025 graduates

Submitted by: Robert Elliott, Matawa Education's Post-Secondary Student Support Worker

This summer, Matawa Education celebrated over two dozen post-secondary graduates from Aroland, Ginoogaming, Long Lake #58 and Webequie First Nations. Thirty-three Matawa students graduated from undergraduate programs like health and social work, post-graduate programs in education and law, and trades school. This year, the Matawa Post-Secondary

graduation banquet was held in the Matawa Education and Care Centre's gymnasium in Thunder Bay for the first time. To our graduates, we offer congratulations, well wishes, and the best of like with all your future endeavours and opportunities. Please join us in celebrating the success and achievements of Matawa's 2024-2025 post-secondary graduates.



**Payton Gagnon**  
Aroland First Nation  
Social Service Worker  
Confederation College



**Levi Therriault**  
Aroland First Nation  
Masters of Social Work  
University of Toronto



**Zoey Therriault**  
Aroland First Nation  
Pre-Health Sciences  
Confederation College



**Alexis Levesque**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Dental Hygiene  
Cambrian College



**Kristan McMahon**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Master of Education: Education for  
Change: Indigenous Education  
Lakehead University



**Jarret Taylor**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Electrical Engineering Technology  
Confederation College



**Joanne Taylor**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Hair Dresser Certificate  
The Canadian Beauty Academy



**Nicole Wesley**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Juris Doctor  
Osgoode Hall Law School

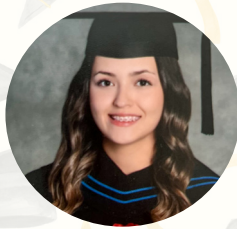


**Tyler Taylor**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Hair Design  
NuWave School of Hair Design





**Evin Dore**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Computer Programming  
Confederation College



**Emmalee Goudie**  
Ginoogaming First Nation  
Police Foundations  
Confederation College



**Madyson Baillargeon**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Practical Nursing  
Cambrian College



**Brai-Lynn Bananish**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Social Service Worker: Indigenous  
Specialization  
Sault College



**Meghan Dahl**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Civil Engineering Technician  
Confederation College



**Laurie DePerry**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Bachelor of Social Work  
Algoma University



**Chasity Finlayson**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Transitional Year Program  
University of Toronto



**Jewels Finlayson**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Onajigawin Indigenous Services  
Confederation College



**Seth Finlayson**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Business Program  
Confederation College



**Destiny Kuszner**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Indigenous Transition Year Program  
Lakehead University



**Connell Miller**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Construction Management  
Red River College



**Rheanna Mirus**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Digital Communications and Media  
Red River College





**Jessica Rhame**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Social Service Worker  
Northern College



**Saige Savignac-Dion**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Social Service Worker: Indigenous  
Specialization  
Sault College



**Brittney Spence**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Forestry Technician  
Confederation College



**Terri-Lyn Turtle**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Bachelor of Social Work  
Algoma University



**Katrina Kocsis**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Bachelor of Nursing  
University of Lethbridge



**Brandon Britt**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
H.B.A Political Science  
Lakehead University



**Lance Lachapelle**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Cyber & Cloud Security Professional  
Robertson College



**Kiara Lapointe-Deperry**  
Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Practical Nursing  
Confederation College



**Jada Sofea**  
Webequie First Nation  
Bachelor of Arts: Indigenous Learning  
Lakehead University



**Veronica Mekanak**  
Webequie First Nation  
Bachelor of Social Work  
Algoma University



**Sharla Wabasse**  
Webequie First Nation  
College Access  
Confederation College



**Shania Shewaybick**  
Webequie First Nation  
Early Childhood Education  
Canadore College



# Celebrating excellence: The 2024–2025 Bowmanville Rotary Club bursary recipients

Submitted by: Robert Elliott, Matawa Education's Post-Secondary Student Support Worker

Matawa Education, in proud partnership with the Bowmanville Rotary Club, is thrilled to celebrate the recipients of the 2024–2025 Bowmanville Rotary Club Bursaries. Each year, the Bowmanville Rotary Club, based in the southern Ontario community of Bowmanville, provides generous financial support to help Matawa First Nations students pursue their educational goals. These bursaries not only ease the financial burden of post-secondary education but also recognize and

encourage leadership, perseverance, initiative, and community involvement. Thanks to this meaningful partnership, students are empowered to follow their dreams and strive for academic excellence. These bursaries are more than just awards, they're investments in the future of Matawa youth. Please join us in celebrating the incredible achievements of this year's recipients and the continued spirit of collaboration between Matawa and the Bowmanville Rotary Club.

## **Jarret Taylor**

Ginoogaming First Nation  
Winner, Excellence Award

## **Aubrey Finlayson**

Long Lake #58 First Nation  
1st Place, Grades 6–8

## **Jasper Gagnon**

Ginoogaming First Nation  
Winner, Multimedia (Primary/Junior)

## **Monica Spence**

Constance Lake First Nation  
Winner, Adult Education Category

## **Aubrey Howe**

Long Lake #58 First Nation  
2nd Place, Grades 3–5

## **Jayden Sutherland**

Aroland First Nation  
Winner, Cultural Award

## **Robbie-Jo Mendowegan**

Ginoogaming First Nation  
1st Place, Multimedia (Senior)

## **Dredan Chapais**

Ginoogaming First Nation  
2nd Place, Grades 6–8

## **Jade Broughton**

Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Winner, Excellence Award

## **Rheanna Mirus**

Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Winner, Continuing Post-Secondary

## **Emmalee Goudie**

Ginoogaming First Nation  
Winner, College

## **(Kayla) Lyn Spence**

Marten Falls First Nation  
2nd Place, Multimedia (Senior)

## **Rylee Thompson**

Long Lake #58 First Nation  
Winner, University

## **Everett Baxter**

Marten Falls First Nation  
2nd Place, Creative Writing

## **Lyndon Sakanee**

Neskantaga First Nation  
Winner, Excellence Award

## **Stormy Towedo**

Aroland First Nation  
Winner, Matawa Education & Care Centre  
Award

## **James Neegan-Waboose**

Long Lake #58 First Nation  
1st Place, Grades 3–5

## **Mariah Smith**

Webequie First Nation  
Winner, Excellence Award

## **Tammy Bois**

Eabametoong First Nation  
1st Place, Creative Writing

## **Michelle Magiskan**

Aroland First Nation  
Winner, Excellence Award

These students represent the bright future of their communities and are a testament to the strength, creativity, and perseverance of Matawa youth. Congratulations to all award recipients—you make your families and Nations proud!





Nearly two dozen people participated in Matawa Education's 2025 Transition to Life program, which is designed to prepare Matawa members for their post-secondary education journey. (Photo credit: Chu Shang)

## Preparing for the Next Chapter: Matawa Youth Experience Post-Secondary Life

Through campus tours, budgeting workshops, cultural connections, and hands-on activities, twenty three future Matawa post-secondary students gained skills, resources, and confidence to support their journey into higher education and adult life

Submitted by: Alyssa Maunula, Post-Secondary Transition Coach

From May 5–7, 2025, the Matawa Post-Secondary team hosted the second Transition to Life in Post-Secondary program, a three-day immersive opportunity for upcoming or recent high school graduates to connect, learn, and prepare for this important life transition. Twenty-three students between the ages of 17 and 24 from seven Matawa communities participated in the program at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. Six students in Grades 9–11 at Simon Jacob Memorial Education

Centre in Webequie also joined select sessions as part of their Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.. Over the course of the three days, students practiced taking public transportation, toured post-secondary campuses like Lakehead University and Confederation College, with a focus on student life, and spent a few nights in Lakehead's residence to experience dorm living. They met with organizations offering support and services to Indigenous youth, heard directly from past and current

Matawa post-secondary students, and learned practical skills such as budgeting, money management, and funding options for their education. Evenings were spent together enjoying recreational activities and building connections with peers.

Students also explored Thunder Bay, visiting places of interest for young adults such as Howl at the Moon, the Waverley Public Library, Windy Shores Café, and the Ahnisenabae Art Gallery. A highlight of the program was the Support Services



and Career Fair, where participants spoke with representatives from Northwest Employment Works, the Matawa Health Co-operative, Ontario Native Women's Association, Elections Canada, YES Employment Services, the Outland Youth Employment Program, Faye Peterson Transition House, Nishnawbe Aski Police Service, and several other organizations.

The Transition to Life in Post-Secondary program will continue in 2026 as part of Matawa Post-Secondary's transition programming, which began in August 2023 with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities. Its focus is to provide resources and targeted support to Matawa members of all ages who are making transitions into and out of post-secondary education.

**For more information about the program or post-secondary sponsorship, please contact Ali Maunula by email at [amaunula@matawaeducation.ca](mailto:amaunula@matawaeducation.ca) or (807) 630-3509**



Future Matawa post-secondary students participated in a number of activities aimed at preparing them for higher education and beyond, including a career fair that introduced them to prospective employers. (Photo credit: Chu Shang)





Matawa Health Co-operative staff with RNAO BPSO Coaches Kate and Grace during a site visit to the MHC's new clinic on Algoma St. N. (Submitted by Kaija Saarinen)

## Matawa Health Co-operative launches three-year plan to advance culturally safe care

Matawa Health Co-operative is embarking on a three-year partnership with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario to advance culturally safe, evidence-based care as part of the Best Practice Spotlight Organization program

Submitted by: Kaija Saarinen, Health Promotions Worker

**T**he Matawa Health Co-operative is taking a major step forward in improving health outcomes for Matawa communities by joining the Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) program, led by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO).

The BPSO program is a collaborative initiative between healthcare or academic institutions and the RNAO, with the goal of implementing and evaluating evidence-based best practice guidelines that will support culturally safe, wholistic

care tailored to the unique needs of Indigenous Peoples and communities. By integrating Indigenous ways of knowing with RNAO's clinical guidelines, participating organizations work to enhance well-being and reduce health disparities.

The Matawa Health Co-operative was proudly accepted as a BPSO pre-designate in 2024 and is now embarking on a three-year journey toward full designation by implementing two best practice guidelines: promoting smoking

cessation and transitions in care and services. With over 20 trained BPSO Champions on staff to lead and support this initiative, MHC will be implementing these best practices over the next two years.

The first guideline, 'Promoting Smoking Reduction and Cessation with Indigenous Peoples of Reproductive Age and Their Communities,' will strengthen our interdisciplinary collaboration and enhance the impact of our smoking cessation efforts. By implementing this best practice



guidelines, the Matawa Health Co-operative aims to improve health outcomes for members by building a more coordinated, community-informed approach to recreational tobacco reduction.

The second guideline, “Transitions in Care,” reaffirms the Matawa Health Co-operative’s strong commitment to family, community, and the interconnectedness that lies at the heart of Indigenous health and well-being. It supports members as they adapt to new routines, healthcare providers, and medication changes. This best practice guideline enhances integrated care across sectors,

emphasizing the importance of patient-directed care and fostering respectful, trusting relationships between care providers, Matawa members, and their support networks. It ensures that all members are empowered as active partners in their health journey and that their voices help shape and improve the services we deliver.

Through monthly Knowledge Exchange calls and annual Indigenous-Focused Symposiums, the Matawa Health Co-operative has built strong, collaborative relationships with other BPSO organizations, including Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, Ontario Native Women’s Association,

Anishnawbe Mushkiki, Confederation College, and many others. We look forward to sharing updates as we continue along our BPSO path and to celebrating the milestones that will lead to better health and well-being for all Matawa members.

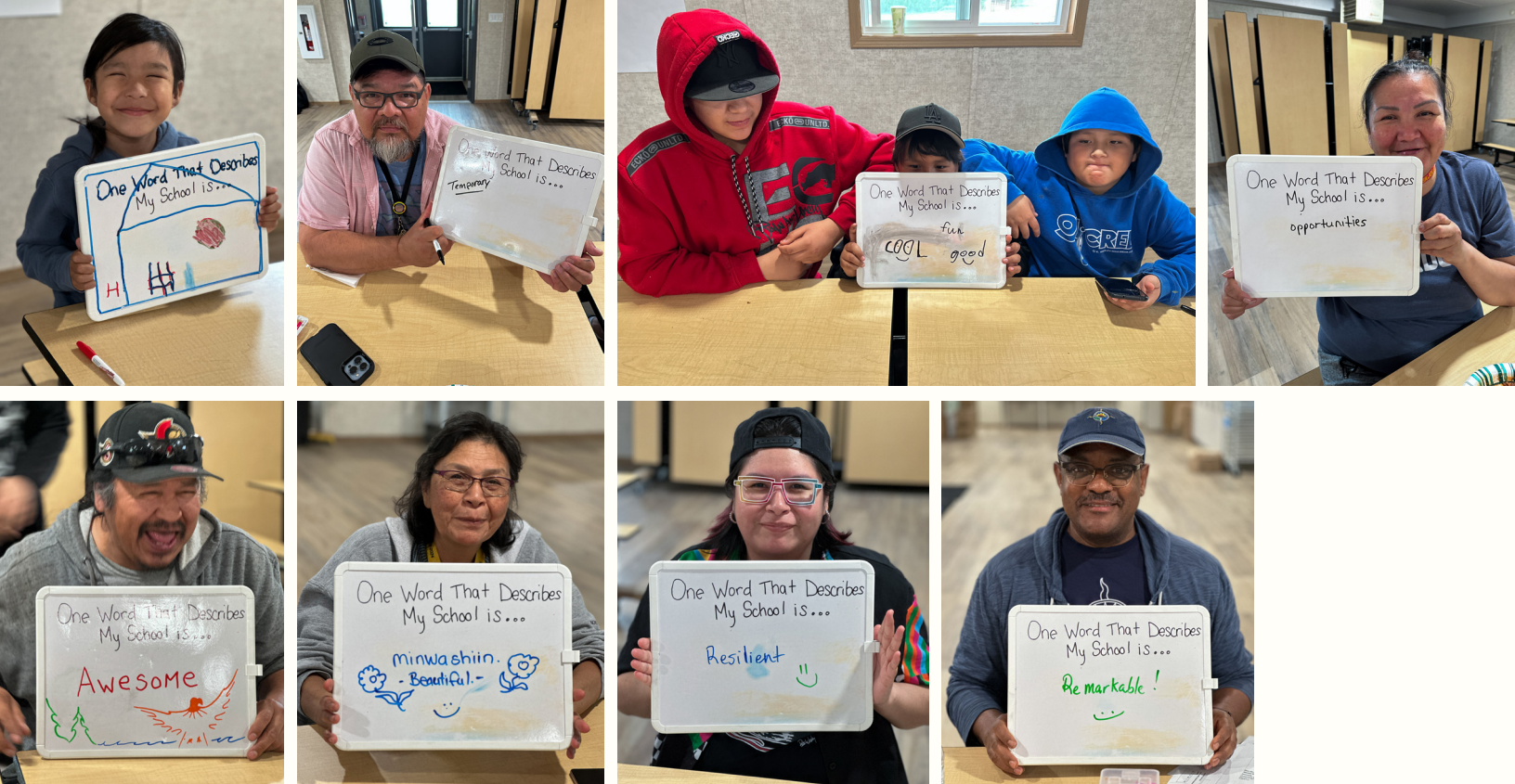


Kaija Saarinen is a Health Promotions Worker with the Matawa Health Co-operative



Clockwise from top left: MHC’s Health Promotions Worker Kaija Saarinen at the BPSO Clinical Institute in Toronto, MHC staff have been trained as BPSO Champions, and MHC’s Cheryl Schultz, acting director of Clinical & Nursing Services, at the launch event for the BPSO Program. (Submitted by Kaija Saarinen)





Community members are invited to join Matawa Education when they visit your community. Your voice matters—help shape Matawa Education's next Strategic Plan and strengthen education for all Matawa students. (Photo credit: Shelby Ch'ng)

## Your Voice, Your Future: Help Shape Matawa Education's Next Strategic Plan

Submitted by: Shelby Ch'ng

Matawa Education is reaching out to communities to help shape its upcoming strategic plan to ensure the voices of students, families, and leaders guide the future of education across Matawa First Nations.

The Matawa Education department is currently undertaking a community-based planning process to shape our 2027–2031 Strategic Plan. Rooted in a commitment to improving education outcomes for Matawa students, this process focuses on working in partnership with the communities we serve.

Over the next year, our team will visit each Matawa community served by Matawa Education to meet with leadership, educators, students, parents, Elders, and community members. We recognize that each community is unique,

and that its strengths, needs, and aspirations must guide a meaningful and responsive education strategy.

We want to hear what is working well in local schools and what supports or changes are needed in areas such as curriculum and land-based learning, language revitalization, mental health and wellness, staffing and professional development, and student transitions and pathways. We are also seeking direction on how Matawa Education can provide more effective and culturally relevant support to students and staff.

These sessions are open to all community members. Your voice matters, and your input will directly shape our priorities and services. The insights gathered will form a comprehensive strategic plan that reflects community voices and

provides a clear roadmap for action.

The final strategic plan will guide our work, keep us accountable to Matawa communities, and ensure our programs remain aligned with the needs and values of Matawa First Nations.

This process is about more than planning—it is about building relationships, strengthening trust, and working together to ensure all Matawa students have access to high-quality, culturally grounded education. Watch for updates about upcoming visits to your community.



Shelby Ch'ng is the Education Partnership Program Liaison for Matawa Education's Pathways to Achieve Student Success team





Keewaytinook Internet High School will allow students in Marten Falls to earn a high school education while remaining in their home community. (Photo credit: Marlee Poulin)

## Marten Falls celebrates grand opening of Keewaytinook Internet High School

The ceremony featured prayers, blessings, and speeches from Elders, dignitaries, and students, highlighting the school's role in expanding opportunities for learning, leadership, and cultural preservation—while also honouring National Indigenous Languages Day and Elder Elizabeth Achneepineskum's 86th birthday

Submitted by: Marlee Poulin, Community Education Navigator

On March 31, 2025, community members, leaders, and educators gathered in the Henry Coaster Memorial School's auditorium in Marten Falls First Nation to celebrate the grand opening of Keewaytinook Internet High School (KiHS)—marking a new chapter in local education.

Marlee Poulin, Community Education Navigator with Matawa Education's Pathways to Achieve Student Success (PASS) department, was in attendance to join the celebration hosted by Marten Falls First Nation and the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Board of Education (KOBE). The ceremony began

with an opening prayer from Elder Elizabeth Achneepineskum, followed by a blessing and drumming by Elder Russel Achneepineskum. Education Director Susanna Baxter shared remarks highlighting the mission and vision of KiHS, while dignitaries including Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Councillor Bob Baxter, Councillor Paul Achneepineskum, and Education Councillor Maria Baxter offered their support.

Education staff, students, community members, and guests also heard from KiHS Vice Principal Raj Budhram, Henry Coaster Memorial School Principal Tom

Recke, and a current KiHS student. Each speaker emphasized the importance of education and expressed excitement for the opportunities KiHS will create in advancing language and culture, leadership, and governance.

The celebration also coincided with National Indigenous Languages Day, further underscoring the school's commitment to cultural preservation. To close the event, Elder Elizabeth's 86th birthday was honoured with a cake, adding a personal and joyful touch to the historic day.





# Keewaytinook Internet High School Grand Opening

Clockwise from top left: Celebrating Elder Elizabeth Achneepineksun's 86th birthday; Raj Budhram, KiHS Vice Principle, and education director Susanna Baxter, speak during the internet high school's grand opening; and Elder Russell Achneepineskum provides a blessing and drumming during the ceremony's opening. (Photo credit: Marlee Poulin)





# Welcome new Matawa staff

Matawa's most recent hires introduce themselves in their own words



Hiya! The name is Serity Moonias, and I'm 28 years old. I recently joined Matawa as a Guardian Intern with Four Rivers Group in May of 2025. I grew up on my reserve, Marten Falls First Nation. As a youth, I would spend multiple summers being a part of Frontier College's Literacy Camp. I am deeply inspired by learning about my culture, storytelling, and experiencing my own personal growth as a mom of two beautiful girls. I am so happy and excited to experience everything this role has to offer and where it will lead me next. Miigwetch!



Hello! Aaniin! Boozhoo! My name is Clayton Megan, I'm a proud community member of Aroland First Nation. I recently got hired as a Guardian Intern with the Four Rivers Group. Being born and raised on the land and my love for the outdoors gives me a lot of excitement and encouragement to start this journey and the great opportunity to be a part of the environmental sector with a job as a Guardian. As of early May, I have started and learned various new programs and projects. I cannot wait to start working with all of you as a Guardian. Away from work, I enjoy long walks, hiking, sports, and golf during the summer. Also, most of all spending quality time with my family, friends, and pets. I am truly honoured and beyond excited to be part of the team, and I look forward to meeting you all. Aho! Meegwetch!



Hello everyone! My name is Dwight Beaver, and I'm thrilled to have recently started my role as a Guardian Intern with Four Rivers Group. As a member of Eabametoong First Nation, it's an honour to be part of this team. I'm eager to continue learning through the hands-on training and to contribute to the important work of being a Guardian in our homelands. I am excited to work both in the field and the office to help deliver community initiatives and support our environmental programs. I look forward to contributing to our team's success!





Janelle Bear is a member of Ginoogaming First Nation and one of the newly appointed Guardian Interns of Four Rivers Group. She is passionate about environmental conservation and the preservation of Indigenous lands and cultures. As an active member of her community, Janelle volunteers her time to support its members and staff while gaining new skills and experiences. She is proficient in photography and graphic design, and is currently studying Ojibwe through the Matawa Waka Tere Indigenous Language Revitalization Program. Janelle eagerly anticipates her professional growth within the Guardian program and the opportunities that lie ahead.



Hi y'all. I'm Suzy Kennedy, your eclectic new Geomatics Technician, and I am thrilled to have joined the Four Rivers team in June 2025. I have worked in both the public and private environmental sectors including in forestry, parks, conservation, administration, and land use for 15 years. I have a diploma in Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation, a Honours Bachelor of Environmental Science focusing on wildlife biology, and a postgraduate certification in GIS analytics. My focus is to provide support and innovative solutions for Four Rivers projects, as well as to Matawa communities, with the goal of forwarding environmental stewardship and protection initiatives so future generations can continue to live off of and enjoy our natural world. In my free time, I can almost always be found near or in the water; my friends joke I was secretly born a fish and can shapeshift. When I can get out to the lake, I enjoy making jewellery, reading, and playing with my two cats. I look forward to meeting and working with all of you and learning more about the experiences and lives of Matawa community members.



Hi everyone! My name is **Akash Lakhani**, and I'm happy to be joining Matawa Health Co-operative as the **EMR/IT Specialist**. My background is in Computer Science: I completed my master's degree and have been working with IT support, system administration, and networking ever since. I really enjoy helping people with tech, finding solutions, and making systems easier and more reliable for everyone to use. I'm especially looking forward to supporting staff with EMR systems and IT needs here at Matawa Health Co-operative. Outside of work, I'm always learning about new technologies and growing my skills, and I'm excited to get to know all of you as we work together.





Hello everyone, my name is **Jackie Chamness** and I'm excited to join the Matawa Health Co-operative as a **Mental Health and Wellness Worker**. I'm originally from Saskatchewan, though I've moved around a lot throughout my life and was living in Yellowknife, NT before moving to Thunder Bay three years ago. I am a registered psychotherapist with a Master's degree in counselling, and I'm especially passionate about supporting Indigenous communities through trauma-informed and client-centered care. Over the past few years, I've had the privilege of walking alongside individuals facing a range of mental health concerns, both in Thunder Bay and remote northern communities. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be part of the MHC team and look forward to working together and learning from you all.



**Sandeep Kumar** recently joined the Matawa Health Co-operative as a **Physician**. I am a dedicated family medicine physician specializing in the Remote First Nations stream, and am proud to join the team. I am no stranger to the Matawa communities; my connection runs deep. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I served as a public health nurse, working tirelessly to safeguard remote First Nations communities. I am originally from a small village in Punjab, India, where access to healthcare was limited and preventable deaths were unfortunately common—I understand firsthand the challenges of accessing basic medical care. As a member of India's marginalized tribes, I bring a perspective grounded in lived experience, empathy, and cultural humility. My vision is clear: to provide culturally safe, community-centered care and to inspire the next generation of physicians to serve remote Indigenous communities. My journey is a living testament to the belief that Every Child Matters—and that every life deserves compassionate and equitable care.



Hi Team! My name is **Ashley Wice**, I'm a Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Educator with the **Matawa Health Co-operative**. A fun fact about me is that I am a triplet and I completed my undergraduate degree and my dietetic internship with Dayna! Over the last few years, I have been working primarily in diabetes management at NorWest Community Health Centres and the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre's (TBRHSC) Centre for Complex Diabetes Care. I've also had the privilege of working at TBRHSC on the dialysis team as well as on medical/surgical/oncology floors. I am passionate about providing patients with the education and tools to self-manage their diabetes while minimizing complications of diabetes (wounds, limb preservation, kidney disease, etc.) as well as prevention and screening. I am looking forward to meeting everyone and learning from staff and clients at the MHC.





Hello! Boozhoo! My name is **Desiree Towedo**, and I'm an Anishinaabe Kwe from Long Lake #58 First Nation. I was born and raised in Thunder Bay. I'm an **Indigenous Care Coordinator** at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, where I support patients and families by bridging healthcare with culturally safe and holistic approach. I am a graduate from Lakehead University's Honours Bachelor of Social Work program, as well as the Child and Youth Care program at Confederation College. I was recently hired in this role through Matawa Health Cooperative, where I will continue to fiercely advocate for accessible, inclusive and culturally-grounded care for Indigenous peoples.



**Darren Lillington** is the new **Travelling Community Health Manager** at the Matawa Health Co-operative. Hello everyone! I'm excited to join such an amazing team and contribute to the important work that you're all doing. I have a diverse background and have worked in healthcare for around 18 years. Previously, I was the Health and Social Services Manager for Namaygoosisagagun First Nation in the Armstrong area. Before that, I was a clinical social worker with Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, first with the travelling primary care team and then with the family health team. I began my career in social work as the Regional Services Coordinator and Provincial Indigenous Lead for Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, where I primarily did intensive case management as well as community development and facilitated relevant education events. I'm a member of Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River First Nation), where I lived for part of my childhood and attended school. I have two children and love to spend time enjoying the outdoors and travelling whenever possible. I look forward to meeting all of you, learning about the wonderful work you're doing, and supporting it in any way possible.

# MATAWA RADIO SHOW



LISTEN ON WAWATAY  
RADIO EVERY OTHER  
TUESDAY AT 4PM EST

89.9FM in Sioux Lookout

106.7FM in Timmins

[www.wawataynews.ca](http://www.wawataynews.ca)







**Dr. Stacy McDermid** recently joined the Matawa Health Co-operative as a **Physician**. Hi, Boozhoo! My name is Stacy McDermid, and I am from Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation. I grew up in Thunder Bay and completed my Family Medicine residency at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. I had the privilege of meeting some of you during my clinical rotations at Matawa this past spring. This experience has solidified my belief that Matawa is the perfect fit for my professional aspirations to serve Indigenous communities. The opportunity to contribute to the health and well-being of Matawa communities is something I am deeply passionate about, and I am excited to work alongside all of you. In my spare time, I enjoy returning to my community, beading, and staying active. With me, my husband and children have relocated from Duluth, Minnesota, to Winnipeg, Manitoba, and then Thunder Bay to support my dream of becoming a family doctor. We are all excited to finally settle and call Thunder Bay our home. I look forward to the opportunity to collaborate, learn, and grow with you as colleagues.



**Olivia Moller** has joined the Matawa Health Co-operative as a **Physician Assistant student**. My name is Olivia Moller, but I go by Liv. I am from Hammonds Plains, Nova Scotia, and am a current second-year Physician Assistant student at the University of Toronto. I went to Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, for my undergraduate degree in Kinesiology. I played basketball at Acadia and still enjoy being active, whether it's running, weightlifting, yoga, pilates, hiking, or pickleball. I am thrilled to be working in Thunder Bay and learning more about this community! I am so excited to be working with everyone. The first few days at MHC have been amazing!



*Two-Eyed Seeing:*  
Uniting Traditional Land Stewardship  
with Modern Environmental Innovation

Clarion Lakeside Inn and Conference Centre, Kenora  
**October 8<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025**





**Matawa First Nations Management**

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