



MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER

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

Wachay OFNEDA Community,

Spring has arrived, bringing longer days, fresh momentum, and a renewed sense of energy across our communities. As the season shifts, it's a meaningful time to reflect on growth, connection, and the continued work we are doing together to support economic development across First Nations. I hope you are finding time to enjoy this change in season and all it represents.

I am pleased to invite you to the **15th Anniversary Celebration of the First Nations Economic Advancement Conference**, taking place at the Pearson Convention Centre from **September 14–17, 2026**, as we celebrate our crystal anniversary. This year's theme, ***"Walking Forward Together: Seizing Economic Opportunity,"*** reflects 15 years of collaboration, capacity building, and training with Economic Development Officers, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and partners across Ontario.

We will be sharing additional details soon, including speaker announcements, entertainment, hotel and travel information, and the full conference agenda. The event will also feature an **Indigenous fashion showcase with Stacey Mitchell Designs**, along with other designers, and **a special gala performance by Crystal Shawanda**.

We are also opening advertising space in our upcoming digital newsletter, creating new opportunities for members and partners to highlight their work. A media kit will be shared shortly.

This past month included coffee meet-ups, two Entrepreneurship Committee trainings, a Membership 101 session, and a webinar on community capacity funding. Our EDAC and TAED training programs continue to move forward successfully, and our EDO and Entrepreneurship Connections initiative continues to grow as a valuable space for monthly collaboration and peer learning.

We are also pleased to welcome our new Vice Chair, Cheryl St. James of Fort William First Nation, and Tiana Wabegijig-Jourdain of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek First Nation, serving as Chapter 3 board member.

supports needed going forward. During this visit, we will review the toolkits currently in development and deliver in-person training focused on marketing, AI, and Excel, alongside targeted discussions to ensure our resources reflect community needs and priorities.

We sincerely thank you for your continued commitment to advancing economic development across our communities. The work being done collectively continues to create real impact, and we look forward to building on this momentum as we move toward our 15th anniversary celebration together.

Meegwetch,



Peggy Domingue
Executive Director, OFNEDA



First Nations Economic Advancement Conference

**WALKING FORWARD TOGETHER – SEIZING ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**

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 driven First Nations economic growth

communities and businesses across Ontario.

The 15th anniversary of the First Nations Economic Advancement Conference (FNEAC) marks a defining moment in collaboration, resilience, and economic leadership, setting the foundation for the next generation of First Nations prosperity and opportunity. Attendees can expect a comprehensive experience that includes a dedicated exhibitor area, interactive workshops, plenary and breakout sessions, and curated networking opportunities designed to foster meaningful connections.

The program will also feature an Indigenous fashion show during gala dinner and awards celebration recognizing excellence in First Nations economic development, along with optional tour experiences that showcase local initiatives, partnerships, and success stories.

Onsite registration will open on September 14.

The opening begins at 1 o'clock on Monday, featuring our dignitaries, opening remarks, and a keynote you will not want to miss. The day concludes with an evening reception that sets the stage for relationship-building and collaboration.

Over the following days, participants will take part in insightful discussions, knowledge sharing, and strategic networking, all designed to support long-term partnerships and advance economic opportunities across First Nations communities.

**Sponsorship, Trade Show Booths, and
Event Inquiries please contact:**

Tessa Lavoie, Event Coordinator at events@ofneda.ca

Reema Chopra, Marketing & Training Director at marketingdirector@ofneda.ca

Have questions about the conference?

Find your answers [here](#).

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CONFERENCE



Interested in sponsorship or tradeshow opportunities?

The FNEAC trade show offers a dedicated space for organizations to showcase their products, services, and initiatives to a highly engaged audience of First Nations

BENEFITS OF SPONSORSHIP/EXHIBITING

Elevate your brand visibility among First Nations communities, leaders, and key decision-makers across Canada.

Connect directly with 400+ engaged attendees to build relationships, generate qualified leads, and expand your network.

Showcase your products and services to a targeted audience and position your organization as a trusted partner in First Nations economic development.

EXPLORE SPONSORSHIP OPTIONS



Jordan Hatton,

Director of Economic Development
Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand
Point First Nation)

HEAR WHAT OUR PAST ATTENDEES HAVE TO SAY

OFNEDA's annual conference is an important gathering for First Nation leadership, Economic Development Officers, and youth. It creates space to celebrate Indigenous economic development success stories and to learn from one another through shared experience and best practices. The conference also brings together regions from across the province, helping us understand the diverse issues and opportunities shaping Indigenous economic development in Ontario. Congratulations to OFNEDA on its 15th annual conference!

First Nations Community Highlights



Lac Seul First Nation Advances Community Services and Opportunities

Economic Development at Lac Seul First Nation has made strong progress in recent months, highlighted by the launch of the Lac Seul Transit Program. After a community information session on February 26, the service officially began on March 2 with two vans running morning and afternoon routes between Whitefish Bay, Kejick Bay, Frenchman's Head, Hudson, and Sioux Lookout. With fixed routes and scheduled stops, the program improves daily mobility for residents. Plans are underway to expand to four vans, supported by start-up funding from the Rural Transit Solutions Fund.

The 2026 Lac Seul Career Fair is also shaping up to be the largest yet, with 108 confirmed vendors and strong sponsorship from partners across Ontario. The event will feature keynote speaker Paulina Alexis from Reservation Dogs and will be hosted by Stan Wesley. With an expected 800 students attending, the fair continues to be a major opportunity for youth, job seekers, and employers to connect.

Together, these initiatives are strengthening access to transportation, education, and employment, supporting long-term economic growth and a more connected community. If you require more information about this event please reach out to:

Jamie Armstrong

Commercial Operations Manager

Lac Seul First Nation Economic Development

Work Cell: (204) 307-1868 | Email: jamiearmstrong@lacseulfn.org

READ THE FULL ARTICLE

WHAT'S NEW

EDO and Entrepreneurs Community Connections

Jun 17, 2026 | 2-3 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 monthly 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 YOUR SPOT

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 Ryan Moore, Reema Chopra, and other team members, and your input will help guide the development of upcoming toolkits.

Breakfast, snacks and lunch is included.

Regional Engagement Forum – Rama

June 25, 8 AM – 4:30 PM

Casino Rama Resort, 5899 Rama Rd, Orillia, ON L3V 6H6 | 1 800-832-7529

[RESERVE YOUR SPOT FOR RAMA](#)

Regional Engagement Forum – Thunder Bay

Thursday, July 7 | 8 AM – 4:30 PM

Best Western Plus NorWester Hotel & Conference Centre
2080 Highway #61, Thunder Bay, ON, P7J 1B8, Canada

[RESERVE YOUR SPOT FOR THUNDER BAY](#)

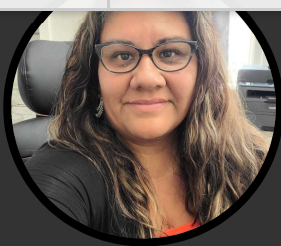
Did you miss our Community Capacity Funding LIVE webinar?

No problem. Log in to your OFNEDA membership dashboard to watch the recording now.

[WATCH THE RECORDING NOW](#)

NEW 10-PART SERIES FOR EC TRAINING

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.



June 17 | 9 am–12:30 pm

Marketing Part 1

REGISTER NOW

June 18 | 12:30–4 pm

Marketing Part 2

REGISTER NOW

Call for Committee Members

We are seeking community members with strong entrepreneurial experience to join the Entrepreneur Committee. If you have any questions or would like to join, please contact **Ryan Moore**, Director of Indigenous Procurement and Entrepreneurship Development at ipeddirector@ofneda.ca



COFFEE MEET-UP

Strengthening First Nations Entrepreneurs with Small Business Centre Support
June 11 | 10 AM ET

Teresa Shaver is the Manager of the Business Advisory Centre Durham, one of Ontario's 54 **Small Business Centres**. She is also representing the nonprofit association, Small Business Centres of Ontario.

For more than 30 years, SBCs have supported entrepreneurs and small businesses across the province. They are funded through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, along with local counties and municipalities. SBCs deliver a wide range of programs, including Digital Main Street, Starter Company Plus, Summer Company, Foodpreneur Advantage, and My Main Street.

Across Ontario, SBCs host more than 3,000 events each year, support over 15,000 businesses, and contribute to the vibrancy of local communities.



Presented by:
Teresa Shaver
Manager,
**Business Advisory
Centre Durham**

REGISTER NOW

earned her Registered Business Coach designation in 2014 and her Economic Development Certificate in 2017.

COFFEE MEET-UP

Land Stewardship as a Community and Economic Development Opportunity

Jun 29 | 1:00 PM ET



Presented by:

Zack Hamm, MA, P.

Principal

Round Lake Consulting



REGISTER NOW

Archaeological and environmental participation in major and minor projects creates jobs and revenue, builds community capacity, and engages communities in both Western and traditional land-based practices while building sector relationships and direct investment confidence.

Zack is a heritage and economic development sector professional of 13 years, a professionally licensed archaeologist and historian, the Director of Economic Development and Resource Management for Ginoogaming First Nation, and the Principal of Round Lake Consulting. He has a Bachelor of Arts, Honours and Master of Arts from the University of Windsor. Zack began in archaeological surveys and fieldwork in 2012, started a sole-proprietorship in academic editing in 2015, entered built heritage research work in 2016, and transitioned to heritage project management between 2018 and 2021 across southern Ontario before starting work in-community in environment and consultation, leading eventually to managing and directing First Nations economic and lands departments. He has developed and launched several First Nations project participation programs focused on archaeology and environmental work. He founded Round Lake Consulting in 2025, and lives and works in Longlac, Ontario with offices in Longlac and Windsor.

VIRTUAL TRAINING

Intro to communications for community economic development

June 15 | 9:00 AM -12 PM ET



Presented by:

Caroline Starr

Whether you're drafting a grant proposal, responding to a partner email, or managing a community crisis, strong communication is the backbone of economic development. This hands-on session walks First Nations communicators through the full spectrum, from sharpening internal

and Communications
Partner, Director of
Economic Development
and Communications
Locality Consulting



Presented by:

Katherine Skene

Interim Vice President,
Marketing and
Communications
Interim Vice President,
Marketing and
Communications
Crohn's and Colitis
Canada



- Internal Communication 101
- Writing with purpose; reaching a range of internal audiences
- External Communications
- Writing for specific audiences; active vs. passive voice; less is more
- Document types: email (requests, follow-up etiquette), crisis/urgent communication, press release, MOU, partner communications
- Report writing; grant writing (workshop: two types)
- Using AI Without Losing Your (Community's) Voice
- Intro to AI/LLM tools; healthy skepticism; using AI without letting AI use you
- Wrap-Up

Log in to your membership portal to register for this training.

REGISTER NOW

Caroline Starr is a graduate of the University of Waterloo's Master's in Economic Development program, Caroline is an economic development consultant with a deep experience in public and private sector communications. Her work focuses on creating, accessible, transparent economic development outcomes for small and rural communities, and supporting accessible, clear storytelling with a range of partners.

Katherine Skene is a communications and marketing executive known for building institutional reputation, leading through change, and turning strategy into stories that inspire action and connection. She brings depth across brand, issues management, digital transformation, and stakeholder engagement, with a reputation for galvanizing teams and earning trust across complex organizations.

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!

The government has added a new **Beta tool** to help with your navigation on the CanadaBuys site, an AI chatbot named "**Procura**" that you can ask questions and should be able to help you along your process

[LEARN MORE](#)

Teeny Tiny Summit 2026: The Power of Community

June 3rd, 2026 from 10–4 pm

Manitouwadge, Ontario

OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH HALL, 3 SHAWINIGAN PLACE

Join rural leaders and community champions for the 2026 Teeny Tiny Summit, focused on building hope in uncertain times. Learn practical tools, hear success stories and connect with others who care about small communities.

Keynote speaker Leslie Fournier will share creative, low-cost strategies that energize volunteers and bring local ideas to life.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Encore presentation: Competition Law and Made in Canada Claims 101

The English session will be hosted on

June 4 at 12:30 pm ET on Microsoft Teams.

The Competition Bureau's Compliance and Outreach Unit is hosting a free encore webinar for businesses that will cover important information:

Why competition law matters to small businesses and entrepreneurs

How the Competition Bureau helps protect and promote competition

What you need to know about competition law and Made in Canada claims?

How to protect your business with compliance measures

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[View email in browser](#)



OFNEDA

ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC
DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION

STAY CONNECTED



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