



# SAGAMOK ANISHNAWBEK **EDUCATION**

Ziigwan Edition - Spring 2026 Newsletter

*Supporting every Sagamok citizen to reach their full potential.*



*Ziisbaakdokaan - Sugar Bush*



Baapaashkaakodin Giizis - JANUARY - Cracking of the Trees Moon  
Makoonhs Giizis - FEBRUARY - Little Bear Moon  
Naabdin Giizis - MARCH - Crusting of the Snow Moon

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**Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiihn Gamik - Daycare**  
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# SPRING



Aanii, kina wiiya. Shki Minokimi!

While this newsletter brings stories of what took place over the past few months in Education -- stories of winter fun days, land-based activities involving ice-fishing, animal tracking, and sugar bush visits -- we cross over to seasonal minokimi (spring) activities which include personal cleansing and wellness, welcoming new beginnings for staff, students and families, the arrival of warmer weather, and opportunities to ground ourselves once again in all ways Anishinaabe.

Winter provided many occasions for discovery and learning in the great outdoors. This is a favoured option among students (and staff!) given that Creator's Classroom meets the individual where they are at. It provides an opportunity to expand our awareness of self-reliance, efficiency, adaptability, and survival. To use our personal strengths, gifts, and abilities to help ourselves and our peers develop, while simultaneously nurturing our Anishinaabe spirit, culture, and ways of living that innately live within each of us.

Gratitude to Mishoomis and Nokoomis, and G'chi Manido for the land, the winged and four-legged creatures, the water, the people, and all the beautiful things that help us walk, talk, and live the bimaadiziwin way. It's the time of year when ice thaws and disappears as silently as it arrived, and the sun warms the ground so that the daffodils' green shoots appear and brighten up the bland browns of the recently exposed grass and decomposed leaves on the forest floor. Red-wing blackbirds, Northern flickers, and Finches sing us their joyful songs and awaken our senses with their vibrant colours fluttering above in the pastel glow of spring skies. New opportunities, a fresh start, and all things in the natural world beginning anew, reminds us that we, as part of that natural cycle, can embrace an equal opportunity to rediscover ourselves, learn new things, and open ourselves up like a crocus unfolding. Let's embrace new possibilities that will grow with proper nurturing, confident exploration, and educating ourselves however we find knowledge provided to us.

*Miigwech for reading!*





*Director's Reflection*  
Ziizbaakdoke Giizis - April 2026

**Vance McPherson**

I like numbers. To be more precise: I like the stories that numbers can tell us. I like how when numbers tell stories, as long as they are true stories, they whisper of an unseen magic that gave rise to them.

Here are some such stories.

Since September, Biidaaban's literacy scores have gone up by 34%.

And while we're still below a rather arbitrarily defined benchmark, on average, we are 65% closer to surpassing it.

Since September, Biidaaban's numeracy (math) scores have gone up by 46%.

Our numeracy scores are now comparable to Rainbow's, and some of our classes are exceeding the Rainbow benchmark by quite a bit (not that it's a competition, but it is sometimes helpful to speak in relative terms).

Since June of last year, student's self-reports of being bullied have dropped by almost 70%.

Compared to 2024-25, our current rate of post-secondary first semester attrition (the students who start school in September but leave before January) is down 26%.

Since Spring of last year, the increase in use and comfort in using Anishinaabemowin at the Daycare is up sufficiently, so much so that in the last Ministry of Education inspection, it was remarked as a noticeable feature of our program (binary data (yes/no) is also data).

There are several reasons for these accomplishments. The most important is the incredible work of our

learners and those who support them. We have asked students to be more reflective and respectful and take on greater challenges, and we have asked families to assist us with supporting learning in many ways. The Sagamok community has, of course, risen to the occasion.

The faculty and staff of the Education Department are to be commended for their tireless efforts to think and act in new ways to meet today's challenges and build robust programs in so many mutually reinforcing but different directions at once!

I would be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge the work of the First Nations with Schools Collective. Since its inception, the Collective has been developing a model for true community-level jurisdiction over Education, and at Council's direction, we have already started organizing ourselves along the lines imagined by our own Knowledge-holders and those of our partner communities. The results – which allow for enhanced supports and cross-departmental collaboration – speak for themselves, far faster than I think anyone could have imagined.

These results, magnificent as they are, are only truly meaningful in their repetition. We will look for similar gains semester over semester, year over year. That means that the work has only just begun. The workload, the pace of adaption and adoption, the relentless pursuit of ever-better learning and teaching practices that have been hallmarks of the past year, must be the new normal.

It would be impossible to imagine such a lofty goal in a provincial or other colonial setting. The bureaucracies are too big. The work cultures are too grounded in Euro-Western thought.

But this is Sagamok. Education jurisdiction belongs to the community. And when we believe it, we just keep getting better.



# Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik Daycare



## *Easter Luncheon*

Daycare friends and family enjoyed Easter Luncheon together on April 2. Grandparents, parents, caregivers, participated in making a themed craft together ahead of enjoying a hot turkey and ham feast in celebration of the holiday. Chi miigwech to our cooks for preparing the amazing spread of delicious foods! Miigwech to Daycare staff for making this gathering meaningful with their beautiful, Spring decorations, creative crafts, and providing the opportunity to spend time together as a 'daycare family.' Friends enjoyed receiving an Easter basket of goodies and hopping around excitedly showing them to all of the visitors.





## *Barbara Nolan Facilitates Professional Development Day for Daycare Staff*

Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik welcomed Barbara Nolan, Anishinabek Nation Anishinaabemowin Commissioner, and Lynne Pine, Barbara's apprentice, on January 30, to the Daycare's Professional Development Day. Daycare Manager, Rachel Toulouse, and Marjorie Southwind, Anishinaabemowin Manager, invited Barbara and Lynne to coach the staff on how to incorporate Anishinaabemowin into the Daycare's daily operations.

Anishinaabemowin Programming in Early Childhood Learning Spaces and 'recognizing the importance of language revitalization in early learning spaces for children and families' was the topic of the day. Both Barbara and Lynne currently work at the Garden River Childcare Centre providing Anishinaabemowin language support and immersion programming. It is their passion; Barbara has many years of language proficiency and in providing mentorship, and Lynne is emerging as a speaker and teacher with Barbara's assistance and encouragement.

Opening prayer and smudge were offered by Michael Abitong, Land-based Resource Teacher, to start the development day off in a good way. Daycare Staff, Biidaaban Language Speakers, Land-Based, Educational Assistants, and Student Support Workers gathered for the presentation, which included the following themes:

- Strategies for incorporating Anishinaabemowin into our Daycare and continue supporting Biidaaban's curriculum to revitalize the language.
- Ways to support staff who aren't currently Speakers by sharing how to get started learning Anishinaabemowin, offering resources, teaching tools, and Speakers on hand.
- Encourage staff to use the language daily with students and offer positive reinforcement when they do!
- Use the language daily, and whenever possible, to keep it alive; immerse students and fellow staff members in it.
- Repeating words, phrases, and introductions, and practicing these repeatedly will instill the language in learners, parents, and staff, making it familiar and comfortable over time for all who use it.

- Make learning the language fun for staff and students!
- Use the language in daily life to increase your knowledge and inspire new vocabulary when you don't know the word;
- Speak/listen with Elders or others who know Anishinaabemowin – conversation and hearing the language spoken helps us learn and retain it.

Barbara poignantly summed up these points when she stated, “If you’ve got words, use them! If you don’t use them, our language will disappear. Our ways of being will disappear.” Even if you are not a speaker, Barbara emphasized, just use the words you know or learn things like “sit down”, “be quiet”, “sleep time”, “let’s go outside” – things you would commonly use with young children and students. To protect, maintain, and preserve our language speakers, it needs to be used in everyday life, Barbara reinforced. “We have to produce speakers!” she exclaimed. The necessity of speaking, hearing, learning, encouraging, and immersing ourselves in the language in our daycare and schools is paramount. “Let’s move forward!” Barbara spoke genuinely. “When they told us not to speak our language, we lost something inside too (I’m not good, I can’t be proud of being Anishinaabe) but we need to lose those thoughts, put it behind us and move forward. The time is right to reinvigorate our language.”

Barbara addressed the concern about how to teach if you are not a speaker yourself. Her response was powerful: We don’t start by teaching, we start by speaking. Barbara held her hand over her heart as she spoke endearingly:

*“Use whatever words you know. There is no need to translate at the Daycare level. We want students to start picking up the sounds of the language, to hear us speak. Sagamok has a specific sound, a distinctive sound that is very beautiful. Little words at a time because that is all you need to start with. Put ‘life’ into your words when you are speaking to children. Anishinaabemowin is spoken from our heart and describes a story or event, so put some feeling into it when you speak. Actions that accompany the words will also reinforce the language with new learners. Just sit and listen to our language being spoken and let it flow over you. There’s a lot to learn, but you’ll get there! Utilize Steven Bennett as your Resource to learn how to speak/pronounce or what to say – build your vocabulary this way. Learn songs and read books in the language to the students. Incorporating the language and immersing the students in it daily will make a big difference. Many of you are just learning, and there is no need to feel afraid or overwhelmed – practice, practice, practice and be expressive.”*



The presentation went on to talk about the basics of language acquisition. “How do we acquire our first language?” Barbara asked rhetorically. She then explained that the language we hear as an infant is our first language, also known as our acquired language. We don’t actively learn this language; we acquire it

through hearing, speaking, and absorbing it. Barbara continued, “We can learn so much through listening, observing, and taking it into our language acquisition device – we all have one and have this ability – it’s how we learn. Your language and speech emerged through stages – first words, then phrases, then forming sentences/paragraphs of thoughts. Corrections were made through our parents’ modelling the correct words or ways of speaking. Reading and writing are not at the preliminary stage of learning a language – that comes later. First comes hearing and listening.”

Our language acquisition device is like a cup, Barbara gestured. Fill it up to become a speaker. New learners are encouraged to go listen to speakers, for example, at Bingo Night (everyone chuckled!), with the goal of guessing what is being said. “Do it with love, gentleness, and kindness to yourself,” shared Barbara.

Barbara explained that acquiring and learning are two very different ways of becoming fluent speakers. In her opinion, acquiring a language through immersion is more effective than the other method. “Acquiring a language is a slow process and happens over time. It is subconscious – you don’t even know you’re doing it – it comes naturally. When you learn a language, you need instruction, to follow teachings, and to use your brain and think,” stated Barbara. By starting language revitalization at the Daycare level, through daily immersion and curriculum development, our youngest learners will have an opportunity to acquire the language, building a strong foundation for when they advance to Biidaaban and continue learning. From the presentation slide, Barbara reinforced this point, “Second Language Acquisition in early childhood is most effective through immersion, play-based, routine-driven environments.” Strategies to support this include:

- visual aids (point at things as you say the word in Anishinaabemowin, flash cards, memory games etc)
- repetition (use the words you know over and over to instill them in yourself and students)
- being interactive (play games, sing songs, read stories, talk to students about their surroundings whether they are eating a bowl of soup, using a spoon, or getting ready to go outside)
- meaningful interactions (conversation)
- increasing vocabulary and retention skills (try out new words, test yourself, practice)

And of course, this is not only about language. It is about culture, too. Bringing cultural immersion into education spaces helps promote pride in Anishinaabe traditions and cultural ways. Reading books such as “I am Anishinaabe”, demonstrating traditional dance, dress, games/crafts/storytelling, mentoring (inviting speakers and Elders), attending or hosting powwows are various ways that parents, teachers, and community members can play a role in revitalizing Anishinaabemowin and Anishinaabe-Aadziwin in our community.

Before breaking for a lunch of Indian tacos, Marjorie concluded the morning session with methods for assessing Anishinaabemowin within the Daycare curriculum. Ensuring a ‘flow of continuance’ when learning Anishinaabemowin begins with developing curriculum at the Daycare level and developing evaluation methods for second language oral language assessment. Beginning these steps in Daycare will translate into continued, supportive learning once students enter Biidaaban. She explained that Biidaaban Language Speakers will need to know and witness what is being taught/learned in Daycare, so that appropriately advanced curriculum can be developed as students progress from the initial learning base. We want to support our educators on this journey towards language revitalization -- within their roles as individuals and in their family/community environments. Parents also need to be aware of what we will be teaching about Anishinaabe-Aadziwin so they can be part of educating our youngest members and help provide continuity at home. Marjorie described an all-season language plan for the Daycare, incorporating pertinent cultural seasons such as winter feast, spring solstice, round dance, planting, medicines, powwows in summer, fall harvesting, feasts and ceremonies, weekly smudging, and more, as well as incorporating the medicine

wheel and four directions within this instruction model. The use of land-based teachings will support this plan, as will Anishinaabemowin Speakers available in classrooms to provide a point of reference and encouragement to staff, learners, and families/community members as their language acquisition evolves.

**Community Service Hours Opportunity**

**Volunteers Needed!**

Sagamok Dog Kennels will be open for temporary (up to 72 hours) housing of dogs, and we need volunteers!

Tasks would include (but are not limited to):

- Feeding
- Watering
- Visiting

*Does this sound like something you would be interested in? Contact us!*

For more information, contact:  
Lindsey | 705-863-0145 or [cada\\_lindsey@sagamok.ca](mailto:cada_lindsey@sagamok.ca)



In summary of the morning's presentation, Barbara reiterated the priority of "recognizing the importance of language revitalization in early learning spaces for both children and families." She added the analogy, "When you plant seeds, something grows! So, at the Daycare, we are going to plant seeds -- language seeds." As encouragement to everyone present, no matter their level of Anishinaabemowin, she suggested always incorporating the language. Set a small goal for yourself: use 2 or 3 words per day and evaluate your learning at the end of the day. Starting small and using the language daily will prove to be successful over the long term in revitalizing our beautiful language.


**Technology and Computers 101 for ELDERS**

**LUNCH & LEARN**

Learn the basics of operating a computer or other devices, and learn about keeping your information secure on your devices.

► **May 19**  
► **11AM - 1PM**  
► **Lifelong Learning Centre**

Susan | 705-863-2838  
[sonnenburg\\_susan@sagamok.ca](mailto:sonnenburg_susan@sagamok.ca)




*Raven's*  
Reminders  
January  
**'Grief and Loss'**

Grief is a natural response to losing someone or something meaningful in our lives, but it can be a complicated and deeply personal process. Everyone grieves differently, and there is no "right" way to experience loss.

It's important to allow yourself to feel your emotions and seek support from others, whether through therapy, support groups, or simply talking to friends and family.

Compassionate self-care, patience, and time are key as you process the stages of grief and navigate your healing journey.

Raven Hammond, BSW, RSW.  
Student Mental Wellness Specialist  
Education Department  
Sagamok Anishnawbek

C: (705) 863-0883





Daycare Anishinaabemowin  
January - February - March 2026

*Baapaashkaakodin Giizis - January*

Baapaashkaakodin Giizis - Cracking of the Trees Moon - January


Waabshkaa - White 


Gimaa Giizhgat - Chief's day 

Biiskan wiikwan - put on your hat 

Aaniish ezhiyaayin nongo? - How are you feeling today? 

Zookpoo - It is snowing 


Ksinaa - Cold 


Biiskan gmidaasan - Put on your socks 


Gooni-nini zhi'aada - Let's make a snowman 


*Makoonhs Giizis - February*


Mkoonhs Giizis - Little Bear Moon - February

Mskwaande - Red 

Biiskan gmidaasan - put on your socks 


O'de - heart 


Mkwa - bear 


Ngi-Chi-Nendam - I am happy 

*Naabdin Giizis - March*


Naabdin Giizis - Crusting of the Snow Moon - March


Zhaawshkwaa - Green 


Niswi - Three  3


Ziizbaakdokaan in - At the Maple Sugar Camp 

Zhaangswi - Nine  9

Ninaatigo mitig gii zhigigaaza - A Maple tree was tapped 

Oonzaan Ziizbaakdaaboo - Boil the sap 

Enji Skagmizgeng - At the boiling station 

Aangwaamzin - Be careful! 

Read it  
Write it  
Speak it



Try to practice and speak the words at home together.  
Regularly speaking, hearing, repeating, seeing words, and providing images  
that further support the vocabulary, helps to build language and fluency.



## *Daycare Sleighride at Wagon Wheel Ranch*

Daycare friends and staff, along with a few grandparents, parents, and caregivers, travelled to Wagon Wheel Ranch near Val Therese on February 12. A perfect winter day with bright sunshine, blue skies, and snow-laden trees dampening any sounds except our own. The blanket of snow on the ground was so thick, the sleigh runners travelled smoothly through the fields and into the bush expertly by its horse-drawn team. For today's excursion, we were led out to the farmyard where a beautiful, and powerful, harnessed team of horses stood waiting for their visitors. They were impressive in size but gentle in nature, standing calmly while everyone navigated the snowy yard and clambered up onto the sleigh platform. Families were bundled up warmly, with blankets on the sleigh platform and covering the passengers' laps. Everyone enjoyed a quiet, reflective ride across the expansive countryside. Of course, excited chattering and squawks of glee were heard from daycare friends as the sleigh lurched forward to begin the journey. As we swayed along through the snowdrifts, they pointed out unique things of interest to them with their tiny, mittened hands-- such as the fallen poop from the horses staining the pristine, white snow!

It was a magical outing -- snow sparkling on the fields, the sleigh rocking us gently from side to side, each of us snuggled close to our neighbours, ensuring we were all safely on board, securely seated, and sharing in the experiences together. Our sleigh driver made a big loop through the bush, the tall horses knocking snow loose from low-hanging branches to the squeals of passengers as it landed down the necks of their coats and on their attentive faces. Cheeks were rosy and glistening wet with the melting snow (and runny noses!), and the smiles and laughter were mesmerizing. The pair of farmhands delivered us to a cozy corner of the bush where a warm fire, seating area, and chance to greet the horses close up provided itself. Staff members had brought along plenty of snacks, hot cocoa, and juices, and a thermos of pre-cooked hotdogs to roast over the fire on a stick! Miigwech to Daycare Cooks, Priscilla and Ieshia for their foresight and preparations. No fire is complete without the sticky goodness of marshmallows to wash down the lunch! These outdoor, interactive experiences ignite all of the senses, creating lasting memories and space for personal development such as seeing and touching the frosty snow or the horses' whiskery noses, smelling the hotdogs cooking or the mittens drying out over the fire, sampling the sticky smores, all while basking in the sound of silence in the winter bush, punctuated with the crackling of the wood fire.

After taking turns petting the noses and faces of the large horses, gazing into their eyes, and having some photo opportunities, it was time to get everyone back on the sleigh. We skidded over hill and dale headed back to the ranch. Once everyone had disembarked and gathered up their blankets and belongings, we were greeted at the stable door by a wide-bodied donkey seeking some attention of its own from the passing children. The donkey stood poised for a few moments of delightful back scratching and appreciative stares from captivated onlookers and then sashayed away to its water trough around the corner.

The rustic farm décor and horse-themed decorations throughout the greeting area offered another level of learning: visual and tactile. There were horse collars and hames (harness), antique farm tools, and animals outside of the windows for friends to observe; much to their surprise! It also offered a cozy place to get dressed/undressed from bulky winter gear and use the bathroom following/prior to the long bus ride. The day trip was a wonderful educational experience -- one that both the children and adults alike, enjoyed immensely. Miigwech to Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik for organizing this amazing winter outing for everyone to participate in.



# Wagon Wheel



Miigwech to Land-Based Lead, Michael Abitong for getting our Daycare friends out on a warm, winter day to experience ice fishing.

The children did a great job checking on their minnows, jigging their line, and patiently waiting for a fish to bite.

The hotdogs and hot chocolate were a welcome treat around the warm campfire prepared by Michael and Daycare Manager, Rachel Toulouse.

## Ice Fishing with Daycare Friends and Families

February 2026



Giskaans (hole)



Giigoonhkedaa - Fishing





Giidebnaa! I caught a fish!



# Biidaaban Kinooaagegamik

You got this!!  


It is ok not to be the best at everything  
  


I am Loved  
  






*Introducing...*

**Scott Restoule**

*Principal, Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik*

*Aanii,*

Scott Restoule Ndi-zhnikaz, wajashk Ni-Dodem, Dokis Ndi-Bendaagos. I am very excited and grateful for the opportunity to work in the role of Principal at Biidaaban. I have worked at Biidaaban for 10 years now, and have had many opportunities to appreciate the language, culture and traditions that are within this wonderful community.

As part of my role, I pride myself on providing a safe learning environment for all students within the school. Creating a safe and supportive place for our students allows them to develop as a learner, and most importantly as Anishnaabe people. Promoting language and culture within our learners will be a priority, and I look forward to working with the education team and community partners in providing this to our students.

From a leadership standpoint, I value the term "leading" as someone who leads by example. I believe that to lead by example, it entails walking and talking in a good way. I am a person who is willing to put in the extra mile in assuring that I am creating a working/learning environment where staff are able to focus their time and energy on growing our learning environment here at Biidaaban.

I look forward to promoting a sense of community and pride within our school at Biidaaban. In order for this to take place, it will mean building a stronger connection with program supports and resources that are located within Sagamok. Most importantly, this plan will not happen without the support and trust of the members of Sagamok. I am looking forward to the journey ahead, and everything it will have to offer the youth of Biidaaban and this community.

*Miigwech,*

*Scott Restoule, Principal*

[restoules@biidaabanschool.ca](mailto:restoules@biidaabanschool.ca)



## *Freeze Tag with APS!*

While APS officers were visiting Biidaaban during a WITS program assembly, they joined Mr. Lester's Physical Wellness block and participated in a quick game of *Freeze Tag* with the young students. There were big smiles on everyone's faces! It was a great way for law enforcement members to engage with students and encourage communication and collaboration between staff, students, the school, and APS.

*The WITS Program is part of Sagamok Education's Bullying Awareness Campaign.*

*It focuses on positivity and kindness and encourages students to learn how to identify and use their WITS (Walk Away, Ignore, Talk it Out, Seek Help) to combat bullying.*



## *High School Course Selection Begins for Biidaaban's Grade 8's*

Parents/caregivers of Biidaaban's Grade 8 students were invited to the classroom on January 27 for information and assistance about how to best support students with their course selections for high school; 2026/2027 academic year. Course selections need to be made ahead of time to allow students and families an opportunity to determine the education stream and potential focus the student wishes to make as it relates to their dreams and future career goals.

Light refreshments were served while information and guidance was shared about course selections, how/where to submit the selections within their student portal, and space allowed for questions, concerns, and support.

A follow up evening was hosted by Espanola High School on Thursday, February 12 at 6:00pm as posted on the Espanola High School FaceBook page. Grade 8 students and families were invited to experience "an evening of discovery and exploration, where you'll uncover the exciting opportunities awaiting you, firsthand." Best wishes to all Grade 8 students making course selections. This is an exciting step on your learning journey, and we look forward to seeing where you take your academic adventure!



Senior students had the opportunity to go downhill skiing at Boogie Mountain in Espanola on January 15, 22, and February 5. The weather was ideal, and the snow conditions were perfect! Students enjoyed the outing and were excited to share their experiences upon their return to Biidaaban. Smiles were as big as the slopes they traversed, faces as bright as the sun reflecting off the snow, and spirits as high as the clear, blue skies. Miigwech to Mr. Lester and all those involved in organizing this learning opportunity and fun day out.

Students also had a downhill skiing experience at Searchmont near Sault Ste. Marie! Students and support staff travelled to the Sault on March 3 & 4 to test their skills on the big hills. They enjoyed beautiful weather for skiing and travelling the 530km to and from Sagamok. Miigwech to the organizers for this wonderful experience in the outdoor classroom.



# Valentine's Tea



On Friday, February 13, Miss Laura's Grade 6/7 class hosted a Valentine's Tea, inviting family members and caregivers. Mothers, Aunties, Grandmas, Dads, Uncles, and baby siblings arrived to the classroom which was decorated with heart themed tablecloths and garland, and accessories.

An assortment of sweet delicacies, and snacks were served and of course – tea!

A cup of tea shared among friends and family is of the sweetest kind. Everyone enjoyed the relaxing time with each other and LOVED the opportunity for fun and fellowship.

**HAPPY  
VALENTINE'S  
DAY** ♥





## Family Math Day!

Math Day was held on Jan 23, 2026. Family and caregivers attended Biidaaban to support students with encouragement to embrace math as fun and interesting by participating in the activities planned by Teachers and EA's. The adults joined students in their classrooms for interactive involvement and insights, and to enjoy some snacks and drinks. Mr. Mark Eizenburg, Numeracy Lead, greeted parents and caregivers in the entrance hall, offering snacks and beverages as they found their way to their students' classrooms.

The event ran during the 11:40-1:00 study blocks and was a great success! Many caregivers participated, and students expressed their enjoyment of the special visit from family members, sharing hugs and smiles with parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, as they engaged in the activity organized in their classrooms.

Each classroom offered a unique Math Day activity relevant to their students' learning level and curriculum focus:

- EL1 (Terri) Math Centres and games for students to rotate through by choice
- EL2 (Juliet) Numbers Bingo in both English and Anishinaabemowin
- Grade 1 (Abigail) Pizza Making activity – students used shapes and colours to create 'toppings' on their pizza, counting/recording the number of each one they added
- Grade 2/3 (Alexis) Addition and subtraction Bingo
- Grade 2/3 (Eric) Bucknaage and Blooket games
- Grade 4/5 (Jay) Dice Games
- Grade 4/5 (Pam) Board Games involving counting such as Snakes & Ladders, Chess, Uno
- Grade 6/7 (Laura) Financial Literacy activity
- Grade 6/7 (Tia) Escape Room
- Grade 8 (Kevin) Bridge Building - popsicle stick construction, engineering, calculations, etc.

A 'Guess-timation Station' was set up for students and visitors to submit estimates on how many items were in the gummy bear and fuzzy peach containers. It was a popular activity among the students, as many of them visited with pencil and paper in hand, deliberating on what their answer would be with the hopes of winning. Some consulted their fellow peers, others kept their answer private, some asked their teachers, and some even tried squeezing it out of Mr. Mark – the one who coordinated it all and, of course, has all the answers!

Congratulations to Brian Bob, who won BOTH guess-timates!! Way to go Brian! Brian shared with Mr. Mark what strategy he used: calculating volume by counting pieces on one side and multiplying by the number of rows on the other side. Here were his results:

Fuzzy Peaches

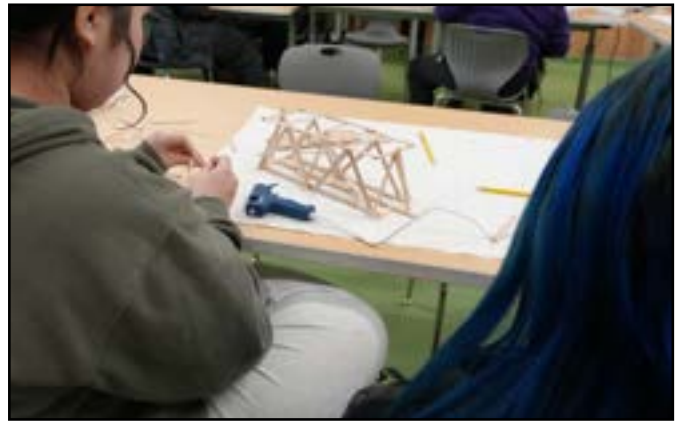
$34 \times 4 = 136$  with an estimate of 133

Gummie Bears

$51 \times 5 = 255$  with an estimate of 236

Very clever, Brian! You demonstrated great ingenuity in your thinking (determining the best approach to finding the closest answer), using a logical approach (utilizing a strategy learned in class about calculating volume), and applying these in a problem-solving situation (how many pieces are in the jar?). These are all examples of where math is needed and used to help with everyday tasks. By incorporating fun approaches to math, and learning in general, students benefit by understanding the relationship between education and real life. Of course, the winner takes home the guess-timation station treats but, on days like these, everyone wins!

Staff and students alike were pleased to have a great turnout of parents/caregivers at this school-wide activity. It goes a long way towards helping students embrace Math, find alternative and fun ways to learn and explore, and develop collaborative skills with peers and community members to increase their knowledge. The positive effects are immeasurable, and parent/caregiver attendance is appreciated and welcomed. Aapji go miigwech for your support!



## 2026 Biidaaban Classic Hockey Tournament!



Fans filled the bleachers and overhead viewing area at the Massey Community Arena on February 11, travelling from far and wide to cheer on the student hockey players, bench staff, timekeepers, and referees. All participating schools - Biidaaban, Shawanosowe, Sacred Heart, Lakeview, and Pontiac - were given equal representation (ice-time) at the day-long hockey tournament, expertly arranged by Mr. Kevin Lester, Biidaaban's Physical Wellness Instructor. The tournament started at 8am and wrapped up by 5pm. It is necessary to acknowledge some of the behind-the-scenes planning and organizing that goes into these education-based tournaments, including:

- collaboration between all the schools, involving a constant flow of communication;
- available staff equipped with adequate knowledge and skill to coach on the bench and ensure student safety and wellbeing;
- construction of a schedule to include all teams having an opportunity to play each other, and calculating which teams will compete in the Final Game;
- financial contributions to cover costs, including arena rental;
- acquiring volunteers, referees, timekeepers, equipment/supplies, and practice times; and
- team transportation!

Dedicated parents delivered student players to the Massey Arena starting at 7am on the morning of the Biidaaban Classic! Shawanosowe, Pontiac, and Lakeview schools travelling the furthest to compete, also had a very early morning start! Mr. Maracle proudly acknowledged that many helpers were on hand early to get the tournament rolling, including his Grade 8 class. They unloaded pop, water, and supplies, bringing it all upstairs for their Canteen and Raffle Table. He shared, "They did very well with sales towards the Grade 8 fundraiser!" The students offered pancakes, sausages, and other breakfast fare in the morning, followed up by chilli and scone for lunch, and pop, chips & snacks for in between. Students were responsible for calculating needed quantities, acquiring the supplies in advance, managing a float/change for sales, replenishing supplies as sales continued, and being available at their designated posts to serve patrons.

The games were a lot of fun to watch! All teams playing respectfully and competitively. The brightly coloured hockey jerseys, emblazoned with each unique school logo, brought a sense of identity and community to the tournament. Each uniform was vibrant on the ice as skaters soared around, swooping in to grab up the puck, and netting goals. After each game, both teams gathered on the ice for a group photo, and Mr. Lester announced the most sportsmanlike player, congratulating the winner with a McDonald's gift card. The Final Game came down to Lakeview (M'Chigeeng) versus Sacred Heart (Espanola).

Once tournament games finished up, spectators and students moved to the upstairs room overlooking the ice; much warmer and more comfortable than the rink area. This also served as a comfy space to hangout during the day if your team wasn't playing and gave a bird's eye view of the hockey action. Mr. Lester called attention to the awards celebration, citing that the winners' names and their school will

be engraved on the grand prize trophy. While the trophy remains in the display cabinet at Biidaaban, the winning school received a significantly sized 2026 Champs banner, with the second-place team receiving a 2026 Runner Up banner. Most Valuable Player (MVP) trophies were awarded to each team as follows: Shawanosowe Bobcats player, Leo, was named Tournament MVP, Lakeview MVP is Bray, Sacred Heart MVP is Chase, and Biidaaban MVP is Avery. All First and Second Place team members were presented with tournament medals. A memorial trophy honouring Rennison Ruth, was awarded to the Outstanding Team Player of the Annual Biidaaban Classic. This year's recipient was Gavin Eshkakogan! Congratulations, Gavin! and to his Mama, Brooke Eshkakogan, who cheered loud and proud "I'm his Mama!" as she hurried up [sporting a hoodie with the caption 'Hockey is Good Medicine'] for a photo opportunity. The trophy was presented by Myna Toulouse – the late Rennison's Nohomis (grandmother) and Jennifer Ruth – Rennison's mother, Myna's daughter).



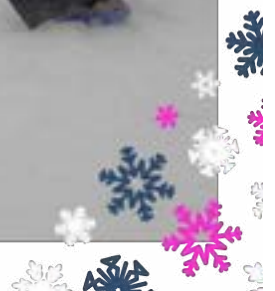
For the dedication and efforts of all education staff from participating teams involved to make this annual sporting event take place, *chi miigwech!* Miigwech to Biidaaban Eagles' bench staff: Kayla Morell, Scott Restoule, Brooke Eshkakogan, and Carson Abitong! A special miigwech also goes out to members of the Espanola Paper Kings, who volunteered their services for the entire day as referees for the games. We couldn't do it without you!

And to the students and fans who bring the spirit to the game, miigwech to all of you too! Miigwech to everyone in attendance who supported the Grade 8 Fundraising Canteen and Raffle Table throughout the day! Mr. Maracle and Miss Jeanette, thank you for supporting the Grade 8 students. Miigwech, and kudos to the Grade 8s for their efforts flipping pancakes, prepping food, refilling fridges with beverage options, maintaining sales, and offering timekeeping services throughout the day to ensure the tournament went smoothly with fans and players adequately fed, watered, and entertained! Miigwech again to Mr. Lester for his passion and devotion to this annual event, to the Student Support staff, Miss Becky, and the Cultural Workers who also lent their support and cheers from the stands. See you again next year!

# Winter Fun Day at Biidaaban

February 6

Staff and students participated in an afternoon of winter celebration! Organized by Mr. Lester and helpers, students moved between stations to have a chance to experience the fun winter can offer through activities, culture, and togetherness. Plank Races, Snow Soccer, Snowshoe Relay, Snowball Throw, Storytelling by the fire, Sled Races, Fire safety/fur teaching stations were available to try out.





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# FAMILY

## ADVENTURE NIGHT

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Hosted by the Literacy, Numeracy, Mental Wellness, and Anishinaabemowin units of Sagamok Education, a Family Adventure Night, themed after the popular TV show Stranger Things, took place at Biidaaban on February 26 from 5-7pm. Families and caregivers, from infants to grandparents, ventured out to Biidaaban on a cold, blustery night to participate in a series of challenges and activities led by each of the corresponding education support managers.

Following registration, attendees were invited to move throughout the gym to stations featuring clues and interactive materials focused on math, reading, wellness, and our native language. Some guests took this adventure challenge very seriously, and being avid fans of Stranger Things, came decked out in themed t-shirts and apparel, or wore the series' classic red and black colour scheme. What a wonderful display of enthusiasm and engagement! Chi miigwech for adding to the fun!



Twinkling mini lights around the room's perimeter set the mood and placards, creatively made by Skylar Sayers-Southwood (Library Assistant), included Stranger Things characters, scenarios, and graphics, and displayed cryptic messages such as math questions, riddles to read and decipher, and clues to lead guests to the next steps. The Student Mental Wellness table featured an array of handouts and fidgets, as well as themed placards, asking guests to respond to or consider emotions they felt through questions or character scenarios

presented at that station. Over at the Anishinaabemowin station, Manager Marjorie Southwind held a game of word bingo, whereby guests were challenged to say the Anishinaabemowin word for the picture displayed on the card. It was fun to see how many cards you could translate, and/or learn with Marjorie's help, and then go back later to challenge yourself: how many could you remember? There were many amazing door prize bundles to be won! The draw for those took place the next day at Biidaaban via Facebook live. Congratulations to all the winners who were super excited with the lots they won! A delicious, warm, and comforting spaghetti supper, complete with garlic bread, caesar salad, drinks, and blueberry cheesecake for dessert, was available throughout the event in the cafeteria dining area for families to enjoy at their leisure. The evening was full of excitement, connection, and learning, featuring fun activities on math, language, and wellness that all parties participated in.

Chi miigwech to Stephanie, Mark, Skylar, Raven, and Marjorie for your collaborative efforts in orchestrating this creative night of intrigue for all to enjoy.



## Grade 6/7 Trip to Science North

Miss Laura and students from her Grade 6/7 class (students everywhere reading that right now are juggling their hands back and forth, saying 6 – 7...) travelled to Sudbury on February 24 for a field trip to Science North. Educational Assistant, Maani Assiniwe, and a parent volunteer supported chaperoning the students throughout the exhibits. Bus driver Cheryl was also welcomed along on their tour of the centre. The students lovingly cared for her well-being during their match with the mirrors maze in the Phenomena Exhibit, which brought a smile and a chuckle to her day.

While students adjusted and settled following the lengthy bus ride (a bathroom run and stretching ensued), Miss Laura retrieved the tickets for everyone and handed out the day's tour schedule, which began at about 10:00am and concluded around 1:30pm.

Highlights of the field trip included:

- ★ Space Place
- ★ Phenomena Exhibit Hall
- ★ Wetlands
- ★ Discovery Theatre
- ★ Coding Patterns - instructional challenge

Students bustled excitedly between the interactive displays and interpretive centres, traversing the four floors via the spiral column on foot or by elevator, a route that became popular as the day went on! While the elevator only held about 8 people, most were keen to walk (jog) up and down the column, enjoying the dinosaur skeletal display suspended from the ceiling overhead and the views through the expansive atrium windows of people out skating on Ramsay Lake.

The most captivating exhibits, according to the students, were the Phenomena Hall and the Wetlands. However, lots of experiences unfolded throughout the day, including:

- The mirror maze, upside-down room, and electricity ball (which demonstrates how the transfer of energy from our bodies can power an iridescent light bulb!) offered lots of laughter as students explored these optical illusions.
- Viewing insects like tarantulas, stick bugs, and oversized beetles, and then being offered the choice to sample (eat) plain, ranch, or BBQ-flavoured bugs brought about a surprising number of willing participants! These students were up for anything! And their enthusiasm and curiosity were exceptional.
- Turtles, beavers, fish, and toads in their habitats were explored with students getting a closer look at each specimen.



- At the space exhibit, students tested their coordination and patience using the Canadarm to pick up/ move blocks and check out samples of astronaut food.
- They tried out first-aid equipment, including observing a working defibrillator and performing CPR on practice dummies. There were displays of human anatomy, like a baby in the womb, and an interactive display exploring the placement of the intestines, liver, heart, and so on.
- Students had a chance to construct objects with wheels and gears in a robotics section and to clock their sprint speed out of the starting blocks, with the results recorded in real time for them to review afterwards.
- One display allowed the student to drop a solid metal sphere into a pit of sand/gravel to replicate the force of a meteorite hitting the Earth. It demonstrated the subsequent crater depth and how this relates to the Sudbury region and the development of various mines we use currently, through this very same phenomenon.

After exploring all the exhibits, students gathered for an instructional lesson. A Science North staff member led the class through a simple coding exercise. Students were divided into small groups, given laptops, and shown a PowerPoint presentation on computer cells and how to write code. These cells, when placed in a specific sequence, create a result: a game, a moving diagram, or a starburst effect over a logo etc. Some were more interested in getting to lunch and the gift shop, perhaps, but others were intrigued and worked together to see what their team could accomplish.

Overall, the variety of exhibits prompted lots of questions for Miss Laura and the free-roaming Centre Staff! This day was a fun way to gain knowledge, to discover ourselves and our environment, and to explore possibilities – seeing and doing things we may not normally have a chance to see or even think about. The trip to Science North offered options and opportunities. It was an enjoyable and educational day out for everyone.



## Heritage Fair

The Ontario Heritage Fairs Association (OHFA) has been hosting an educational program since 1993 that offers elementary students the opportunity to explore Canadian history and cultural heritage. A variety of research methods are incorporated and taught throughout the program in preparation for creating the Fair displays. The platform encourages students to choose a topic of interest, to tell their story (where they live, family history, or a story about their community), and to showcase their final projects. A team of judges, including local Historian Allen Toulouse (Historical Researcher), Chevaun Toulouse (Environment and Climate Change Coordinator), Colleen Toulouse (Student Success Coordinator), Becky Toulouse, and Marjorie Southwind (Anishinaabemowin Manager), attended each display, asking students questions to determine their level of subject-matter expertise and evaluate the effort put into their projects. Criteria for projects and awards are set by OHFA. All students who participated in the Regional Fair received a ribbon, and those who placed in the top three for Grades 6, 7, and 8 received prizes. First-place winners will have a chance to compete at the Provincial Fair in early May!

Colleen offered, "Our Biidaaban Heritage Fair was considered an independent fair as it was just our school. This year, we extended invitations to other FN schools in the area. Lissa McGregor [Shawanosowe School] responded to participate. Our Heritage Fair was then listed as a Regional Fair by Canada's National History Society." Colleen has been instrumental in organizing the annual fair for several years and was very excited to have other schools in the region participate in this year's event!



Congratulations to the following student presentations, placing 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in the three Grade divisions, with both Sagamok and Birch Island students receiving recognition awards.

### Grade 6:

1. Kerenza Wells - Natural Indigenous Medicines
2. Uriah Taibossigai - Pitawankwat Sugar Bush (BI)
3. Izzy Tonge and Naveah Esuk - Dreamer's Rock (BI)

### Grade 7

1. Avery Toulouse - Indigenous Pictographs
2. Layla Wahsquonaikeshik - Water Serpent
3. Leisa Paibomsai and Kaetyn Blondine-Dube - 60s Scoop

## Grade 8

1. Ryder Toulouse & Caius Jones - MMIW
2. Kihanna Toulouse & Vincent Bennett - Addictions
3. Carly Abitong-Southwind & Maci Southwind - Suicide Rates



The following students were honoured recipients of these 2026 OHFA Award categories for their projects:

Ontario Historical Society - Leisa Paibomsai and Kaetyn Blondine-Dube - 60s Scoop, Gr 7

Ontario Human Rights Award - Ryder Toulouse & Caius Jones - MMIW - Gr 8

Ontario Ancestors Award - Uriah Taibossigai - Pitawankwat Sugar Bush - Gr 6

OHFA FNMI - Izzy Tonge and Naveah Esuk - Dreamer's Rock - Gr 6

OHFA Founders Award - Uriah Taibossigai - Pitawankwat Sugar Bush - Gr 6

OHFA Historical Thinking - Izzy Tonge and Naveah Esuk - Dreamer's Rock - gr 6

Ontario Library Association Research - Izzy Tonge and Naveah Esuk -Dreamer's Rock - gr 6

Ontario Women's History Network - Izzy Tonge and Naveah Esuk - Dreamer's Rock - gr 6

Two projects selected for the Heritage Fair National Showcase are by students from Shawanosowe School in Birch Island. The BI students attended for the day, supported by their Grade 5/6 teacher, Lissa McGregor. Lissa expressed how pleased she and the students were to receive Colleen's invitation to participate in Biidaaban's Heritage Fair, adding that this was the first of its kind they had ever participated in! The new learning experience was a welcome and exciting change for her and the students. Completing research and constructing displays offered a personal sense of contribution and satisfaction, as well as a social opportunity to meet new students and explore new environments through their journey and visit to Biidaaban.

Family and community members were invited to attend the Regional Heritage Fair on April 8 at Biidaaban, which was well-received. Best wishes to the competitors as they continue to the next round! Miigwech to everyone who played a role in organizing this event, and congratulations to all the students on their amazing displays, content, and diverse subject matter!

## *Anishinaabemowin Student Speeches*

Amanda Hardisty, Anishinaabemowin Teacher at Biidaaban Kinooomaagegamik, began working with students in September 2025 to cultivate a love for Anishinaabemowin, and increase language fluency and students continued second language development.

With the Language Conference in mind (March 26-28, 2026, in London, ON), students were encouraged to learn new vocabulary and build upon their existing skills. They were supported in continuing their language reclamation efforts. Amanda invited the students to compose a speech for the conference, using one of these two prompts: 'a story of their choice' or 'a positive role model in their lives'. Over the next few months, students completed these in English. Amanda, along with Anishinaabemowin Speaker, and fellow teacher, Carol Bob, then began to translate the English versions into Anishinaabemowin. It took a great deal of thought, time, and consulting back and forth with Elders in the community to confirm the translation and spelling according to Sagamok dialect. Teachers worked with the students to ensure that the meaning behind what they were writing about was not lost in the translation. Since Anishinaabemowin is a descriptive and emotional language, they hoped that the translated speeches would better capture the personal nature of the students' stories, allowing their feelings to shine through.

Once the students were satisfied with their stories, the next steps of practicing pronunciation and spoken fluency were taught. Students developed their abilities over the course of the next few months. They actively and devotedly participated during class time but also in an after-school Anishinaabemowin Club. Amanda proudly noted that "10 kids participated in the club! They showed up after school was done for the day and committed to being there every Wednesday." They were curious, dedicated, and desired to learn more about their native language.



Four confident speakers were selected to present their speech at the 2026 Language Conference – Naadmowaadaa Eshkiniigjik Wii Anishinaabemowaat – Let's Help Our Youth to Speak Our Language. They practiced extensively until they were ready to present their speech aloud and record it for submission to the Anishinaabemowin-Teg Language Conference Bursary application. Ms. Hardisty and Ms. Bob supportively coached students towards speaking clearly, fluidly, proudly, and loudly. As with all public speaking engagements, familiarity with your content is of utmost importance, but building confidence and helping students discover the power of their voice is equally important and perhaps more difficult. It is something that must come from the individual. Teachers can encourage, support, and provide tools to build up the student's confidence, but the final presentation relies on the student finding the courage and the desire to share their story and to find their voice in front of a large crowd of unknown people. A daunting task for most of us! Students practiced their speeches repeatedly, speaking aloud to each other, to themselves, to their teachers, to their families, and memorized their speech ahead of and during the March Break.



“Our language becomes alive,” Ms. Bob shared during an Anishinaabemowin class. “Use love and expression because

“Our language becomes alive,” Ms. Bob shared during an Anishinaabemowin class. “Use love and expression because



our language comes from here [she pointed to her heart's center] and it blooms from our love and expression as we speak." She went on to add, "We often speak with laughter in our voices because our speaking is coming from a place of love and kindness. Our voices flow and change in pitch when we speak because we are expressing ourselves and our story (what we are saying)." Both Carol and Amanda would read the speech aloud to the student first, then allow the student to repeat it aloud; assisting only if needed. Carol reminded students, "It takes a lot to learn our language, and we need to just start somewhere. Wherever we are at. Our

Papa and Grandma taught us our language through everyday things like cooking, cleaning, and preparing for the seasons. I wasn't even thinking about becoming a teacher until I volunteered. Now I'm a teacher of Anishinaabemowin and it's exciting to see you as students learn and speak the language." "Okay, now listen to my voice when I say your speech," says Carol as she reads through the developed passage once again. Then the student tries again. "It's about repetition and practice! Listening to a language helps us to know where the natural pause in words is, and proper pronunciation and inflection of the voice to bring emotion and meaning; otherwise, it drones on and people lose interest in what we have to say," she guides the students. "When we speak our language, it comes from our inner self, not off of a paper. And that's why our language comes alive. We are given these words from our ancestors, and this is a gift to be able to share this with others now," Carol fosters them. Amanda adds, "Some of the words are very long and have a lot of consonants, so it can get confusing quickly." She sits and rereads passages with students. She points out that the speech starts with introducing yourself; your name, your clan, where you are from; this has always been historically done when meeting someone new, to let the other person know who you are as Anishinaabe.

During the lesson, Carol breaks down some of the words to demonstrate past and present tense based on word endings. She talks about the sounds made when two vowels are placed together. Then circling back to practicing the student speeches, both teachers remind the students, "We are going to be nervous and that's okay. Overcoming that and building up your confidence is part of the process of learning. You want to look out at the crowd every once in a while, and hold your head up tall and proud, so your voice can be heard."

The following students shared these personal stories at the conference:

Avery Toulouse (Age 13, Grade 7): "Migizi-kwens miinwaa Miiigwans." Avery wrote a story about a little girl named migizi owens and her eagle feather miigwan.

Leisa Paibomsai (Age 11, Grade 6): "Aapji maamiikwenmaak ndodemag." Leisa wrote a story about her family and how much they inspire her in their own characteristics.

Parker Bob (Age 11, Grade 5): Title of speech: "Niin-dibaajmoonid." Parker tells a personal story about the day he was born that was shared by his mom.

Cohen Rivers (Age 10, Grade 5): Title of speech: "Mii maaba dedem-baa gaa nagamak nwii dibaajimowad." Cohen shared a story about his late dad and how much he admired his kindness.



You can listen to these four students reciting their speeches on the Sagamok Website. Navigate to the Community tab and choose The Sagamok Hour from the dropdown menu. Then, click on the April 12 show! Congratulations to our students who successfully presented their speeches in Anishinaabemowin during the conference banquet, showing great courage and love of their language. Their teachers, along with Sagamok Elders, language speakers, and community members, were present to hear them and cheer them on. The comments heard afterward included how proud they were of the students, how well they did, how fluidly they spoke, how well they presented themselves in front of the crowd of 500! It was profoundly moving to hear this young, upcoming generation of Sagamonians carrying forth Anishinaabemowin Aadziwin.



Chi miigwech and congratulations to Avery, Leisa, Parker, and Cohen for their brave participation in the Language Conference. We are all so proud of you! Chi Miigwech to Ms. Amanda and Ms. Bob, all staff, and family who encourage learning/using Anishinaabemowin whenever possible. Miigwech to everyone who continues to expand their knowledge and practice of the language, to those who share their language knowledge and teach it to others. You are all contributing to the preservation of our beautiful language for generations to come.



## Raven's Reminders February 'Kindness'

Acts of kindness, both big and small, have a profound impact on mental health. Whether it's helping a friend, volunteering, or offering a compliment, showing kindness improves your well-being and creates a ripple effect of positivity. Kindness not only strengthens relationships but also boosts your own mood and self-worth. It can be as simple as smiling at a stranger or offering a listening ear to someone in need. Ultimately, kindness is a powerful tool for fostering compassion, connection, and community.

Raven Hammond, BSW, RSW.  
Student Mental Wellness Specialist  
Education Department  
Sagamok Anishnawbek

C: (705) 863-0883





# ATTENDANCE MATTERS

## GIVE ATTENDANCE 100% EFFORT!

**YOUR CHILD ✓ IN SCHOOL ✓ EVERY DAY ✓**

BIIDAABAN KINOOMAAGEGAMIK

### NEW SEVERE FOOD ALLERGIES

- Peanuts/Nut Products
- Lactose
- Seafood/Shrimp
- Fish/Fish Products
- Pineapple
- Scented Products



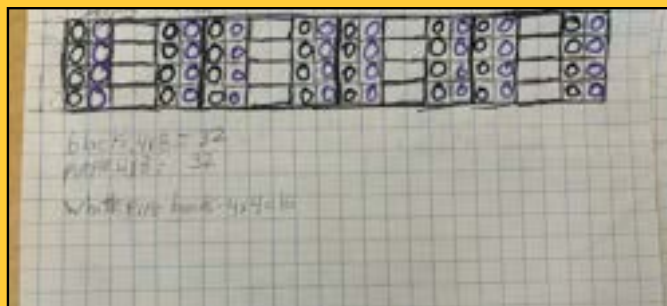
Please do not bring any of the above, or anything that contains the above, to Biidaaban School.



### Making Choker Necklaces in Math Class

Mr. Jay's and Mrs. Pam Solomon's "Grade 4/5 classes used math and multiplication to help them plan and design their own chokers [necklaces]. Once they had figured out how many beads they would need of each colour, they created their own chokers. They turned out great!" - Mrs. Solomon. A wonderful example of developing math skills, creativity, and self-expression.

*Photos courtesy of the Biidaaban Facebook Page - Miigwech!*



Biidaaban Autism Acceptance Classroom  
Door Decorating Challenge 2026



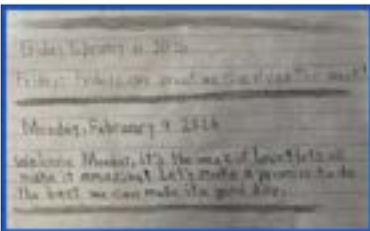
Biidaaban's *Sunshine Room* Teacher, Miss Michelle Lajeunesse, organized the following activities throughout the month of April in support of Autism Acceptance:

- April 2 - World Autism Awareness Day - was acknowledged with infinity pins and message bracelets provided to all Education staff and students, as well as an information handout.
- A door decorating challenge began April 7; see some of the colourful doors shared here! Judging is scheduled for April 23; winner (announced April 24) will receive a popcorn party.
- April 10 held an Awareness Walk around the block. Chi Miigwech, APS, for your escort!
- A Decades Dance on April 30, featuring prizes and fun for all, hosted by the Sunshine Room kids with music by DJs Ian and Kayla Blondin.

Chi Miigwech to Miss Michelle, Ms Alannah, Ms Shayla, Ms Al for providing all of these beawonderful activities for everyone to learn about autism, embrace it, and provide support.



Miss Michelle, by Kaetyn



Written piece by Charlotte



Biidaaban's Autism Acceptance Walk, April 10. Raise the Flag.

You are my Sunshine

hello sunshine



Ms. Alannah and her main man Revan



Birthday month celebration with presents.



Artwork by Aden. Mammal research project.



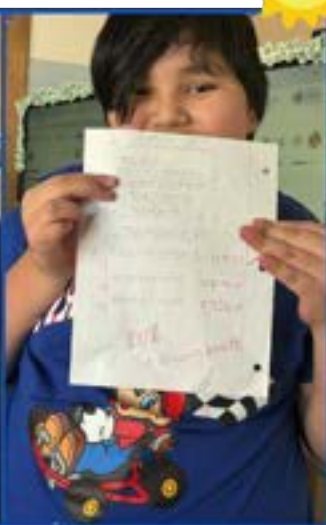
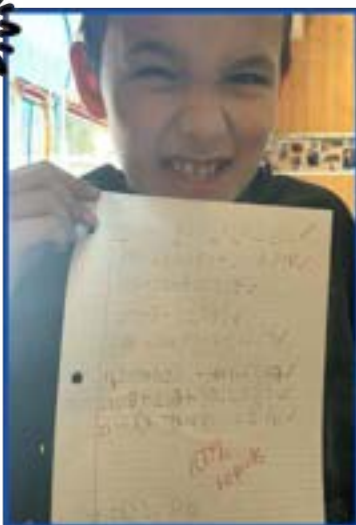
Artwork by Santino and Jacob



Artwork by Kaetyn. Mammal project.



*Shine bright, beautiful.*



# *The Sunshine Room: A Place to Belong*

Submitted by: Ms. Michelle

The Sunshine Room is more than just a classroom — it's a place where you can be unapologetically yourself.

It's a space where students are supported by their peers, their teacher, and their EAs. A place where differences are not just accepted but celebrated.

For many years, we worked toward having a place like "The Sunshine Room" in our school. It took a team of dedicated, positive, and caring people to make this dream a reality for our students. Now, in our second year as the Sunshine Room, we are seeing just how powerful that dream truly was. The growth we have seen in our students has been nothing short of amazing.

We see it in their confidence.

We see it in their voices.

We see it in the way they are learning to stand up — not just for themselves, but for each other.

In our classroom, we remind each other that we are a family. We show up for one another. And when things get tough, there's a sense of safety in knowing, "Ms. Michelle's got it."

As their teacher, my goal is simple but important: I want every student to leave our classroom feeling confident, capable, and ready for what comes next — especially those preparing to move on to high school. We focus on real-life skills, meaningful learning, and building independence in ways that truly matter beyond the classroom.

There are still people who may not fully understand what autism is, or what a classroom like the Sunshine Room looks like. But if you step inside, you will quickly see something powerful:

A group of incredible students who bring light, strength, and perspective into everything they do.

We often call them our "10 superheroes" — not because they are the same, but because each one is uniquely strong in their own way. They remind us every day that there is no one way to be, no one way to learn, and no one way to see the world.

During Autism Acceptance Month, we invite everyone to move beyond awareness and into understanding, respect, and true acceptance.

Because in the Sunshine Room, we know this to be true:

We are kind.

We are brave.

We are smart.

We are important.

Miigwetch Miigwetch Miigwetch



# Lifelong Learning Centre

## Upcoming Dates at the Lifelong Learning Centre...



Stay Tuned for More Details!

Rainbow Schools



## Adult Night School

Are you interested in obtaining credits towards an Ontario Secondary School Diploma?

- FREE two-hour classes every Monday and Wednesday
- Espanola High School and Sagamok Lifelong Learning Centre
- In-person and online options available
- Teacher on-site for assistance, internet and laptop use available

Register now! Contact Andrew Kendall (EHS) at 705-869-1590 or Anna Bourcier (LLC) at 705-865-2421.



The parking lot in front of the Lifelong Learning Centre is reserved for **elders and accessible parking only.**

All employees and community members are to park at the MEC.

## POST SECONDARY STUDENT SUPPORT APPLICATIONS **DUE BY JUNE 8TH**

Meet with a Guidance & Career Coach for assistance with Post Secondary Support Applications.

Contact the Lifelong Learning Centre at **705-865-2421 X928** to speak with a Guidance & Career Coach today.

717 Sagamok Road



## New DIRECT Line to the Lifelong Learning Centre

**705-501-8950**

Or Email:  
[LLC\\_intake@sagamok.ca](mailto:LLC_intake@sagamok.ca)



## Interested in a New Career?

We're considering offering two diploma programs in partnership with Northern College and need to know if there's interest.

- Social Service Worker Program  
2-year Diploma
- Business Administration Program  
2-Year Diploma

Fill out our 30-second survey!



For more information, please visit:

[www.SagamokAnishnawbek.com](http://www.SagamokAnishnawbek.com)

## *First Aid Training*

Staff members at the Lifelong Learning Centre took part in a St. John's Ambulance First Aid program at the end of January. Some needed to update their certification, and some were taking the training for the first time as part of health and safety compliance measures; it is imperative that staff have knowledge and training in these life-saving skills for both personal and professional purposes. While staff were learning some of the many important maneuvers throughout the day, we managed to capture a few who were not too shy to have their photo taken. Miigwech to Debbie for instructing the course, and inspiring a lot of laughter amongst students, creating a lighter atmosphere during what can be a serious and process-oriented training.

This, and numerous other specialized training programs, are part of the Lifelong Learning Centre's ongoing efforts to support learners, employees, and community members in reaching their full potential. If there is a program you or your department are seeking, consider contacting the Manager of Lifelong Learning Center (LLC), Claudette Jones, to discuss opportunities.



## *Safe Food Handlers Course*

The Lifelong Learning Centre held the Safe Food Handlers Course onsite on February 26. The course met its capacity within days of advertising, with 25 participants registered!

A waitlist has been made to accommodate all the interested participants when the next program is organized. Stay tuned for advertisements for course registration via the Digital Signs, Education and Community newsletters, websites, posters, and social media.

Congratulations to all the graduates from this one-day certification program! Those involved in this course expressed that they were registered to ensure they are compliant for their catering businesses, operating the Food Bank, demonstrating food preparation with students in their classrooms, and to assist with preparation of wild game meals at the Daycare and Biidaaban to support Land-Based Learning. Chi miigwech to these community members who dedicated their time and energy to gaining this necessary knowledge and certification in service to our community!

## *Sagamok Member Aminah Boukhonza-Toulouse Debuts Role in High School Musical at Sudbury 5 Game*



A big shout-out goes to Aminah Boukhobza-Toulouse on her debut theatrical performance at the Sudbury 5s basketball game on Thursday, February 19!

Aminah, along with fellow cast members from Sudbury's YES Theatre, performed an energetic musical piece from their production of High School Musical, during the halftime intermission. The lively performance by the young adult cast lit up centre court, drawing cheers and applause from hundreds of fans in attendance.

Congratulations to Aminah, an EHS student and member of the YES Theatre Group, on auditioning and being selected for one of the coveted roles in this Disney smash-hit musical! High School Musical opened at the YES Theatre on March 5. As a show of support for her acting endeavors and commitment, her family were excited members of the audience watching and cheering her on. Sagamok Education staff, community members, and friends were among the ticket holders as well; they were elated to be there as her #1 fans. The show ran from March 5 to March 12, with both matinee and evening shows available. The two-hour, family-friendly performance was SOLD OUT!

Stay tuned to Bimaadiziwin Radio and the next Education Newsletter for a full-coverage interview highlighting Aminah Boukhobza-Toulouse's story, including her behind-the-scenes journey involved with the High School Musical performance, how she became an actress, and the inspiration behind her pursuit of theatre and the arts.

On behalf of Sagamok, we congratulate Aminah and wish her the very best on her theatrical and educational pathway. Aminah, you are a positive role-model and representative of our community, and we're so proud of you for following your passion for the arts, and your success!



## *An Interview with a Sagamok Actress!*



The following is the transcript from an interview recorded for the April 12 episode of Bimaadiziwin Radio: The Sagamok Hour, Sagamok's radio show. The interview is between two Sagamok creatives, Radio Show Host and Videographer, Bradley Trudeau, and YES Theatre Actress-Performer, Aminah Toulouse.

Aminah recently held a coveted role in YES Theater's Disney's High School Musical which ran from March 5-12 and was a sold-out performance! Her cast and company debuted a teaser of the performance at a Sudbury 5 half-time show on February 19.

The interview shares a small snippet of Aminah's personal road to acting and the world of theatre, including the effort involved in pursuing her interests and dreams, as well as her sources of inspiration. Perhaps Aminah's story will connect with you in some way. It is wonderful to have youth voices on our radio show, showcasing the positive role models they are, and providing encouragement to peers who are also exploring their own interests and education pathways. Miigwech, Aminah, for being an inspiration to our community and congratulations on your success!

Here we go....5, 4, 3, 2,..1.

**Bradley:** Aho, Aanii, this is Bradley Trudeau. You're listening to Bimaadiziwin Radio, the Sagamok Hour. on 94.1, the Moose FM, Manitoulin Island's biggest variety. And I'm here today with Aminah Toulouse. Could you introduce yourself and tell us a bit about yourself?

**Aminah:** Aanii, my name is Aminah and I love theater.

**Bradley:** What inspired you to get into acting and performing?

**Aminah:** There was this program that happened in Sagamok with "A Road to Freedom," and it showed me how much I really enjoyed acting and that sort of stuff. And then this movie, Wicked, came out, I think, during the winter, and I just fell in love with the music in it, and I started getting into musical theater.

**Bradley:** That's cool. How did it feel when you found out you got a role in Disney's High School Musical with YES Theater?

**Aminah:** It felt like I was floating on air. It was so thrilling to be in something that I knew I would love and to be with people who I would be surrounded by who love the same thing that I do.

**Bradley:** That's awesome. So, it was a core group of youth around your age that did the performance, and was this your first production?

**Aminah:** Yeah.

**Bradley:** Oh, nice! What has been your favorite part of being in the production?

**Aminah:** I would say probably all the friendships I made and how I evolved during my time on there.

**Bradley:** Awesome. So, you learned a lot about the stage life. It's fun! Can you describe your role as a cheerleader in the ensemble and what it was like to audition for the role?



**Aminah:** So, for my audition, I had to make myself a monologue and also sing a song. So that was like, very scary. But right when I got in there, I felt like I was a totally different person. And my role was a nerd. So about halfway through the show, they switched my part to moderator, where I had to say some lines during the decathlon. And yeah, I think that role just gave me so much to be and gave me so many opportunities with YES Theater.

**Bradley:** That's cool. It's very interesting. I used to work in film as well. And I know how hard it is to do your first show. What's the biggest challenge for you -- during rehearsals or preparing for the live show?

**Aminah:** I would probably say remembering my lines. Because I think being in theater, you have to hold yourself a little bit higher and try your very best every day. But sometimes I'd obviously forget my lines and I'd kind of tear myself down for it. But everyone makes mistakes. Everyone knows that. Like you're going to forget your lines from time to time, or you'll forget what part you're singing. But yeah, I'd probably say it was remembering your lines.

**Bradley:** Nice. Yeah. And that's some good advice to just, you know, just push through it, push forward. Don't get down on yourself all about that. As a youth from Sagamok, what does it mean to you to be on stage and represent your community?

**Aminah:** It means a lot! There was this other girl from Wiki. She was a brainiac with me. And she, the way she talked about being in Wiki and was able to have the opportunity to go to Sudbury and do this was amazing. And I was so inspired by her. And I didn't really look at it from that point of view. And now, like I see from her point of view, and I'm so incredibly proud of myself to show younger kids that there are things out there that they can experience.

**Bradley:** Yeah. Other than, just stay on the rez for a little bit, there's a whole world out there. And it's great to go and experience that. Do you have a favourite song or moment in the show?

**Aminah:** So, there's this scene with our Chad and Taylor, where they're planning this big thing to tear apart Gabriella and Troy. And Chad hits on, like, yeah, he hits on Taylor and it's like the funniest moment out of the whole show. And during rehearsals, we all could not stop laughing, which was really, really funny.

**Bradley:** Nice. What are your dreams for the future, and do you see yourself continuing in acting or performing arts?

**Aminah:** Yes, I 100% see myself in acting in specifically theater, because I think theater is somewhere where I want to be when I grow up. I've already started researching schools specifically for theater and theater programs. And I hope to be in more YES Theatre productions because YES Theatre is such an amazing company to be in because it shows you where you could go. And our directors, April and Gaia, they showed me how to push myself and how I can properly be in theater.

**Bradley:** Oh, nice. I know there's, Canadore, that college has a good theater program there as well. I know in that community, they have a strong like theater presence as well. They have what they call the Fringe Festival. So, they have like many different artists putting on their like one-man shows, two-man shows and different venues and stuff. So, Final question, Aminah. What advice would you give to the other young people who are thinking about following their dreams like you are?

**Aminah:** I'd say do it. Don't be scared. Like it took me awhile to find something that I love. And once you find that thing, you should just do it and work for it because you're not going to be good at it right away. It took a lot of practice for me to become a good singer, a good dancer, and a good actor. So, push for what you want, and don't be afraid.

**Bradley:** With a bit of dedication and self-discipline.

**Aminah:** Yeah.

**Bradley:** That's very wise for someone your age. Well, thank you for making the time to come out to the show and, you know, best of luck with your future.

**Aminah:** Thank you.

**Bradley:** Naahow baa-maa.

*Photo credit: YES! Theatre Production*



## Raven's Reminders March 'Student Safety'

Ensuring student safety, both physically and emotionally, is crucial for fostering a positive learning environment. Safe schools are ones where students feel valued, respected, and supported. Mental wellness programs that teach conflict resolution, stress management, and emotional awareness can create an atmosphere where students thrive. Educators, staff, and families working together to create safe spaces help students focus on learning, personal growth, and social development.

Raven Hammond, BSW, RSW.  
Student Mental Wellness Specialist  
Education Department  
Sagamok Anishnawbek

C: (705) 863-0883





## *Cultural Support Series at EHS facilitated by Sophie Pheasant*

Espanola High School Student Support Worker, Karen Boyer, and Lifelong Learning Centre Guidance & Career Coach, Josephine Toulouse, coordinated cultural support days for students through a 3-part series of specialized programs. The cultural series included:

- Beading Techniques 101;
- Regalia Making: choose from a) Shawl, b) T-Dress or Day Dress, c) Prep of Regalia Accessories/Appique (moccasins, leggings, purse or hair ties); and
- Ribbon Skirt or Shirt Making.

Each program was offered on two consecutive occasions beginning in January from 1:00pm-4:30pm. This time block allowed students to really immerse themselves in the teaching and complete an extensive project aligned with their personal goals. A supply kit including a felt pad, sewing needles, a wax block, thread, scissors, and an array of coloured seed beads were provided for today's

beading session. Assorted snacks and a pizza dinner were also supplied. Everyone was welcome to attend! A late bus was arranged by EHS/Student Support Workers to give students a more relaxed timeframe to work on their projects. Programs will continue to operate into the late Spring.

The beading study taught students:

- HILL stitch – This stitch's appearance was thought to resemble the hills and rolling landscape surrounding the Lakota or Plains people. Called a 'lazy stitch,' but it is far from that, Sophie quipped. It requires focus and accuracy!
- FLAT stitch - Used for Anishinaabe flowers and making curved lines found in florals or leaf designs.
- DASH stitch – An equal space between beads and the length of stitches. Sophie demonstrated how this is a forward-moving stitch. Put 3 beads on [your needle], sew these in place, then move

forward from underneath your canvas an equal distance from the 3 beads you have already placed (sewn), and bring the needle up to lay your next three beads in a 'skip' pattern. Used a lot for woodland style of beadwork, mostly in Iroquois fashions; they would 'dash' a lot of their beadwork.

- CURVE stitch – Freehand a curved line on the felt sampler to follow. Lay down five beads, go back up from the bottom at the third bead, lay five more beads, back three, lay five, and so on. For smaller curves, lay three beads, then go back up through the second bead to lay the next three, and so on. This was used for vines, stems, or leaves, for example.
- DOTS – Typically sewn half an inch apart, with half an inch of space surrounding them away from a curved line of beads. Draw attention to an area or add a design element.
- FLOWER – Single bead in the centre, then lay seven beads of a contrasting colour around the centre bead, and tack it back through the bead where you started (#1 of 7)



Each student chose their own design and colour scheme for each stitch sample, and then it was a matter of learning the stitch and repeating it. To begin, Sophie instructed students to start with a thread that is the length of the distance between their elbow

and their hand. They learned to drag the thread through the wax block before getting started to help beads slide onto the needle and glide through the fabric more easily. Students learned about the 'loop



system' as a means of properly securing beads in place, and a knot technique to finish and tie off their work. Sophie coached students to be mindful of their stitch tension and to remain consistent. She helped them recognize how the appearance of their work changes when this is inconsistent. It takes practice, she reminded them gently.

"We don't normally get things right the very first time we attempt something. Exercise patience with yourself and kindness," Sophie shared. With more practice, you will get quicker at beading – quicker at counting beads onto the needle, making straighter rows, and getting your pattern to flow. Using the example of students having just completed a 3-inch-long hill stitch section in the first hour of the class, you can begin to gauge how long a beaded piece will take you. Aside from the regalia Sophie had available as samples, she suggested that students could also make earrings, bracelets, brooches, bookmarks, etc., by using these same basic beading techniques.

Sophie Pheasant, Facilitator of the cultural series, resides on Manitoulin Island and is renowned for her teachings and knowledge sharing of Anishinaabe and First Nations' ways. She takes great care

in sharing what she has learned throughout her personal journey, whether culturally related, self-development, or awareness. As she sat with students --everyone absorbed in beading -- she explained the history of the various stitches and how they came to be. Sophie first learned about beadwork when she was 14 or 15 years old, she recalled. "Beading techniques and beading styles come from different nations," Sophie provided. "You can tell where beaded pieces are made by the way they look, certain patterns/colours used, and even the person who did the beading based on their unique style, right down to the stitch tension." Beading is a form of personal expression, Sophie offered, and a great way to stay focused on the present time and not be distracted or overwhelmed by what happened behind us or what lies ahead. While it takes significant time to complete a beaded piece, Sophie encouraged, we can take great pride in the accomplishment once it is finished and reflect on what we gave of ourselves: our talents, perseverance, concentration, and willingness to keep working at it until we are

*opening a different dimension. It is a good idea to be in solitude. It can cause us to start thinking about our ancestors and perhaps be visited by spirits or memories. Speak to them, acknowledge them, offer semaa in appreciation of them looking out for you; checking in on you. Spirit beads (said to be an odd bead out of place/colour pattern) may turn up in your work and are thought to be visits from ancestors or*



satisfied with the end product. Sophie offered this to the students:

*"Creative work offers an opportunity for us to escape; get out of our heads and thoughts and feel relaxed and calm. So, when you bead, you should be in a good space, with kind, positive energies going into your work. Negativity or stress will show up in the work. When we are beading, we are*

*spirits. While some may see it as a mistake/ flaw, that is what makes our work personal."*

Sophie went on to discuss how she works with neurodiverse students and the importance of using different teaching strategies to address various needs that arise. She also relayed stories from her teenage years/young adulthood, as well as her personal struggles and lessons learned. She mentioned how the concepts of Identity by Design, philosophies touted to help you break old habits, rewire your mind, and become who you were meant to be all contributed to bring about a personal change in her outlook. The concepts explore the idea that by creating a 'new blueprint' for yourself, you can erase outdated personal mindsets and societal norms that no longer serve you, and discover or create a new identity that embodies who you want to be and who you are meant to be. The philosophy argues that identity is not fixed but can be built over time through repeated beliefs, emotional patterns, and behaviours. Sculpting yourself anew by removing

barriers imposed by yourself and society, reprogramming subconscious habits/beliefs, and realigning actions can all help you achieve your desired identity and a sustainable, personal transformation.

“To bead or not to bead,” one student added “punily” to the group, but many were so absorbed and attentive to their crafty creations that the play on Shakespeare’s words may have been heard only by the few immediately beside him. The room was quiet as students focused, listening intently to Sophie, and attempting to recreate her demonstration of the various stitches on their own bead sampler. The time and space to bead and learn about beading -- a significant cultural form of self-expression and identity as well as a therapeutic art form -- was well received by the students. The completed bead samplers identified that each student was as unique as their beaded creations, in both the vibrancy of the colours chosen and the diversity of their finished designs.



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## Raven's Reminders April 'Self-Care'

Self-care is about prioritizing your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It includes activities that rejuvenate and restore your energy, whether it's taking a walk, practicing yoga, meditating, or simply relaxing with a good book. Self-care isn't selfish—it's necessary to maintain balance and prevent burnout. Regular self-care routines are integral for overall health and can improve productivity, happiness, and resilience in the face of life's challenges.

Raven Hammond, BSW, RSW.  
Student Mental Wellness Specialist  
Education Department  
Sagamok Anishnawbek

C: (705) 863-0883





## *Career Day*

Guidance and Career Coaches hosted a Career Day presentation on February 19 at the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC). Community members and students from Biidaaban and EHS were among those present to learn about careers from the following three employers: Z'Gamok Enterprises Inc. (ZEI), Sagamok Human Resources, and Vale.

Supporting local has always been at the forefront of Sagamok's conversations about planning for Education and Employment pathways. Education and employment support services help community members explore career options, find good job opportunities, and understand the education needed for these careers. These services involve talking with employers, students, employees, and other members to learn about their needs and goals.

One ongoing goal is to meet the needs of our community. What kinds of skilled workers do local employers need? Where, what, and how can we offer special training to help workers support each other? Offering jobs and education so members can stay in the community or close to home, if they want, is also an important part of these talks. And if members want to go elsewhere for education, personal growth, experiences, or to build their skills and resumes through jobs that might only be available in other areas, how can we support them on their path and help them succeed?

Career Day was developed by Guidance & Career Coaches to offer members an opportunity to learn about the possibilities open to them right here at home. During the session, Grade 8 and High School students converged at the LLC to visit the three visiting employers: ZEI, HR, and Vale. Learning about careers and

the requirements for achieving your dream job is not always discussed in the classroom. It was invaluable for Grade 8 students to attend, as they were on the threshold of making their academic course selections for their High School career. Choosing their learning stream begins in Grade 9 and sets them up for College or University pathways, depending on their selections. For EHS students, the focus is more on what they will do after graduation. Which College, University or Training program offers the education needed to get into the career they are most interested in?

Representatives from ZEI, HR, and Vale shared valuable insights, encouraging attendees to reflect and be inspired. Each company highlighted its core values, emphasizing “we invest in you” and “be true to your core values and interests.” The three-hour session included a question-and-answer period, interactive displays and slideshows, and opportunities to connect with Guidance and Career Coaches.



As they rotated through stations, the attendees discovered a broad sampling of careers found in the mining, construction, forestry, electrical, health and wellness services, administration, political office, heavy equipment, operators, and communications, including the sometimes less obvious support roles that are critical within each of these industries. Along with organizing and advertising the event, Guidance & Career Coaches helped facilitate the event by welcoming visitors upon arrival, introducing visitors to the three representative areas, and offering a door prize, swag, and sustenance. They also outlined the complimentary services available to all learners at the LLC: resume writing, aptitude assessment, assisting with education or employment connections, application assistance, program support/funding, and encouragement towards an individual’s pathways to success. Chi miigwech to the dedicated staff of the Lifelong Learning Centre for providing this opportunity to explore careers in these industries, and to the representatives from ZEI, HR, and Vale for their commitment of time and effort to support this afternoon of learning.

**ZGAMOK ENTERPRISES**  
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# UNIONS MEET AND GREET



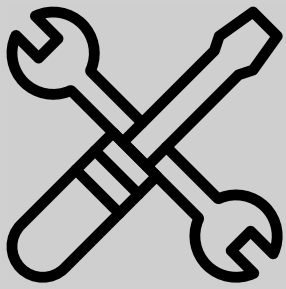
Sagamok members had the opportunity to connect directly with union representatives and industry professionals during a recent meet-and-greet held at the Lifelong Learning Centre on March 25. Though the turnout was modest, those who attended benefitted greatly from one-to-one, informative dialogue.

When discussing why the trades continue to grow in importance, representatives from several sectors, including carpentry, heavy equipment operation, and electrical, all offered valuable insight. A consistent message was present amongst all speakers: the demand for skilled workers is rising, and they are always looking to expand their labour force. With many new projects on the horizon within the Northeastern Ontario region, many sectors are eager to bring more young workers in.

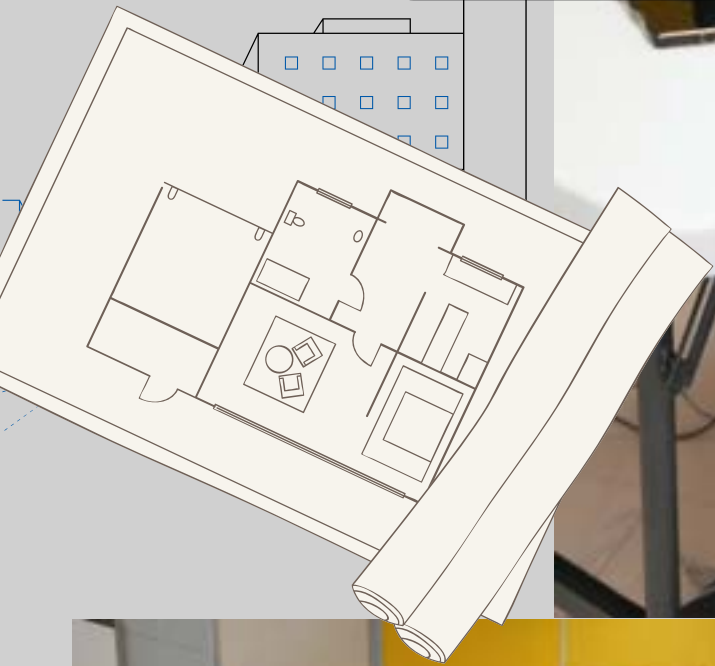
Yan Gervais, a market deployment representative with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) local 687, shared that this was his first time doing career outreach in Sagamok. Having worked in construction here in Sagamok, he noted how it felt meaningful to return in this capacity. Yan emphasized that the trades aren't going anywhere, making note of the stable and structured path forward that unions provide for youth looking to build their future careers. Across the board, representatives all mentioned the paradoxical nature of the demand for labour. While there is a strong need for workers, it remains difficult for new workers to gain experience. With a high volume of projects in constant circulation and a lack of apprenticeship opportunities, new workers often struggle to find direction.

Like Gervais, carpentry representatives Logan Kane and Rheal Gelinas focused less on wages and more on what shapes the day-to-day experience of the job. Health benefits and pensions came up right away, but they kept returning to training and safety as the primary benefit. Although not as flashy as wages, the way unions structure training makes a distinct difference. Classes remain small (usually around twelve people) allowing for the training to be focused on the individual, rather than a large class. Apprentices work closely with tradespeople and are offered experience with full-scale builds. With clear standards to meet, whether for a Red Seal certification or something equivalent, the representatives argue that unions raise the bar for everyone coming into the workforce. Additionally, unions smooth out a lot of the uncertainty that can be found when starting in the trades. With more consistent work opportunities, apprentices aren't left choosing between earning and learning since training and placements are paid.





Charlie Peters, a representative from the Heavy Equipment operator union, highlighted the importance of awareness beyond traditional hydro-related work. This includes opportunities in mining and large infrastructure projects. He also noted unions' role in not just building a workforce but creating a sense of community.



The representatives emphasized that unions are, at their core, a family: a labour force that shares the goal of supporting one another while contributing to meaningful projects. The Unions Meet and Greet provided a meaningful opportunity for Sagamok members to explore pathways for skill development, training, and employment. Conversations were also sparked about what it means to build a secure and stable career and how to contribute back to the Sagamok community. As demand for the trades continues to grow, events like these help ensure that opportunities and knowledge about local unions are accessible for Sagamonians, strengthening both the regional workforce and the community.



## Indigenous Labour Market Information Survey

Jacinta Eshkakogan is the Labour Market Information Surveyor at the LLC. Here is a brief description she provided about the type of data she gathers and what it is used for:

The Indigenous Labour Market Information (ILMI) Survey collects essential data on education, training, and employment within First Nation communities. The survey takes approximately 45 minutes to complete and can be filled out online or on paper, with or without assistance. All information collected is confidential. Only aggregate data — such as employment rates, education levels, and demographic trends — is shared with Service Canada. No personal or identifying information is released.

The survey addresses the recognized gap in up-to-date labour market information for on-reserve communities, where national surveys are not conducted. The results support informed decision-making, effective program design, economic development, and Indigenous self-determination in areas related to post-secondary education, skills training, and employment. Individuals who complete a survey will receive a \$50.00 incentive by way of direct deposit from Sagamok Finance Department. All those who are: (1) age 15 and older; and (2) are a Band Member of Sagamok Anishnawbek are eligible.

Jacinta provided the following report summarizing the results of the data collected:

### ILMI Survey – Summary Report

This report summarizes participation metrics from the Indigenous Labour Market Survey. The data provides insight into respondent age, on/off reserve status, and survey completion methods.

Total Survey Completion: 71

#### Age Distribution of Respondents

- Youth (15–24): 26 respondents

- Adults (24–49): 34 respondents
- Elders (50+): 11 respondents

The largest proportion of respondents fell within the adult (24–49) category.

#### Residency Status

Respondents identified their residency as follows:

- On-reserve members: 47
- Off-reserve members: 24

Most survey participants reside on reserve, while a significant portion of responses also reflect off-reserve perspectives.

#### Survey Completion Method

Participants completed the survey using the following methods:

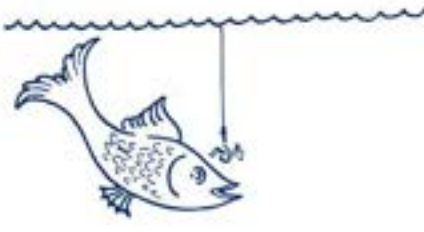
- Email / Online link: 45
- In-person (paper): 26

Most responses were collected through the online survey link, the ones collected in-person on a paper copy were from the community post created for the Lifelong Learning Centre as well as the mini college/university fair.

#### Summary

Overall, the survey achieved a total of 71 completed responses with balanced representation across age groups, residency status, and completion methods.





**EHS Ravens  
Land-based Learning  
Ice Fishing Adventure**

February 2026



The Ravens class, led by their teacher, Mr. Beamish, and supported by Karen Boyer, Indigenous Student Support Worker from Espanola High School, travelled to Big LaCloche Lake for some outdoor learning. What a gorgeous day Creator provided to go ice fishing with peers and enjoy a hike through the bush from Fort LaCloche to the 'secret' ice fishing location.

Students were supported by Arthur Trudeau, and staff, from Mukwa Adventures, on this brisk, blue-sky day. Equipped with tackle, ice fishing holes, chairs, and a campfire complete with hotdogs and snacks, the Ravens enjoyed the opportunity to spend the day jigging, enjoying the beauty of their surroundings, its tranquil offerings, while absorbing the lessons as only nature can provide.

Miigwech to everyone who helped organize this unique day of learning for the Ravens.





## EHS Arm Wrestling Club

The East Region Arm Wrestling High School Tournament was held in Hawkesbury on Friday, March 22, 2024, at which the following Sagamok youth participated as representatives of the Espanola High School Arm Wrestling program: **Rhys Paibomsai, Blaze Paibomsai, Maddox Toulouse-Abitong, RJ Stoneypoint, Kia Trudeau, and Brice Southwind.**

EHS really locked in placing in the gold, silver, and bronze categories, with some participants winning awards for BOTH left- and right-arm wrestling. The following high schools were represented at the tournament:

ÉSC Hawkesbury, ESC Plantagenet, ÉSC L'Escale, ÉSC Le Relais, ÉSC Casselman, ÉSC Embrun, ÉS publique Le Sommet, ÉSC La Citadelle, Opeongo High School, Vankleek Hill Collegiate Institute, Russell High School, Espanola High School, L'Académie de la Seigneurie, St. Matthew Catholic High School, Holy Trinity Catholic High School, and La Salle High School.

Arm wrestling has really grown in popularity over the past few years, partly due to social media ambassadors, but for many, for reasons of their own, who do not play traditional school sports, it provides a great alternative. It is a sport that allows students to maintain or improve physical conditioning while also boosting confidence. Thanks to coach Gabriel Keresztesi, Technologies teacher at Espanola High School, supported by Josephine Toulouse, Guidance & Career Coach and Sagamok student support



worker at EHS, and of course, the group of arm wrestlers were supported over the course of the school year through dedicated training and unwavering conviction! "Performing in this sport requires grit and a willingness to put one's pride at risk, but those students who do so develop strength and character in the process," relayed Mr. Keresztesi during the tournament. Students were chaperoned to Hawkesbury and able to participate thanks to many dedicated volunteers, including Julianne Steedman & Makayla, Bill Croft, Philippe Louzon, and Selena Sutton. They provided support through fundraising efforts, organizing logistics, transporting, and feeding the crew of athletes.



The tournament boasted special guest appearances by Devon and Lauden Larratt. Devon is considered one of the greatest arm wrestlers of all time and is ranked among the best in North America. He has significantly helped to popularize and reinvigorate the sport. Rick Blanchard refereed the tournament, and Eric Roussin was the

Tournament Director. The coaches summarized the gripping competition by expressing pride in their participants, "We could not be prouder of the hard work put in by these athletes, and the way they represented themselves and our school at the tournament." Chi miigwech to all those who helped make this experience possible, and congratulations to all participants for being victorious in this sport, growing stronger physically, mentally, and intellectually.



# Education Supports



## *Embracing New Opportunities*

Aanii,

I wanted to take this opportunity to share with the community that I have taken a new position within the organization and am no longer at Biidaaban. I want to acknowledge all of you: students past and present, caregivers, elders, knowledge keepers, coworkers, other departments and community members, who have been such an important part of my journey in my time as both teacher and in leadership while at Biidaaban. I am humbled to have shared with you in the many special memories – celebrations, milestones, and everything in between. Please know that you each have a special place in my heart. – G'zaaginim and Miigwech.

*Becky*

## Local/Community Resources

### Sagamok Community Wellness

- **Phone:** 705-865-2171

Offers community mental health programs and counselling referrals through the Community Wellness Department.

### Sagamok Youth Wellness Hub

A culturally-designed youth space providing free mental health, substance use support, primary care, and wellness services for ages ~12-25 (may require local contact for hours and appointments).

## Apps & Digital Tools

- **WeMatter Campaign** - Youth Well-Being
- **Calm** - Mindfulness/Meditation
- **Insight Timer** - Mindfulness/Meditation
- **Smiling Mind** - Mindfulness/Meditation

- In immediate danger or serious emergency, always call 911 first.
- Many resources listed here are free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- When calling a general youth line (e.g. Kids Help Phone), ask to be connected to an Indigenous crisis responder if available.

[www.SagamokAnishnawbek.com](http://www.SagamokAnishnawbek.com)



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## Special Education Update

Aanii Kina Wayaa,

Just a little update from the department of Special Education. The Parent Handbook for Special Education has been completed and posted on the Sagamok Education Website along with the Special Education Plan. Please review when you have time.

At this time, I would like to say Chi-Miigwech to the Education team for their valuable input into the Parent Handbook and Special Education Plan. A special Chi-Miigwech to Becky Toulouse for her valuable input and knowledge. She worked alongside me to help complete the documents. Also, Chi-Miigwech, Paulette Carter-Owl for all the editing, revising, and reviewing with myself and Becky.

Currently, I am working on updating the Special Education Policy for Sagamok Anishnawbek. I am forecasting the Policy to be completed by September 2026.

### Anishinaabemowin Conference

I attended the Language Conference in London, Ontario. This was one of the best learning opportunities for me because I got to attend with 2 of my language influencers; my Husband, Maurice, and my Dad, Louis Fournier. Both of these men speak the language and speak to each other in Anishinaabemowin all the time. I love listening to them converse. What made the conference so special was they both got to see what I do when I attend conferences, but not only that, they were in a place where they felt comfortable, relaxed, and enjoyed meeting people and speaking the language. For them it was a place to “nbwaachid” and listen to other speakers talk about the importance of learning and teaching the language. Both my husband and Dad really enjoyed the conference. I am so glad I got to experience this learning opportunity with both of them. My goal is to start answering them back in Anishinaabemowin instead of using English. It will take many mistakes and laughter, but I’ll do it because I received so much encouragement from Barbara Nolan and Alan Corbiere; 2 of my favorite mentors.

Miigwech,

Allison Abitong,  
System Principal of Student Success  
Sagamok Anishnawbek Education



## Literacy Update

Hello Everyone,

I wanted to share some updates on what is happening in literacy for the second half of the school year.

Upcoming Literacy Initiatives and Activities include the following:

- **Biidaaban Family Fair Night (February)**

We are planning a family engagement event that will feature activities and resources across multiple areas: literacy, numeracy, special education, language, outdoor education, and mental health. The date and official title are still being finalized, and we will keep you informed as details develop.

- **Scholastic Book Fair**

Scheduled for April 13–17, providing students and families with opportunities to engage with new books and foster a love of reading.

- **School-Wide Reading Challenge**

Launching at the beginning of February through Beanstack; an online reading challenge platform.

- **Mid-Year Literacy Assessments**

January marks the start of mid-year assessments for reading and writing, including Acadience and Ontario Writing Assessment (OWA). These will be conducted throughout the remaining weeks of January.

- **Progress Monitoring and Interventions**

Continued focus on supporting students at risk through UFLI interventions and frequent check-ins using Acadience Progress Monitoring to ensure targeted instruction and student success.

- **Book Vending Machine Program**

Ongoing monthly distribution of books to students through the book vending machine initiative.

- **New Teacher Literacy Block Observations**

New teachers will have the opportunity to observe literacy blocks in other classrooms to gather strategies and ideas for their own practice.

- **Library Programming**

Planning is underway for monthly library sessions for classes, beginning in the last week of January. Frequency may increase based on initial success.

- **Collaborative Teacher Support**

Weekly collaboration with teachers as needed, focusing on Fluency, UFLI, Progress Monitoring, Planning, and Co-Teaching.

Miigwech,

Stephanie Sonnenburg

Literacy Resource Teacher, Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik

sonnenburgs@biidaabanschool.ca





*Mino ezhiyaayeng*  
**Lifting our Spirits** - Education & Cultural Departments collaborate to support learners of every age with a wellness series held at the Elders Eagle Lodge.



## *Mino ezhiyaayeng: Lifting our Spirits*

Student Mental Wellness Specialist, Raven Hammond, and Cultural Support Worker, Bernadette Southwind, collaboratively led their first of five wellness sessions on March 18, at the Elders Eagle Lodge. The 5-session empowerment program, **Mino ezhiyaayeng** - Lifting our Spirits was offered to Elders on Wednesdays for about one hour in the morning. The program's intent is to strengthen confidence and self-worth, reduce stress/anxiety, and foster meaningful social interaction. Everyone was welcome.

Gathering around the tables in the large, cozy dining room, Elders gradually made their way to the session and introduced themselves to fellow participants. Among the gatherers were Larry, Barb, Debra, and Barbara! The introductory session incorporated building rapport and a sense of relaxed connection between the workers and residents, but Elders were soon on board with the creative activity at hand and began interacting at their own pace and when they felt comfortable.

"What does wellness mean to you?" was the topic of conversation in the background, but the participants' primary focus was making flowers from clay. Residents chose the colours they were attracted to and began working the pliable, colourful clay into the spheres and sausage shapes that would ultimately become their flower. The diversity of flower styles, colour combinations, and texturing was uniquely individual. The activity -- soothing in nature -- allowed freedom of movement, choice, thought/intention, and creativity, with everyone's participation being self-driven. While residents sculpted their floral creations, Raven provided some gentle conversation and reflective information in the background, supported by Bernadette's Anishinaabemowin provision and cultural knowledge-sharing. This included supporting Elders to nurture their personal awareness and healing if needed, through Anishinaabe-Aadziwin methods.

When Raven posed the question, "What does Wellness mean to you?" one elder responded with, "That's a good question," and everyone laughed jovially. "I learned that from a politician," she chuckled amusedly, again drawing laughter from participants. When Elders were asked, "What does Minookimi (Spring) mean to you?" the answers flowed more rapidly!

**"Alive!" "I love flowers." "I love to see the violets." "Putting away winter clothes."**

One response in particular inspired a roar of laughter: **"The snow is gone!"** Outside the windows of the Lodge, winter hadn't even contemplated leaving!

Bernadette reminded residents that Spring was only a day or so away. "Oh yeah," came the group's response. "Not with all of the snow we just had!" they laughed and chided collectively. What a winter we have had in 2026! One for the books, that's for sure. The Elders completed their clay flower creations and their cups of coffee and discussed the following week's activity. All were invited to attend the upcoming sessions: same place, same time! Everyone was encouraged to bring a friend or tell fellow residents. The remaining sessions included:

- Homemade Card Making (using photos of their clay flowers) with the social connection theme of, "Who are people you can depend on?"
- Painting – "What kind of hobbies bring you happiness?"
- Mindfulness Stone – "What are you grateful for?"
- The final session was to be a resident-driven activity of choice with time to reflect on "What did you learn from this program?" A certificate of celebration was awarded to all participants in recognition of their involvement and dedication to their personal growth.

## Welcoming Minookimi



On March 19, ahead of Minookimi (Spring), Sagamok Education's Student Mental Wellness Specialist, Raven Hammond, co-facilitated a Spring Renewal Wellness Teaching with Cultural Worker, Bernadette Southwind. Community members and staff attended a Welcoming Minookimi Lunch & Learn at the Lifelong Learning Centre from 12-3pm.

Attendees were warmly greeted by Bernadette and Raven. The learning session opened in a good way with an Anishinaabemowin prayer, a traditional smudge, and Miigwechiwendamowin for Mino-bimaadiziwin. Guests enjoyed trays of fresh fruits, vegetables, cold meats, cheeses, and homemade pies, offering a taste of biizigwong (another term for Spring, meaning everything is cueing up).

Since this was an opportunity to learn, Bernadette took great care to explain the purpose and meaning of everything she included in the session. For example, the smudge is performed to cleanse ourselves in preparation for ceremony, or, in this case, the Lunch & Learn, and the intentions/gratitude we put forth are carried up to Creator through the smoke from the smouldering sage and medicines. Raven explained that she and Bernadette wanted to invite the community to welcome Spring, because they both feel Spring itself promotes wellness and renewal; that is essentially what Spring is – Minookimi means 'spring up from the ground and/or late spring'.

Further into the session, the co-facilitators invited attendees to offer examples of what they associate with Spring. These were some of the responses:

- ★ Healing journey
- ★ Spiritual awakening
- ★ Renewal – seeing things differently
- ★ New life – budding of trees/start of new life
- ★ Things are growing or expanding.
- ★ New birth is witnessed (baby birds), which brings us back to our centre – the Creation Story – our first days on Earth.
- ★ Plants – start from seeds from Mother Earth, and just like us as humans, we started as a seed that was planted [from our father into our mother], and when we water and nourish ourselves, we grow!

Wellness springs forth when we look outside and notice winter loosening its grip – the birds are more active, tree branches crack together in the breeze, losing the residual layer of ice and snow, and if we indulge our senses and actively focus, the sights, sounds, and our emotions pick up on everything starting to grow and change.

Bernadette continued by sharing that Anishinaabe use the medicine wheel because it has healing properties. When we look to the Eastern doorway, we embark on a journey of self-healing and care. We fast in the Spring to renew and cleanse ourselves after the long winter, and to restore our bodies. Bernadette brought to everyone's attention that every person in the room had knowledge to share. "We all bring something different to this session; we all hold knowledge. I don't pretend to think I have all the answers, because when I look around the room, I know that all of us have lived experiences that are valuable for each other's growth," she said. "In the same way we open the windows or doors to let in the fresh air and the new light, we can allow new growth and release those things that are stagnant. Everything becomes alive, and we create things anew."

Bernadette shared her personal story with the group, which demonstrated Spring renewal. "I understood that thinking things by myself (all on my own) wasn't going to be enough; I needed guides. There were some things I needed to do to grow, and that started with me at the Eastern door and in the Springtime – a time of growth from the ground up and a period of renewal – Minookimi." Bernadette explained the significance of Anishinaabek respect for nibi (water). "We honour nibi because we need nibi to live, and we came from nibi in our mother's womb and in our father's sperm. When the snow melts, there is a lot of water everywhere. We place tobacco in the water because our prayers and intentions will go in many directions. Even helpers in the waterways will give assistance to carry your prayers onward."

Attendees were then invited to decorate a windchime in celebration of Spring. The creative freedom allowed an opportunity for self-reflection to flow and be supported by the fellowship found within the group setting. Bernadette offered gentle encouragement throughout, "The reason I chose the windchime activity to support this teaching is that the gentle breeze starts to blow once again, and the sound of the chimes is therapeutic too. Wellness springs forth." Using paints, stickers, glitter, and bling -- a variety of inspirational craft supplies -- attendees created their own unique windchimes while openly sharing what they had learned and how they felt about the teaching provided.

While some commented that they knew parts of the teaching, they appreciated what was delivered and could now fill in the gaps with what they gleaned from today's session. Many expressed this identical sentiment: they enjoyed working with their hands, grounding themselves, preparing for Spring, and taking time out to heal. They were excited for the new things that lay ahead with the change of the season and appreciated hearing the teaching to support them on their journey.

Bernadette closed the learning session with a prayer of gratitude. A helper shared the pitcher of nibi (water) with each person, who individually held out their cupped left hand (closest to the heart) to receive the life-giving liquid. The cupped hand held just enough water to offer refreshment. This aligns with Spring by supporting new beginnings and new life, and also avoiding unnecessary use of disposable cups, restoring Mother Earth's health. Miigwech to Bernadette and Raven for offering this restorative Lunch & Learn, Welcoming Minookimi, as an opportunity for growth, renewal, and wellness to help prepare us in a good way for the new season upon us – Spring.





## *Annual Anishinaabemowin Teg Language Conference*

On March 25, more than 60 Sagamok community members and employees travelled to London to participate in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Anishinaabemowin Teg Language Conference. The conference ran from March 26 to 28. This year's theme was "Naadmowaadaa Eshkinigjik Wii Anishinaabemowaat" which translates to "Let's help our youth to speak our language! Miigwech to Sagamok's Political Office and Education Department for supporting so many community members and educators in attending the conference.

Travelling by AJ Bus Lines Coach service, the journey was lengthy but comfortable with adequate stops enroute to get coffee, food, fresh air, and a stretch. The scenery changed dramatically out our windows from snowbanks and rocky shield to bare, flat, and open fields, with skyscrapers cropping up along the route in Barrie, Toronto, and closer to London as we headed Southwest. The Conference was held at the old Kellogg Factory (jokes were made that some of the rooms still smelled like Fruit Loops!) in what is now known as the London Hard Rock Hotel. Rumour has it that upwards of 920 people from across Canada and parts of the United States were in attendance. The crowd included individuals of every age, language familiarity, and fluency level. Chi Miigwech to the Anishinaabemowin-Teg Incorporated Board of Directors, Volunteers, and Presenters. Gchi-miigwech E'naadmaagejig!

The theme of this year's conference was chosen to encourage a deep-rooted intention along with a sense of urgency to transfer cultural knowledge and language to our youth, as traditional Language Speakers are aging. Numerous sessions were offered, from keynote speakers to smaller workshops. Sagamok's very own Myna & Theodore Toulouse were among the presenters, offering their knowledge on Quillwork for half a day, each day! Awesome work! Their daughter Ruth was in attendance, along with her daughter Brianna, and





granddaughter Autumn Butterfly, who was an absolute gem and source of onboard entertainment on the 8-hour bus ride. The family also provided an assortment of handmade ribbon skirts and beaded items for sale at the conference! Congratulations to Myna, Theodore, and their family for all their hard work to prepare a large stock of items ready for sale, working their busy booth, and offering workshops (which were at capacity each day!) You were wonderful ambassadors of Sagamok!

Keynote speakers included: Alan Ojiig Corbiere, Patricia Ningewance, Claudette Commanda, and Isadore Toulouse.

Workshops were diverse and included themes surrounding: The Seven Grandfather Teachings and applications, Ka-zhaabwitoonanh Anishinaabemowin (We will save the language), Giizhi'gong Ezhi Na'wen'daas'ying miinwaa Nangoosag En'waaz'waat (Our Relation to the Universe and Star Teaching), Swayaajmodaa: Let's Share the Stories, integrating fun and games into language learning with beginner learners, as well as resources and story examples for educators, Anishinaabeg Kinomaagewgamig: Building Anishinaabemowin Immersion for Youth, Community, and Future Generations, Kweji kinomodwaa wii-nishinaabemwaad ekinomojig (Getting your students to speak Anishinaabemowin), and Giimooch Gaa-bizindawaad: Reclaiming Anishinaabemowin: a program for silent speakers was quite interesting as it addressed the idea of how to engage with Elders/Speakers to encourage sharing their knowledge having been silent for so many years, and on the other side of that,



building confidence in new second language speakers and/or non-Indigenous to embrace and learn Anishinaabemowin.



The Conference held something for everyone's learning, whether exploring the language as a beginner or conversing openly in Anishinaabemowin more fluently. Attendees were invited to a country-themed Hoe Down (Bizhaak!) to balance out their experience. And if they weren't at a workshop or presentation, Sagamonians could be spotted enjoying an ice-cream cone or a coffee, or gathered at the Hollywood-styled, lit-up Kellogg's sign conversing, sharing contagious laughter, or posing like celebrities for the perusing paparazzi!

Each year, one of the conference highlights is the ever-popular Scholarship Awards Banquet. Tickets were sold out with approximately 500 in attendance! Attendees enjoyed the Grand Entry Drum Song, entertainment, and a message from Keynote Speaker, Chancellor Claudette Commanda. Guests were especially pleased and proud to hear speeches by young students from various communities. Elders were beaming with awe, pride, and hope-filled raw emotion as they listened to the young people deliver their presentations in Anishinaabemowin.

Four students from Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik were among the revered presenters: Avery Toulouse (age 13; Grade 7), Leisa Paibomsai (age 11; Grade 6), Parker Bob (age 11; Grade 5), and Cohen Rivers (age 10; Grade 5). Congratulations to these brave students on the successful delivery of their speeches and for being shining examples that Anishinaabemowin continues to live on. Each student was awarded a bursary for their dedication to pursuing native language proficiency



Miigwech to Language Teachers Carol Bob and Amanda Hardisty for translating the students' speeches and helping to build their confidence to speak proudly and fluidly in front of a large audience. Students, teachers, and family members supporting them, had many hours of practice and months of preparation that went into these presentations, and really made Sagamok members proud! Chi miigwech for this tremendous dedication to continuing our language so it can thrive and come alive in our youngest members. And of course, miigwech to our Elders, community members, and everyone who plays a part and takes an interest in revitalizing our beautiful Anishinaabemowin and Anishinaabe Aadziwin.



**Land-based learning** about Animals, Fur identification, Trapping, and Tracking, our responsibility as custodians of the land, offering gratitude and semaa to Mother Nature.



Michael shared a story with students as they visited the firepit and checked out various furs and traps he held up. They were asked if they could identify the animal fur, and had a chance to feel the density and differences between the furs. Michael talked about how the beaver and muskrat will share their home (lodge), and best months for trapping to get the fur at its best quality. He spoke about the fur trade and how our ancestors did a lot of trapping along Lake Huron, Spanish River, Georgian Bay, Ritchie Falls, and how trappers would go out for a week or more at a time on trapping expeditions. The furs and other hand-made items such as bows, were sold or exchanged for goods they didn't have, such as rifles. He recalled a story of how he and his grandfather, Frank Bob, would go on a full-day snowshoeing trip to Spanish to trap. The number on the trapline indicates who owns and manages it, Michael shared. Miigwech to Michael and Merle Abitong for building the benches surrounding the fire for students to be able to sit comfortably and learn.

Land-based lead, Michael Abitong, offers students knowledge in the new outdoor classroom spaces.





Ntam gibiindaakoojigemin jibwaa-naadoobiiyang – First, we offer tobacco before we go and fetch sap.



Biimnagian – Drill/bit



Ziisibaakidaaboo – Maple sap



Ninaatig – Maple Tree

Land-Based Learning in the month of April included a visit to the Sugar Bush! All classes had an opportunity to learn about sugar maple trees, the production and season for sap to run/be collected, the medicinal properties of sap, uses of maple syrup, traditional teachings, tree tapping methods, sap gathering, boiling processes, tools used (new and old), fire maintenance/heat control, and general traditional preparedness for the Sugaring Season.



**Miigwech dinaag Ninaatigoog – I say thank you to the Maple Trees.**



**Biiskitenaagan – Maple sap bowl/Birchbark pail for collecting sap**



**Mshkikiiwon shkintam bmijwang zisbaakodaaboo – The first flow is medicine.**



**Gjibdan ziiwaagmide – Taste the syrup**

**Here are some additional Anishinaabemowin terms about the sugar bush:**

Mnokami / Ziigwan – It is Spring.  
 Aambe zisbaakdokaaning zhaadaa! - Let's go to the sugar bush!

**Tools we use:**

- Waagaakwad – Axe
- Giishkaboojigan – Chainsaw
- Pkitegaanhs – Hammer
- Kikook – Pails
- Biimnagigan – Drill/bit
- Kookisagook – Barrels
- Negimekwaan – Spile/tap



**Preparing the Sugar Bush:**

- Ziisibaakidakaan – Maple sugar bush
- Maankiki – Hardwood bush
- Boodawedaa – Let's make a fire.
- Shkoode – Fire
- Dashiga'an boodawe msan – Split the fire wood
- Msankewag – They are cutting wood
- Ngii zhigage – I tapped the trees.

**Maple Products:**

- Ziisibaakidaaboo – Maple sap
- Ziiwaagimide – Maple syrup
- Mezaweyaanh – Maple candy



# Ice-fishing – Winter Land-based learning



Miigwech to the LRE department for the hotdogs and hot chocolate with marshmallows for all of the classes and families to enjoy while ice fishing!



Daycare and Biidaaban students had an opportunity to enjoy a beautiful day out on Big Lacloche Lake trying their hand at ice-fishing. They learned about this traditional method of obtaining food, operating fish minders and ice augers, and spending time together with friends and family on a sunny winter day. Miigwech to Land-based Lead, Michael Abitong, for his efforts towards organizing outings for each grade and school. Michael ensured the fire and necessary supplies were taken care of. Miigwech to Creator for giigoonh.



## WITS Assembly

A sea of blue shirts filled the gym at Biidaaban, as students from every grade, staff, family, caregivers, community members, representatives from departments of Sagamok Anishnawbek including Community Wellness Department, Family & Community Support Services, Cultural Workers, and Anishnawbek Police Services (APS) members, gathered to kick off the first WITS Assembly, on January 28, 2026.

WITS (Walk-Away, Ignore, Talk it out, Seek Help) is an evidence-based program Biidaaban is implementing to help decrease conflict, bullying, and discrimination and increase positivity, kindness, and inclusivity in the school environment for students, staff, and families. WITS provides tools to teach students and staff how to focus on options for conflict, targeting, and bullying resolution, ultimately providing a better, safer, more constructive place to learn, and empower students and staff to grow as individuals.



The blue t-shirts, emblazoned with a feather design, were made available through the generosity of the Family & Community Support Services (FCSS), and included a quote on the front stating, "In a world where you can be anything, be KIND." FCSS representatives were on-site ahead of the assembly, handing out the shirts to classroom teachers for further dissemination, and allowing students an opportunity to wear them to the assembly. Education and Sagamok Departmental staff, as well as community members in attendance to support the event, were also provided a t-shirt to feel and be included in this kindness campaign.

Raven opened the assembly with an introduction of Bernadette Southwind, Cultural Worker, who offered an opening prayer in Anishinaabemowin to start the WITS assembly off in a good way. Prior to the prayer, Bernadette had travelled throughout the gym offering a traditional smudge, and a welcoming hand-shake, hug, or kind greeting to students and community members assembled to share in this momentous event. Bernadette commented, "There is a lot of positive energy here. I can feel it, and it feels good to see all of the students happy and excited." Amidst the high energy, Raven moved on to introduce herself to gatherers, thanking the teachers, community members, department representatives, Director of Education, Cultural Workers, and all of the students for their enthusiasm in adopting the WITS program ideals, and energetically welcoming the changes they were willing to make in themselves, their families, community, and within the school setting. There was indeed a lot of positive energy in the room with students cheering and excitement growing in support of this positive initiative. Raven provided students with a few thought-provoking questions and said to gatherers, "Thank you to everyone here for taking a community approach to help our students succeed. That's why we are all gathered here today." Raven then requested a few volunteers to come to the front, to perform a simple demonstration for the group. Tug-of-strength was a game (tug-of-war) meant to demonstrate the strength one adult/teacher/student has when they pull another over with bullying behaviour. Conversely, when Raven invited several students, community members, parents, and staff to help tug on the rope to combat bullying behaviours, the game demonstrated what happens when we get support from many on our side. "We suddenly have strength and options for overcoming bullying and adversity," Raven concluded for attendees.

Members of Anishnawbek Police Services (APS); Constables Chad and Eric, and Sargeant Macumber attended the assembly to provide their support towards this community collaborative effort. They introduced themselves to the students and guests and were greeted with applause and evident trust and delight at their presence. The officers presented some ideas on what kids could do to resolve bullying

behaviours, how to identify unsafe behaviours, and said “If you are being bullied or feel unsafe, don’t be afraid to speak to us,” they confirmed. “We are here to help you and support you.”

Raven addressed the student body then, “What is something we can take away from this assembly today?” To which students excitedly responded unanimously and with great spirit, “Kindness!” “YES!” exclaimed Raven, “excellent!” Leading up to the assembly, students had been invited to create artwork with positive affirmations and messages encouraging kindness, which decorated the halls. Colourful posters expressing ideas like Be Kind, You’ve Got This!, I’ve got this!, You don’t have to be perfect at everything, etc. had a positive impact on student morale and their understanding about their role in the WITS program commitment and success.

Raven shared her gratitude for the collaborative effort and support shown towards this initiative stating, “Thank you to everyone and every department who came out to support our Biidaaban students today. The level of community involvement was truly incredible, and the collaboration across departments was inspiring to see. Your time, energy, and commitment made a meaningful difference for our students, and it did not go unnoticed. I am deeply grateful for the support, encouragement, and partnership you continue to show.”

Following the event, Principal Becky also offered her positive sentiments towards WITS being implemented at Biidaaban; “Great event Raven! I loved all the support shown across the community departments. I look forward to many more events like this to keep the momentum going!!”

Miigwech to Raven, Student Mental Wellness Specialist, Education Leadership, Biidaaban Staff, APS, and Departments of Sagamok Anishnawbek, for this positive collaborative effort, and providing students, through your supportive presence and embracing of the WITS program, equipping them with tools and encouragement of kindness towards all.

## TREAT EVERYONE WITH KINDNESS

Students are continuing to use their WITS strategies to help reduce bullying in the school. It is working!

- Reduction in bullying incidences documented
- Students are confidently reporting episodes as they occur
- Strategies are working to help students process and overcome incidences in the moment
- Staff, students, and visitors recognize a shift in school atmosphere - positivity and kindness are visible and felt!



# My WITS Promise

I promise to use my WITS to **walk away**, **ignore**, **talk it out** and **seek help** while I'm dealing with teasing and bullying.

I also promise to help other kids use their WITS to keep my school and my community a safe and fun place to learn.





## *Cyberbullying Presentation for Pink Shirt Day*

Biidaaban students in Grades 6 and 7, along with their Teachers and Educational Assistants, were invited to a Cyberbullying Presentation organized by Raven Hammond, Student Mental Wellness Specialist for Sagamok Education. The topic of cyberbullying was presented in conjunction with Pink Shirt Day, acknowledged globally on February 25, 2026. Pink Shirt Day is “an annual anti-bullying campaign that encourages people to wear pink as a symbol of kindness, inclusion, and standing up against bullying. It began in 2007 in Berwick when two students organized a show of support for a classmate who was bullied for wearing a pink shirt,” Raven included in the supporting documentation shared with students and families. “Today, Pink Shirt Day is recognized across Canada and in other countries around the world, promoting respect both in person and online.”

In support of Pink Shirt Day and continued efforts towards the Bullying Awareness Initiative in Sagamok Education, APS Sergeant Vern, Constable Dalton, and Constable Chad attended Biidaaban’s Cultural Space to present information on cyberbullying. They updated their vests to a pink POLICE insignia in support of Pink Shirt Day. Their presentation focused on what cyberbullying is, what to do if you are a victim, the safety and legal ramifications of cyberbullying, helpful resources, and where to go for support. The presentation was meant to both inform students on the subject matter and address the severity and harmful impacts to an individual [student] when cyberbullying attacks are made and/or supported by peers. During the discussion, APS members offered the following questions to students for reflection:

- Does everyone here know what cyberbullying is?
- Who has observed cyberbullying?
- Who did something about it?
- Who didn’t do something and why did you choose not to?
- What is a bystander?
- Can you be charged/jailed for cyberbullying?



Officers went on to share personal stories from their youth about episodes of bullying, (noting that cyberbullying has become much more prevalent in the past 10 years due to increased cell phone usage and availability to students), what they witness regarding cyberbullying in their role as police officers, and how they are required to legally address cyberbullying (it is criminal harassment and an offense that could result in jail time and charges).

Constable Dalton engaged the students by emphasizing, "This is a community engagement session, so we are meant to discuss this topic freely with all of you. We are here to help you learn about cyberbullying (online bullying via text, harmful comments, verbal abuse, racial slurs, sharing photographs without consent, and more, via a cell phone, iPad, computer, gaming station, etc.) and answer any questions or concerns you might have." He offered the opportunity for students to provide input and examples – discussing platforms like SnapChat where lots of kids are experiencing grief from bullying. "You may not even know you are doing it," Dalton sympathized, "but most likely everyone in the room has either cyberbullied at one time or another or been a victim of it." He went on to ask students, "Did you know that everything you post online is not hidden/gone? If you delete something, it never goes away. There are ways we [police] can find it through existing technology. Legislation says that children under 18 can be charged with harassment crimes. Jail service for cyberbullying is real."



The term bystander was also discussed, its definition, and how, even if a student didn't personally send a bullying/threatening message, if they are involved in the group chat and didn't stop the offence, they are considered a bystander and can be charged as an accessory. Once again, Constables Dalton and Chad, and Sergeant Vern, offered personal stories to help the students relate, acknowledge and build empathy about the topic, and resources on how/where to seek support. Elementary Student Support



Worker, Charlene Morrison, added to the officers' comments by saying, "You would be a really good friend if you were to help someone who is being cyberbullied." Fear was noted as a prominent reason for being a bystander to bullying, so with officers, educators, and a student mental wellness specialist present, students were supported and encouraged to speak up and take a stand to reduce or eliminate cyberbullying within student peer groups, the community, and beyond. "We are here to help you. You are in an era where cyberbullying is at an all-time high," Dalton spoke. Sergeant Vern reinforced with students, "If you are a victim of any type of cyberbullying,

find someone to talk to about it," citing the school, teachers, parents, and police as prime options. "Don't hesitate to talk to us if you ever see us out and about. Even if you just want to say 'hi'. We are here to support you, and we'd love to talk with you."

Growing concerns towards cyberbullying in these age groups were expressed by community members, initiating this collaborative approach by the Community Wellness Department, Sagamok Education, and APS. APS fully supported the need to address cyberbullying within the schools/for students, citing community safety and well-being as areas for improvement within the community and providing positive role modelling of police services to the students/school.

The Grade 8 students, (currently away at Ritchie Falls for their annual retreat) will be addressed in March, with a program called Brighter Days, containing information on a similar theme and applicable to their age group. Brighter Days, an Indigenous wellness program (sponsored largely by Sun Life), was developed by Indigenous educators, school counsellors, and community program workers to empower First Nations, Inuit, and Metis youth with appropriate skills and resources to support their personal well-being. Just prior to the APS presentation at Biidaaban, and to maintain consistent messaging across all of education, on February 24, Raven provided information about Cyberbullying to The Ravens at Espanola High School. For the remaining grades, our Student Mental Wellness Specialist and Elementary Student Support Worker led brief presentations on bullying prevention. They visited each class talking about what bullying is, how to use their “WITS” strategies, and ways students can help prevent bullying in our school community. A strong focus was placed on the idea that ending bullying starts with spreading kindness.

Raven noted, “By working together—at school, at home, and online—we can create safer, more supportive environments for all children.” Raven thanked APS members for their meaningful contributions and informative discussion. “The students were very engaged throughout the presentation and asked thoughtful questions,” Raven acknowledged to the group. “The officers were enthusiastic, supportive, and delivered clear, informative messages that resonated well with the students including a definition of cyberbullying to clarify and ensure everyone was aware of what cyberbullying entails.”

To reinforce the day’s message, each student received a pink water bottle and an elastic band featuring a positive message to encourage kindness and remind them of the strategies they learned. In summary, Raven was pleased to share, “Overall, the sessions were meaningful and well received, and we are proud of the engagement and reflection shown by our students.”



Anishinaawbemowin  
Lunch & Learn  
with Steven Bennett  
**LANGUAGE**

Miigwech to Steven Bennett for sharing his knowledge as an Anishinaabemowin Speaker, providing language instruction encouragement during Lunch & Learn sessions for staff at the Lifelong Learning Center. Programs will continue to expand and be provided for all staff and community members. We are currently trying to gauge interest and levels of proficiency in order to provide what learners and community would like to have available.

## Zones of Regulation

In February, a workshop regarding the Zones of Regulation was delivered to staff at Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojinh Gamik-Daycare by Raven Hammond, Student Mental Wellness Specialist. Zones of Regulation is an early intervention program; it helps students to develop strategies for social and emotional self-regulation and helps educators understand the individual social/emotional response language of their students. Along with the presentation, Raven provided resources on how to implement the Zones of Regulation concepts in the classroom, specifically with the daycare friends in their care. This enhanced knowledge will help create a foundational strategy for daycare educators, familiarizing them with the program, methods, and practices of this social/emotional self-regulation tool. The Zones of Regulation has been proven to be effective and has been adopted by school boards across the province and country.

Students in grades EL1 to 3 at Biidaaban, as well as their education support staff, were also provided with the Zones of Regulation materials for implementation, with Principal Becky Toulouse and Vice-Principal Scott Restoule supporting the program. The program's framework helps students to understand and manage their behaviors, emotions and sensory needs, and communicate them to education staff by way of four colour-coded zones – blue, green, yellow, and red. (please see the attached image) The colours help students to categorize their feelings and improve their ability to discuss their emotions and behaviours. It also helps them to gain a better understanding of their relationship to themselves. Raven was excited and grateful to see that Miss Theresa had decorated a designated space in the Early Learning 1 classroom to accommodate the Zones of Regulation colour zones, supporting posters, and emotion identification cushions to help students feel comfortable and supported while learning about these self-regulation tools which also served to help them learn more about themselves. Miigwech, Miss Theresa and all staff for supporting and empowering students with this program.

As part of building Sagamok Education's Bullying Awareness Initiative, it was determined that this trusted, research-based framework was well-suited to build the emotional regulation and behavioural skills of students from Daycare to Grade 3. The implementation of the WITS (Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out, Seek Help) Program, which kicked off with a school-wide assembly and prayer/smudge ceremony the end of January, is being rolled out for Grades 4 to 8. WITS, also evidence-based, is a program designed to promote kindness and reduce bullying and victimization. WITS is already making progress, reports Raven, with lower incidences of bullying being documented. She is confident that the Zones of Regulation strategies will support the younger students to effectively acknowledge and communicate their concerns, emotions, and responses when in a social setting such as the classroom or playground. It will also be helpful to education staff in understanding and responding to each students' unique needs.



## Congratulations to JL Richards & Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik!

Stephanie Campbell, Senior Architect and Manager of the Sudbury Architectural & Structural Department at JL Richards & Associates Limited, recently updated the Sagamok Education Department with the following announcement:

**Good morning,**

***I'm thrilled to share some exciting news: Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik has been selected as a finalist in the AZ Awards in the Social Good category! I want to thank all of you for your part in this project. This recognition is a reflection of the collaboration, dedication, and hard work of the entire team.***

***While we won't know the results until May 28, public voting for the People's Choice award is open, and every single vote counts. Please take a moment to set up an account and vote here:***

**<https://azure.awardsplatform.com/auth/login/pBAXAakM>**

***We would also really appreciate your support in spreading the word amongst your organizations, families, friends, and broader networks. Feel free to share this email or find and share the LinkedIn post from JLR.***

**Thank you!**

**Steph**

In the January Periodical, you may recall an article regarding filming being conducted at Biidaaban in late Fall by a specialized crew hired by JL Richards. Teacher interviews were conducted and students at work and play were captured to showcase the new school facility. Stephanie was also interviewed about the project. She spoke about the environmentally thoughtful design, the quality of materials, and the cultural elements and ceremony involved. She emphasized how the team listened to what the Sagamok community wanted and needed by holding ongoing public consultations.

Well...Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik is now among the finalists for the AZ Awards, which celebrate excellence in architecture and design. Specifically, the project is a contender in the Social Good category! Judging is conducted by an international jury of prominent designers and is scheduled for later in May. Winners and finalists will be announced and celebrated at the annual AZ Awards gala, hosting 500+ architecture and design professionals. Winners and finalists will be published in the July/August 2026 issue of AZURE Magazine.



***“Recognized for its influence in the global design and architecture spheres, the AZ Awards is a significant benchmark for excellence and innovation and showcases the world’s best projects, products and ideas.” –AZURE Magazine.***

Every vote counts, so please visit the link listed above and consider supporting Biidaaban and JL Richards & Associates Ltd. towards victory for this esteemed recognition. People's Choice voting is open from April 17 to May 8. Chi miigwech! We extend our most heartfelt congratulations to JL Richards for this prestigious nomination and achieving a finalist standing!



**Scan Here to Vote!**



### *Introducing...Nimkii & Miigwaans*

Our newest team members at Biidaaban! They are pictured here with their helpers, Patrick Wemigwans (Anishinaabemowin Speaker and Visiting Elder), Colleen Toulouse (Student Success Coordinator), and Amanda Hardisty (Anishinaabemowin Teacher).

The Anishinaabe puppets will be assisting Education Staff to help students learn new concepts, discover their language and personal voice, and explore learning from a positive, carefree, and adaptive place that belongs uniquely to the individual student – meeting them where they are at with their learning and life path. “We have had puppeteers in the school and everyone can see the reaction of the students and their engagement and smiles whenever puppets come in to visit,” observed Colleen Toulouse, Student Success Coordinator. Colleen was instrumental in acquiring the puppets, supported by Marjorie Toulouse, Anishinaabemowin Manager, to be used across all departments of Education, largely supporting Anishinaabemowin Speakers, land-based instruction, and inspiring Anishinaabe-Aadziwin. Mr. Patrick has already provided a teaching with Nimkii and Miigwaans about the Maple Tree, gaining the attention and interest of students in the classroom, and sharing a traditional story.

A naming contest was held the end of March, and anyone was welcome to submit suggestions. Nimkii (translates to Thunder) and Miigwaans (translates to Feather), were the names given to our two new instructional aids.

Their birthday is National Indigenous Language Day, March 31!

**Wiisinidaa!** Let's eat!  
(Wees-nin-daa)



## Table Talk

**Gigaaskaabaagwe na?** Are you thirsty?  
(Gi-gaa-skaa-baa-gwe nuh?)



**Gi-bakade na?** Are you hungry?  
(Gi-buk-ku-day-nuh?)



**Kii-giizhiitaa na?** Are you all done?  
(Kee gee-zhee-taw nuh?)



**Gi-debsinii na?** Are you full?  
(Gi-deb-si-nee nuh?)



**Geyaabi na?** Do you want more?  
(Geh-yaw-bi nuh?)



**Minopgod na?** Does it taste good?  
(Mino-po-gwud nuh)



**Gaawiin, Miigwech** No thank you  
(Gaw-ween Meeg-gwech)



**Bidakjiigan nakaazan** Use your fork  
(Bi-duhk-jee-gun nuk-kaw-zun)



**Emkwaan nakaazan** Use your spoon  
(Em-kwaan nuk-kaw-zun)



Credit: Miigwech to Barbara Nolan for this Anishinaabemowin resource.

# Administration Appreciation Day

April 22, 2026!



Chi Miigwech to all of our Administrative Staff! You contribute so much support, clarity, and front line capability to deliver messages, confirm and provide crucial details, obtain and file important documents, and provide constant communication links between staff, departments, and community, in a friendly, service-focused, and meaningful manner.



Whitney Pregent, Daycare



Rae-Lyn McGregor, Biidaaban



Trecina Cvar, Biidaaban



Angela Stack, LLC



Paulette Carter-Owl, LLC



*you're  
jamaazing*



Kristy Southwind, LLC



Kim Bernard, LLC

**MUCH  
appreciated**

*Truly  
Grateful  
for you.*

*Could've  
done it  
without you!*

Respect



Belonging



Community



PIC·COLLAGE





### **Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik**

3042 New Subdivision Road  
P.O. Box 2004  
Sagamok, Ontario  
POP 2L0  
Manager: Rachel Toulouse  
Phone: 705-865-1180  
Email: toulouse\_rachel@sagamok.ca



### **Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik**

1666 Toulouse Bay Road  
PO Box 2217  
Sagamok, ON  
POP 2L0  
Principal: Becky Toulouse  
Phone: 705-865-2387  
Email: toulouse\_rebecca@sagamok.ca



### **Lifelong Learning Centre**

717 Sagamok Road,  
Sagamok, ON  
POP 2M0  
Manager: Claudette Fournier-Jones  
Phone: 705-865-2421  
Email: fournier\_claudette@sagamok.ca



### **Education Supports**

Infrastructure  
Student Resource Services  
Land Based Learning, Literacy, Numeracy  
Student Mental Wellness Specialist  
Busing / Transportation  
Leadership Team