



AUGUST 2026 NEWSLETTER

A Message from the Executive Director: Community Visits, Reflections, and Upcoming Initiatives at OFNEDA

Wachay OFNEDA Community,

I hope you have enjoyed a wonderful summer and had opportunities to connect with family, community, and the land.

As we move toward the fall season, I am pleased to share a few highlights from another busy and productive month at OFNEDA.

This summer, we launched our new **Bi-Weekly EDO and Entrepreneur Virtual Networking Sessions**, designed to provide a welcoming space for members to connect, share experiences, discuss challenges, celebrate successes, and learn from one another. The positive response has reinforced the importance of creating opportunities for peer support and relationship-building within our network.

We also continued our **Coffee Meet-Up Series**, with discussions on cross-border trade, grants and funding opportunities, access to capital, business banking, credit readiness, and financing. These sessions provide practical knowledge and valuable connections that help strengthen local businesses and economic development initiatives.

Preparations are well underway for the **15th Anniversary Celebration of the First Nations Economic Advancement Conference (FNEAC)**. We are looking forward to bringing together delegates, speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, and partners from across the country for what promises to be an exciting and inspiring event. If you have not yet registered, I encourage you to secure your spot soon.

I am also pleased to recognize the **Round 1 nominees for the 2026 FNEAC Economic Development Officer of the Year and Community Project of the Year**. Chi-meegwetch to everyone who submitted nominations and helped recognize the outstanding work being carried out by Economic Development Officers in First Nations communities. We look forward to celebrating the finalists and announcing the recipient during the FNEAC Gala Awards Dinner.

Congratulations as well to the participants of our **Technician Aboriginal Economic Developer (TAED) Program** on completing another successful course delivery in London, Ontario. Their dedication to professional growth and leadership reflects the strength and future of First Nations economic development.

As we approach the Labour Day long weekend, I encourage everyone to take time to rest, recharge, and reconnect with family, friends, and community. Thank you for your continued leadership, engagement, and commitment to building strong, prosperous, and self-determined First Nations communities.



Peggy Domingue
Executive Director, OFNEDA



Celebrating

15

Years of Excellence
and Achievement
in First Nations
Economic Development



**2026
FNEAC
AWARDS**

MEET THE NOMINEES

**FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC
ADVANCEMENT CONFERENCE**

We are proud to announce the Round 1 nominees for the 2026 FNEAC Economic Development Officer of the Year Award and Community Project of the Year. Thank you to everyone who submitted a nomination and helped recognize excellence in First Nations economic development.

Nominations for this year are now closed.

All Round 1 nominees will be reviewed by the Awards Committee, which will select three finalists. The finalists will be announced at the 2026 FNEAC Gala Awards Dinner, held during the First Nations Economic Advancement Conference, taking place September 14 to 17, 2026, at the Pearson Convention Centre in Brampton, Ontario. Conference attendees will then participate in live voting to select the recipient of the 2026 Economic Development Officer of the Year Award.

MEET THE ROUND 1 NOMINEES

Upcoming September Events



COFFEE MEET-UP

**Indigenous Partnerships:
Youth & Technology**
Sep 8, 2026 | 10 AM – 11 AM ET

Chief Experience Officer
Next Dimension Inc.

REGISTER NOW

how Next Dimension, an IT company in south-western Ontario, is creating opportunities for Indigenous youth in technology while fostering meaningful organizational change. With experience in HR, employee experience, and strategy across major organizations, Pete has led Project Cedar for the past three years, an initiative focused on advancing equitable education and employment opportunities for Indigenous youth.

Presented by:
EPID@Work Research
Institute
Lakehead University

REGISTER NOW

COFFEE MEET-UP

**The Northwestern Ontario
Workplace and Worker Health
Study**
Sep 10, 2026 | 10 AM – 11 AM ET

EPID@Work (Enhancing the Prevention of Injury and Disability at Work) is a research institute at Lakehead University who is currently conducting the Northwestern Ontario Workplace and Worker Health Study. This confidential online survey looks at physical and mental health in the workplace as we hope to highlight the voices of individuals in Northwestern Ontario. Ultimately, we are looking to improve the health of workers across NWO, help workplaces identify areas of concern, and suggest pre-existing interventions for workplaces.

BUILD & GROW: A 10-PART SERIES ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

We are excited to launch a new 10 part learning series for entrepreneurs, led by Sarah Hopkins, Matriarch and Founder of Three Sisters Consulting. Each session offers practical training to support our community in starting, building, or growing a business.



Mon Sept 21
12:30 PM – 4:30 PM ET

REGISTER NOW

Managing Growth: Scaling
Your Business Sustainably

for entrepreneurs whose business is picking up and who want to grow with intention. We'll talk about what scaling really looks like for small First Nations businesses, when to hire, when to move to a physical location, and how to manage the financial side of growth without losing control. We'll also explore what it means to grow in a way that stays true to your values.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify 2–3 areas of your business that are ready to grow
- Create a simple hiring checklist or staffing plan
- Map out the financial steps needed to support your next growth stage
- Name at least one boundary or value you want to protect as you grow

Mon Oct 19

12:30 PM – 4:30 PM ET

REGISTER NOW

Procurement: How to
Sell to Government &
Corporate Clients

Session Overview

Growth is exciting but it can also break a business if you're not ready for it. This session is for entrepreneurs whose business is picking up and who want to grow with intention. We'll talk about what scaling really looks like for small First Nations businesses, when to hire, when to move to a physical location, and how to manage the financial side of growth without losing control. We'll also explore what it means to grow in a way that stays true to your values.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify at least 2 procurement programs or opportunities relevant to your business
- Read a sample RFP and identify the key evaluation criteria
- Start or update your capabilities statement
- Register with at least one vendor database or certification program

WHAT'S COMING UP IN SEPTEMBER



Register Now

FNEAC 2026



PEARSON CONVENTION CENTRE
2638 STEELES AVE E, BRAMPTON

OFNEDA'S 15TH ANNUAL

First Nations Economic Advancement Conference

WALKING FORWARD
TOGETHER – SEIZING
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



First Nations Economic Advancement Conference

September 14–17, 2026

Pearson Convention Centre, 2638 Steeles Ave E, Brampton, ON L6T 4L7

For 15 years, the Ontario First Nations Economic Developers Association (OFNEDA) has supported First Nations economic growth through advocacy, education, networking, and capacity building. As the First Nations Economic Advancement Conference (FNEAC) celebrates its Crystal Anniversary, this milestone event honours a legacy of leadership, collaboration, and economic advancement while looking ahead to future opportunities for First Nations communities.

This special anniversary conference will bring together leaders, businesses, entrepreneurs, Economic Development Officers, and partners from across Canada to explore opportunities, share knowledge, and strengthen relationships that support First Nations prosperity.

The conference features an exhibitor marketplace, interactive workshops, plenary and breakout sessions, networking events, and optional tours showcasing local initiatives and success stories. Attendees will also enjoy a Gala Dinner and Awards Celebration, recognizing excellence in First Nations economic development and celebrating the remarkable achievements of individuals, organizations, and communities.

Onsite registration opens on September 14, followed by an opening reception that evening.

Throughout the conference, participants will engage in meaningful discussions, strategic networking, and practical learning opportunities designed to advance economic development across First Nations communities while commemorating 15 years of OFNEDA's commitment to building stronger, more prosperous Indigenous economies.

REGISTER FOR FNEAC NOW



EDOs/Entrepreneurs

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

THE VIRTUAL NETWORKING EVENT FOR FIRST NATIONS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS AND ENTREPRENEURS



Wed, Sep 9 and Sep 23, 2026 | 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM ET

OFNEDA is inviting Economic Development Officers and First Nations Entrepreneurs to connect in a casual, welcoming setting, whether over a coffee, tea, or whatever you enjoy at your desk. This biweekly space offers EDOs the chance to have informal conversations with one another, share ideas, discuss challenges and wins, and highlight what is happening in their communities. It is an opportunity to build relationships, exchange practical insights, and strengthen the network that supports economic development across First Nations in Ontario.

RESERVE SPOT FOR SEP 9

RESERVE SPOT FOR SEP 23

Questions or Tech Issues? Reach Out Anytime

If you have any trouble logging in, please reach out to our Training Coordinator, **Debbie Donovan**, at trainingcoordinator@ofneda.ca or call **519.200.1033** for assistance. We look forward to insightful conversations and building lasting connections!

UPCOMING REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT FORUMS

REMINDER

Regional meetings are intended for First Nations Economic Development Officers, but they are also open to First Nations entrepreneurs, Chief and Council, or a designated representative from the First Nation.

Our Regional Meetings are small gatherings where we meet with First Nations in the hosting area to hear community priorities, challenges, and opportunities. These sessions help us share OFNEDA programs and resources while ensuring each community feels informed and supported. You will have the chance to connect with Peggy Domingue, Ryan Moore, Reema Chopra, and other team members, and your input will help guide the development of upcoming toolkits. ***Breakfast, snacks and lunch are included.***

IMPORTANT:

Please select the Regional Engagement Forum closest to your Chapter or First Nation. Travel and accommodation support is available only for First Nation Economic Development Officers employed by their Nation's Economic Development Department and attending the nearest forum location.

Not sure which Chapter you belong to? View the Chapter Map here:

<https://www.ofneda.ca/about/chapters>

Regional Engagement Forum – London, ON

Tuesday, Sep 29, 2026 | 8 AM – 4:30 PM

Four Points by Sheraton London

Meeting room: Kensington Room

1150 Wellington Rd, London, ON N6E 1M3 | 519.681.0600

Visit hotel website– <https://www.reservationdesk.com/hotel2/60232e2/four-points-by-sheraton-london-london-on/>

RESERVE YOUR SPOT FOR LONDON



NEWS Ryan Moore's Corner ARTICLES, GRANTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Share Your Story!

We are looking for real experiences from entrepreneurs and economic development professionals to help shape our upcoming toolkits. Whether it's your entrepreneurial journey or lessons learned through procurement opportunities and challenges, your story could provide valuable guidance to others as they navigate their own path to success.

Click here to learn more about [CanadaBuys](#) and [Ontario Tenders](#) opportunities.

If you'd like to book an appointment with Ryan Moore, our Director of Indigenous Procurement & Entrepreneurship Development, please click the link below. Whether you have questions about grants, funding, business opportunities, or any hurdles you're facing, Ryan is here to help.

BOOK AN APPOINTMENT WITH RYAN



Download the Canada BUSINESS APP

AND START ACCESSING FUNDING, RESOURCES,
INSIGHTS AND SUPPORT TODAY.

How do you know your pricing is competitive?

You can access historical government contract awards to see what was purchased and how much was paid, helping you benchmark pricing and make more informed decisions.

The Canada Business App provides easy access to federal programs, upcoming webinars, and business support resources. Whether you're an entrepreneur or an Economic Development Officer (EDO), the app offers a simple way to find information that can sometimes be difficult to locate on government websites. Save useful resources by selecting the "heart" icon for quick access later.

Grant Opportunities

FedNor Build Communities Strong – Local Impact Stream fund

Up to \$1million and Indigenous may be 100% non-repayable

<https://fednor.canada.ca/en/our-programs/build-communities-strong-fund-local-impact-stream-northern-ontario>

LEARN MORE

The Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program application period 3 will be opening soon from August 17, 2026 to October 1, 2026.

Rural municipalities, Indigenous communities, local services boards, and not-for-profit organizations in Ontario may be eligible for funding to support economic development, workforce attraction and retention, and community infrastructure improvements.

Funding streams can help organizations build economic development capacity, implement growth strategies, address workforce challenges, and enhance community assets that contribute to local economic prosperity.

LEARN MORE

Join EDCO's 2026 Wellington County Regional Event September 9-10 | Elora, Ontario

Be part of an engaging two-day experience focused on practical strategies, rural innovation, and real-world economic development insights—and earn 3 certification points.

Pre-Event Workshops and Events (Sept 9 – Limited Space)

Why Economic Development Matters

(for elected officials and municipal leaders- separate registration required)

Downtown Revitalization Workshop (separate registration required)

Plus a Downtown Elora Tour and networking reception—included in your registration—where you'll enjoy great food, great company, and the thrill of a live horse race.

First Nations Community Highlights

Garden River First Nation Partners on Ontario's Largest Solar Project



Construction of a solar farm, similar to the one pictured, is slated for 2028 east of Sault Ste. Marie in Dunns Valley. Source: (Neoen and CBC website)

Garden River First Nation has entered a landmark partnership with global renewable energy leader Neoen to develop what will become Ontario's largest solar energy project.

The First Nation will hold a 50% equity stake in the 200-megawatt solar facility, which was recently awarded a 20-year contract by Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO). Construction is expected to begin in 2028, with the project anticipated to be operational by 2030.

Located on Garden River lands east of Sault Ste. Marie, the project will generate clean energy for Ontario's power grid while creating significant economic benefits, employment opportunities, and long-term revenue for the community. The development is also expected to support approximately 200 jobs across a range of sectors, including electrical, civil, mechanical, administration, and maintenance.

Chief Karen Bell described the partnership as an important step toward advancing Indigenous economic sovereignty and leadership in Canada's clean energy sector, while creating opportunities for future generations.

[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

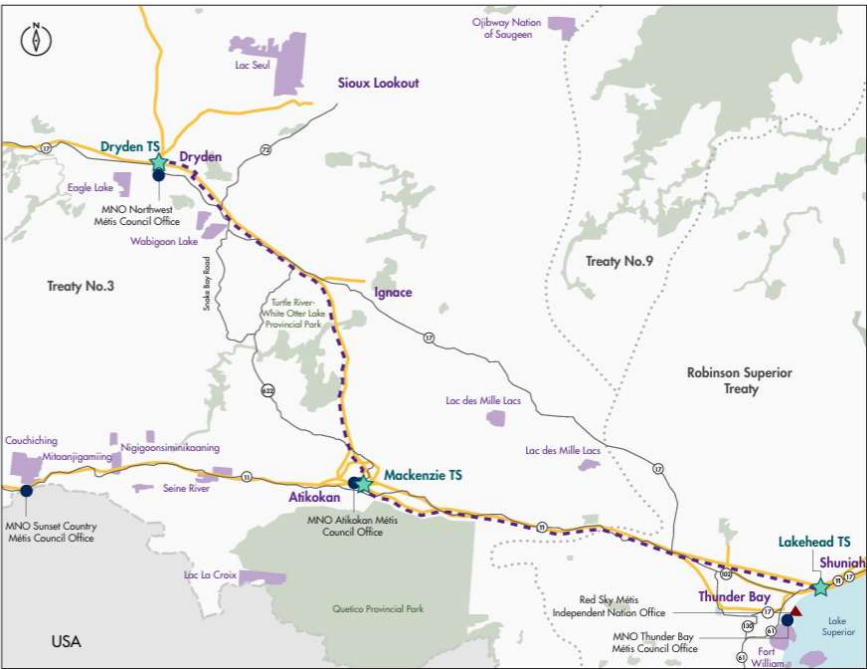
supporting growth in Northwestern Ontario and energizing life for communities and businesses in the region.



WAASIGAN TRANSMISSION LINE

Map Legend

- Existing Transformer Station (TS)
- Selected Route
- Existing Transmission Line
- Highway
- International Border
- Red Sky Métis Independent Nation Office
- Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Council Office
- Treaty Boundary
- First Nation Reserve
- Provincial Park



Source: <https://www.hydroone.com/>

Waasigan Transmission Line Project to Support the Future of Northwestern Ontario

A major energy infrastructure project is helping power the future of Northwestern Ontario. The Waasigan Transmission Line will be a new transmission line connecting Shuniah, Atikokan, and Dryden, providing the electricity capacity needed to support current and future growth across the region.

Once completed, the project will bring an additional 350 megawatts of electricity to Northwestern Ontario, helping communities, businesses, and industry meet increasing energy demands while strengthening the reliability and resilience of the power grid.

The project will be completed in two phases. Phase One includes a new double-circuit 230-kilovolt transmission line from Lakehead Transformer Station in Shuniah to Mackenzie Transformer Station in Atikokan, with a targeted in-service date as close to the end of 2025 as possible. Phase Two will extend the line from Atikokan to Dryden, with a targeted completion date in 2027.

The Waasigan Transmission Line is designed not only to meet the region's energy needs but also to protect and preserve the environment. As part of its commitment to energizing life for people, communities, and the planet, the project focuses on building reliable and resilient infrastructure while minimizing environmental impacts.

The project also reflects a strong commitment to collaboration with First Nations partners, creating opportunities for economic participation, cultural engagement, and shared long-term benefits for generations to come.

READ THE FULL STORY HERE



Missanabie Cree First Nation is making significant progress on a purpose-built Indigenous evacuation centre that is expected to open on its traditional territory in northern Ontario this spring.

Once operational, the evacuation centre will provide a dedicated space closer to northern communities, helping to improve comfort, access to services, and connections to culture and community during emergency situations. The initiative reflects Missanabie Cree First Nation's commitment to developing practical solutions that support the safety, well-being, and resilience of First Nations people across the region.

[READ THE FULL STORY HERE](#)

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Discover funding opportunities, grants, and valuable resources designed to support your organization's growth and success. Log in to your OFNEDA Member Dashboard to access the Grant and Funding Resources Database, along with exclusive member content.

You can also watch past recordings anytime through your OFNEDA Member Dashboard, including sessions such as Tech Essentials, SharePoint, and Microsoft 365 Training. Log in using your member email address to access recordings of past webinars, training sessions, and Coffee Meet-Ups at your convenience. Catch up on missed sessions, revisit valuable content, and make the most of your membership benefits.

LOG IN TO ACCESS FUNDING RESOURCES



MAAX'S

Tip of
the Month:

Maax's Stress Management Tip

*I spent 10 minutes staring into the distance today. Humans call it "doing nothing."
I call it strategic reflection.*

Stress Tip: Before reacting to a stressful situation, pause, take a breath, and gaze dramatically out a window. Bonus points if your coworkers think you're deep in thought when you're actually just beaver-watching.

Happy Labour Day Long Weekend from Team OFNEDA!

Wishing you a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable long weekend filled with time for family, friends, community, and well-deserved rest.

[View email in browser](#)



OFNEDA

ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC
DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION

QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBERSHIP?

For OFNEDA membership support please contact membersupport@ofneda.ca



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT US VISIT,

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