



SAGAMOK ANISHNAWBEK **EDUCATION**

Supporting every Sagamok citizen to reach their full potential.



Powwow Dancer - Tomson Solomon

Niibin - Summer Edition - July 2026

Welcome - Biindigen

Graduation signifies a gradual ascent to achieving a milestone. Like climbing a mountain and looking out at the vista sprawling before you; a wide expanse of possibilities and breathtaking beauty and stories yet untold. The tiger lilies, now blooming at their peak, stand vibrant among the grasses. This season is theirs to shine, just like it is for our Graduates.

Goslings, fawns, cubs, and loon chicks are more firmly established now and preparing to leave their parent's home, being sent forth to thrive and come alive as adults with their own story waiting to unfold and be told. This progression is a natural part of life everywhere we look, one that we look forward to year after year and marvel at. We are led forth by these clues and signals, these marvellous works Creator provides to us, ever changing as the tides within us do, transforming the shorelines of our souls, edging us towards the magnificent masterpiece that is ours alone to craft, to behold, and be proud of.

You are doing great things! Believe it! We did not arrive at this destination alone. Those we love, whether nearby or inhabiting a yet unfamiliar realm - our friends, family, and the community we have come to meet and know - walk with us on our journey, adding insights and experiences to lean on and to learn from. Our gratitude towards their valuable knowledge encourages our own personal growth and forward momentum. As graduates of life, we are all achieving greatness, on some level or another. And it is ours -- to own, to reflect on, and to appreciate. Congratulations on defining and refining the best version of yourself as you claim your place in nature, right where you are meant to be.



This edition of the Education Newsletter contains content from May – Zaagbagaa Giizis – Budding Moon, June – Waab’Gonii Giizis – Blossoming Moon, and July – Miinke Giizis – Berry Moon



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SAGAMOK ANISHNAWBEK
EDUCATION

Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik - Daycare
Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik - Elementary
Lifelong Learning Centre
Education Supports



"Allow yourself to hold a sense of wonder for all the ways that life has chosen you. Think of your ancestors, the generations of people who brought you into the life you now have. Note with amazement all the millions of surprising things that have had to go right and not go wrong to have allowed you to be here right now."

-- Author Unknown



Director's Reflection

Vance McPherson, Director of Education

July – Miinke Giizis – Berry Moon



SAGAMOK ANISHNAWBEK
EDUCATION

The summer is a wonderful time to celebrate an awesome academic year.

This year, students and staff of Sagamok Education achieved a lot:

- Biidaaban literacy scores are up 42% from September
- Biidaaban numeracy up 20% and now comparable, by some estimates, with Rainbow District School Board achievement
- Anishinaabe language and cultural centre (Waaseyaankaan Teg) opened
- 4 cultural workers hired dedicated to Education
- Library renovations underway at the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC)
- Daycare programming being revised to build on school skills and Anishinaabemowin language
- Adult reading program established
- Self-reports of student bullying down 70%
- Plan in place for pilot Culture Curriculum for Early Years as early as Fall 2027
- Negotiations are complete to offer flexible Social Service Worker and Office Administration credit programs from LLC

We are excited to build upon this success in September!





Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik - Daycare



Shki Waase-aaban Binoojiinh Gamik Daycare
NOW ENROLLING



Details at www.SagamokAnishnawbek.com

Turn Your Love of Children into an Exciting Career Move!

Sault College's Pre-ECE Micro-Credentials program is a great learning opportunity for you to explore Early Childhood Education as a career. Presented by Sault College. **Tuition is fully sponsored.**

To learn more, visit: www.SagamokAnishnawbek.com



First Aid PD Day



First Aid Training part of Professional Development (PD) Day at the Daycare!

Staff at Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik – Daycare received First Aid Training and recertification during their PD Day on June 5. Allison Ouellette, Training Operations personnel from St. John's Ambulance (St. Jean Northern Ontario Division), visited the Daycare from the Sudbury office.

The full complement of staff were present, and the compulsory all-day training covered infant/toddler, child/youth, and adult First Aid measures to equip staff with the knowledge to provide assistance to Daycare Friends (students), fellow staff, parents/visitors to the facility, or while on field trips. A First Aid kit was provided to all attendees and used throughout the training session and to build awareness of necessary supplies to have readily available for emergency use.

Allison began the day by defining two key terms:

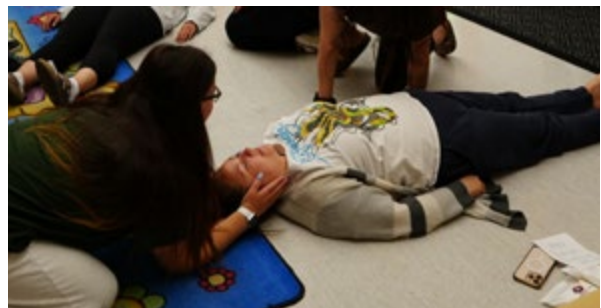
- First Aid – the emergency care given to someone who is injured or ill, and
- First Aider – the person providing the first aid measure using readily available supplies

The training continued to explain how First Aid is administered to an individual by first categorizing ages of potential recipients. In First Aid terms, infants are considered 0-1 year of age, children are ages 1-8, and adults are 8 years old and up. Next, Allison asked staff, "What are the three goals of First Aid?"

1. Preserve life,
2. Prevent further injury,
3. Provide recovery.

She went on to explain that any First Aider needs to check for hazards first, because as the responder, you are the most important person on the scene! You need to be safe! The need to always get consent before providing assistance was also emphasized! Staff reenacted this training by working with their 'pretend casualty' and carrying out each stage.

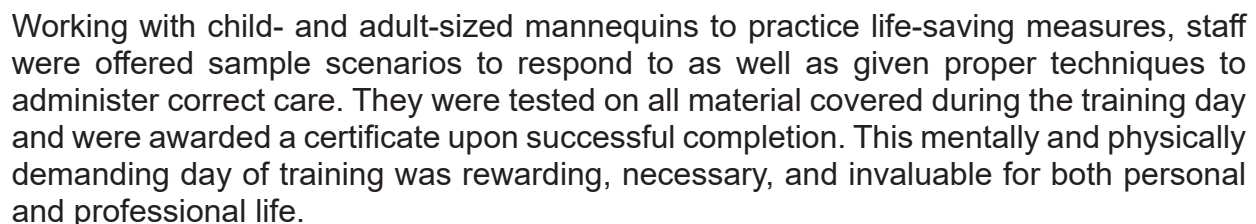
In the workplace, First Aid rules, regulations, and procedures are outlined in the Occupational Health & Safety Act (green book) and state that one must not be negligent or abandon the casualty, provide guidelines to follow, and specifies which First Aid supplies should be available on site. For example, at minimum, one fully



The morning continued by asking/answering questions like:

- Allison provided staff with a handout containing a quick guide to assessing a scene. It contained the word **SAMPLE**, used as an acronym for:

Staff practiced some of the basic measures presented throughout the morning and continued over the course of the afternoon, using fellow staff as mock casualties, dealing with minor and more serious (neck or spinal injury) injuries all while working together in groups. Allison emphasized how to protect oneself from contamination, germs/disease, or infection through the necessity of wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) when responding to an emergency. Gloves, goggles/safety glasses, a mask, and a one-way valve face shield were among the priority items to put on before offering resuscitation and assistance.



DAYCARE

Daycare

Anishinaabemowin (English)

Ziizbaakdoke Giizis | Sugar Moon - April
Zaagbagaa Giizis | Budding Moon - May
Waab'Gonii Giizis | Blossoming Moon - June
2026



April

Giizhigaande (Sky Blue)
Bneshiin (Bird)
Gimiwan (Rain)
Waabooz (Rabbit)
Aki (Earth)
Baakwang (Easter)
Ninaatig (Maple Trees)
Minookimi (It is Spring)
Ogaa (Walleye)
Saawe (Perch)
Waawan (Egg)
Bgoji-Mnoomin (Wild Rice)

May

Giniiwaande (Pink)
Nengaach (Slow Down)
Gindan (Read it)
Niizhwaaswi (Seven)
Memengwaan (Butterfly)
Mdaawsi Shi Naanan (Fifteen)
Wiin Ntam (His/Her turn)
Tisge (To Colour)



June

Waabaande (Gray)
Niish (Two)
Niiwin (Four)
Pabwin (Chair)
Noos (Father)
Mdaaswi Shi Niish (Twelve)
Emkwaan (Spoon)
Doopwin (Table)
Bdakjiigan (Fork)
Miijim (Food)
Mishoomis (Grandfather)
Nokomis (Grandmother)



Read it
Write it
Speak it



*Try to practice and speak these 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 Kids Go Strawberry Picking!



Submitted by Kiah Trudeau – IT & Communications Summer Student - Photographer & Reporter

July 8th, 2026, a nice sunny Wednesday morning, the Daycare kids went on a field trip to Emiry's Berry Patch to pick some strawberries. Hands-on learning is very important for early childhood development, helping with things such as motor skills, using their hands, and learning many other tasks they will end up doing in everyday life. Learning words in Anishinaabemowin, Such as ode'imín (strawberry), wiisnin (eat), and nimadabin (sit down), being mindful not to squash the fragile plants as they search for the ripe berries. The Daycare Educators helped the young friends learn how to gently lift the plants to search for the biggest, reddest berries and chuckled at the facial expressions of the friends who were tasting the flavour of the strawberries for the first time. It was an exciting time for Friends and Helpers alike! Staff members from Wasseyaaankaan Teg were also out for the excursion, supporting the Friends and Educators as they followed up their teaching about ode'imín. Helping the adults put strawberries in the baskets, eating strawberries, saying hi to a horse, and even throwing hay at each other were all parts of the experience!



Daycare Transition Day at Biidaaban

On April 16, Preschoolers from Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik visited Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik. As part of a school readiness program, Daycare Friends participated in a Biidaaban Transition Visit, during which they experienced key elements of what attending Biidaaban in September will look like for them.

Friends boarded the bus at the Daycare and drove to Biidaaban. They unloaded at the doors of the 'big school' and were greeted by Charlene Morrison, Student Support Worker, and welcoming staff members, excited to see the curiosity and wonder in the young faces of the incoming students. They peered around in astonishment at the size of the school building, the large entrance doors, and the long corridors filled with chattering students and movement all around them. Indeed, different from their Daycare classrooms! And that was the point of the transition day: to allow the young Friends a chance to step into the space of what will be their new school in September, meet some familiar faces in the Early Learning 1 (EL1) classroom, and meet their new teacher, Miss Teresa Abitong.



As they were led down the corridor to the classroom, Miss Teresa welcomed them with a warm smile and gentle encouragement. The Friends were invited in to explore the classroom and choose an activity centre, toy, or comfortable place they were drawn



to. Before long, everyone was settling in together, with the students in EL1 (Friends they knew and played with in Daycare, perhaps in previous years) showing Daycare Friends the Biidaaban Classroom set up. There was the Gardening Centre/Potting Bench, the Painting Easels, an Easter themed treasure box with archaeological discovery tools, car garages, dominos, books, and more, to choose from. They helped the young Friends feel welcome and comfortable in the unfamiliar terrain. Daycare Educators remained with their Friends to provide support and comfort through familiarity. There was a lot of wide-eyed excitement and smiling faces among students as they played, interacted with each other, and sat for circle-time songs and introductions with Miss Abitong.

Miigwech to Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik and Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik for collaborating to provide this valuable transition opportunity that allows students to gently ease into a new school environment and receive more personal support, setting them up for success in September.



Mother's & Father's Day Luncheon at Daycare

Daycare Friends welcomed their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family members, and caregivers to join them at Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojinh Gamik: on May 8 for Moms and June 19 for Dads. Parents and caregivers enjoyed a full-course celebratory luncheon prepared by Priscilla Abitong and Ieshia Owl, Daycare Cooks. Friends and their family members worked together to create a special themed craft, creating a lasting keepsake and memories of time spent together. We give thanks and honour all of our Moms and Dads and Caregivers on these special days, and everyday. Chi miigwech.





Biidaaban Kinoo maagegamik - Elementary

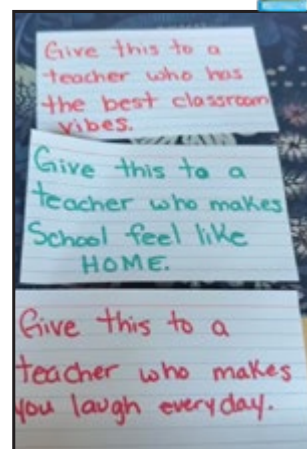
There are people in this world who like to acknowledge others for their contributions that may seem small, arbitrary, everyday, expected, taken for granted, 'part of their job', 'just what I do', insignificant, or even go unnoticed.

It is believed that Trista Toulouse was responsible for the generous thought behind this random act of kindness gesture. Students in Grade 8 were given a cue card with a message written on it such as "Give this to a teacher who makes you smile" and a small gift accompanying it. The students then went about Biidaaban bestowing them much to the surprise and delight of the teacher recipients. Some of the presentations were captured live on film for all of us to witness and share in the joy expressed on both parties' faces, which was really beautiful.

What a wonderful gift and gesture by students for their teachers, and also to celebrate the closing of a chapter in the school year for Grade 8s transitioning out of Biidaaban in September. Miigwech to Trista and those who were involved (we apologize for not having the full story to give credit accordingly) for sharing this example of just how far acts of kindness can travel, and just how much positive impact these actions can have even though they seem small. The inadvertent teachings about thoughtfulness including consideration, reflection, and awareness, are invaluable and life altering.



With Appreciation 🍌



Students Help Residents Fill Planter Boxes



Mr. Maracle and his group of Grade 8 students walked over to the Elders Eagle Lodge (EEL) the first week of June to help residents fill their raised garden boxes with soil and plants. The bales of soil and selected plant materials were provided by Greenhouse Technicians, Adam and Angela, as part of their plan for the day's study unit.

As a means of bringing the two generations together for some quality time, students were paired in groups of 2 with an Elder. Through random selection, students were assisted by EEL staff in locating the resident's apartment via the exterior (garden) door and introducing themselves. The timing was ideal, in-between breakfast and lunch; Elders anticipated the visit and had been looking forward to it! Students were greeted with smiles mixed with a bit of trepidation visible on both sides. This excursion was the first of its sort in a long time and, as Adam mentioned, "I wanted to provide an opportunity to bring these two age groups together while creating garden planters for the Elders to tend and care for during the summer growing season."

Once the Elders and students stuck their hands into the soil to begin mixing and layering it into the garden boxes, the conversation and relaxed atmosphere grew between them. Nurtured by the hot sun and the persistent hum and swatting of black flies adding to the delightful day, connections were rooted. Stories and knowledge were shared. Students provided the brawn needed to lift and open the combative plastic wrap on the Triple Mix bales, while Elders helped guide students in breaking up the soil clumps and preparing it to receive the fresh, cheery-looking seedlings. Elders had a range of plants available to choose from: morning glories and petunias to vegetables like tomatoes, yellow beans, and more. The plants were spaced appropriately, with students receiving instruction from Adam and Angela along the way. Mr. Maracle was heard giving positive reinforcement and encouragement to students as they battled the bugs, and the teenage response to 'work and menial tasks.' It all came together, and by lunchtime, students and Elders were happy and proud of their efforts and productive morning. The planter boxes looked refreshed and alive once again with the new greenery.

The Lodge gardens overlooking the scenic expanse of the North Channel between the majestic tall pines yielded new relationships, new thoughts, and renewed life. Miigwech to Adam and Angela for providing this meaningful exchange between Biidaaban students and residents at the Elders Eagle Lodge.

Education Powwow 2026

On June 19, Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik hosted its annual Education Powwow. Sharing the stage for Treaty Day activities that day, Biidaaban put on a spectacular show of dancers, drummers, regalia, song, and school communities coming together.

“Weaving the Path to Your Future” was the theme for the 2026 Education Powwow, and it took place on the spacious Biidaaban playground from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. With gorgeous blue skies, the sun was shining bright and hot on the gathering site. Birds of varying flocks and feathers flew overhead, getting their ‘birds eye view’ no doubt, adding their recognizable songs to the event. Families and community members were present, along with local elementary school students from S. Geiger and St. Mary’s in Massey. Arena Director, Brad Poulson, and Master of Ceremonies, DJ McGregor, assembled the staff carrier, veteran, and dancers to open the Powwow with the Grand Entrance. Taking part in this cultural experience together, students from each



school soon joined the regalia-clad head dancers and dignitaries entering from the East, dancing in a circle around the drums set up in the centre.

Those who were new to Powwows and dancing were guided by other more seasoned students, learning as they went, and responding to the music and atmosphere. Smiling, joining hands, everyone enjoyed

the sun and sky above, and the ground beneath their feet. The drums, dancing, and songs vibrated across the school yard, drawing everyone together in peace, unity, and the true spirit of bimaadiziwin. MC DJ encouraged and acknowledged dancers and participants as they circled the drums. He announced, “When you are dancing to the beat of that drum, you are massaging Mother Earth.” Staff, students, Elders, visitors, dancers – everyone participated and appeared carefree; faces were visibly aglow as they absorbed the sights, sounds, and ambience surrounding them.



Miigwech to the following people who played an important role in the organization and fulfillment of the Education Powwow:

Master of Ceremonies (MC) – DJ McGregor

Head Veteran – Kiki Eshkibok

Opening Prayer – Kiki Eshkibok

Drum – Indian Road, Black Bull Moose, Biidaaban Singers, and Young Warriors

Head Male Dancer – Braeden Manitowabi-Peltier

Head Female Dancer – Acadia Solomon

Head Youth Male – Cruz Piercey

Head Youth Female – Kassiya Wells

Arena Director – Brad Poulson

Staff Carrier – Cooper Toulouse

Chi Miigwech to Charlene Morrison, Principal Scott Restoule, and Biidaaban Staff for all their organizational efforts and preparatory work towards the Powwow grounds and

student regalia, and to the keynote guests/performers/facilitators listed above, who brought everything together to provide this celebration for attendees.

There is a huge level of dedication, organization, and commitment on the behalf of the behind-the-scenes workers and volunteers to create the enjoyment and success of this event. Miigwech to all of you who played a part! The Powwow was a beautiful display of Sagamok and area student dancers, drums, staff carriers, arena director, emcee, veteran and volunteers, and provided an opportunity for solidifying our cultural awareness, growth, and unification with each other and our neighbours. Chi miigwech for gathering everyone together to celebrate Education.



Early Learning 2 Graduation Ceremony

On June 25 at 11:00 AM, families and caregivers of students in Early Learning 2 (EL2) attended Biidaaban to share in a graduation ceremony. The young students had completed two years, EL 1 & 2, and are making the shift to Primary, Grade 1, starting in September! Jazzed up in fancy dress clothing, some 'twinning' with their parents, the young students entered at the far end of the gym, marching in a procession through the crowd, with their eyes sparkling and smiles as big as their proud personalities. They made their way down the centre aisle towards the stage and their designated seating area. The crowd clapped and cheered the students along, capturing it all on their cell phones.

Opening prayer in Anishinaabemowin by Carol Bob and hand drum song by Darcy Trudeau started the gathering off in a good way. Principal Scott Restoule offered a welcome greeting along with congratulatory remarks to the students and families. Their hard work and dedication to learning was acknowledged. Miigwech to EL2 teaching staff Juliet Ozawanimiki, Courtney Leclair, and Destinee Toulouse, for decorating the gym so beautifully for the celebration! They presented the certificates to each graduate, who were called up by name alphabetically. Each student walked the stage to be presented with their certificates from teacher Miss Ozawanimiki, amidst happy shouts of joy from supportive family members. This year's graduates were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, and with much laughter from the audience interspersed, here is what the class of 2025-2026 had to say:

River Abitong – wants to be a basketball player and a cop

Acacious Abitong-Solomon – would like to be a ninja

Abigail Ashawasega-Sego – wants to be a doctor

Jacob Bennett – would like to be a pirate

Roman Bob – would like to be an animal rescuer

Zavery Bob – when Zavery grows up, he would like to be Earth!

Kierynn Chakasim – would like to be a builder

Tarek Eshkakogan-Keysis – would like to be nice when he grows up

Kehlani Horn-David – would like to be a nail artist

Harper Jones – wants to be a teacher

Peyton Moses – would like to be a teacher

Richard Owl – wants to be a police officer with the star on top of his hat

Brody Robinson – would like to be a firefighter

Zane Southwind – just wants to be 5 when he grows up

Robin Wing – just wants to be happy when he grows up



GRADUATION

Special Awards were presented as well: Highest Average: Peyton Moses, Anishinaabemowin: Acacious Abitong-Solomon, Performance Award: Zavery Bob, and Athletic Award: Female: Peyton Moses, Male: Zane Southwind

Special Certificates were presented by Miss Ozawanimiki for: Math Achievement: Kierynn Chakasim, Music Achievement: Roman Bob, Science Achievement: River Abitong, Art Achievement: Kehlani Horn-David, and Literacy Achievement: Peyton Moses

The super-cute, heartwarming video compilation by Destinee Toulouse, was a beautiful way to close the ceremony, highlighting each student as a baby and now as an Early Learning graduate, progressing from one image to the other, showing their growth and change. A closing song by Darcy Trudeau was enjoyed, and guests were invited to visit the hydration station and enjoy hot brunch served by high school student volunteers (Grade 8 alumni) and the caterer herself. It was a wonderful celebration on all counts! Chi miigwech to all the organizers responsible for providing this momentous day for students and families to remember for years to come.



Biidaaban Attends MSS Powwow

On June 4, 2026, teachers and students from the after-school Powwow Group at Biidaaban were bused to Manitoulin Secondary School (MSS) in M'Chigeeng. The bus arrived, and student dancers began preparing, donning their regalia for the Grand Entry at 11 a.m. The Powwow was led by Rachel Goodfellow, an MSS staff member. Neighbouring schools and community members were welcomed to attend, and the event was supported by a substantial turnout!



Biidaaban Grade 4/5 Teachers, Jason and Pamela Solomon, along with EA Jennifer MacGregor, set up a sunshade for their students; a welcome relief from the scorching sun shining brightly upon the Powwow grounds. As dancers, drummers, students, teachers, and onlookers poured onto the field behind MSS, the excitement began building momentum, matching the rising beat and intensity of the drummers' warm-up songs.

The Powwow grounds occupied the field behind the school and were surrounded by forest. Area schools and visitors arrived in clusters and gathered around the circle. Dignitaries, police services, and dancers from various communities throughout the region set up around the perimeter of the circle, wherever comfortable. Generations – from babes in arms to Grandparents -- were present to participate in and enjoy the Powwow! As introductions and welcome greetings were made, dancers were invited to line up in the customary order: assembling oldest to youngest (so younger ones learn from the older/experienced ones), beginning with the men/boys and followed by the women/girls, starting with traditional dress dancers, followed up by jingle, grass, and fancy shawl dancers. Dancers were invited to enter through the Eastern Door of the arena, and as they assembled there, their excitement and nervous jitters grew in anticipation of their performance. The drums beat rhythmically in the background, echoing off the nearby forest; their deliberate sound creating a focused

and inviting space that draws everyone in. Faces around the cordoned circle revealed smiles, and eyes wide and alight with intrigue, amazement, and wonder at the myriad colours, the jingles, and the swirling, vibrantly coloured cloth and ribbons of the regalia dancing freely around the circle. The event, a living history, unfolded before us -- beautiful, honourable, traditional -- flooding all of the senses simultaneously.



Head veteran, Howard Debassige, was the Flag Bearer of the M'Chigeeng First Nation eagle staff; Taylor from Aundeck Omni Kaning (AOK) was the Emcee for the Powwow, and Sunset was the Arena Director. The Powwow opened with a warm welcome to all in attendance and a land acknowledgment of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples as the stewards who have protected this land since time immemorial. Opening words were shared by MSS Principal, David Wiwchar. Jean Debassige, a retired MSS teacher and current school Trustee, offered the opening prayer in Anishinaabemowin. Several drum groups performed during the powwow, and Biidaaban's Mr. Jason Solomon and student Cruz participated with their group, Black Bull Moose, in the opening honour song. Once the opening procession was complete, guests entered the circle when the time was right for them, to share in the togetherness and gifts of the Creator in the outdoor arena – the sun, the sky, the grass, the trees, the birds, the water behind us. Miigwech, miigwech, miigwech, we acknowledged with mind, body and spirit united. The drums, the songs, the dances, the fun continued. Spot dances were held with random winners receiving gift cards and prizes, and the festivities carried on into the afternoon.

Pamela and Jason Solomon, community members and teachers at Biidaaban, have been offering an after-school Powwow Club for several years. Beginning in January, Pamela said, "It is about offering a fun, safe space for students to come out and have fun dancing" while absorbing whatever they take in about Powwow traditions, protocol, etc. "Everyone is welcome even if you're not a dancer," Pamela emphasized, adding "Many sit and just observe, and eventually students join when comfortable." She went on to explain how her and Jason's two oldest daughters, Acadia (woodland and jingle dress dancer) and Nyssa (fancy shawl dancer), have been coming out to the after-school program to share the jingle dress teachings passed on to them by their grandmother, Eleanor Pine (Baa). The group learns a variety of dances, including feather pickup, two-step, round dance, and more. Pamela said that they approached MSS about bringing the Biidaaban dancers to their Powwow, and the response was 'the more the merrier.'

Their group of 40+ dancers also attended the Espanola High School Spring Powwow in May and will perform at the upcoming Biidaaban Powwow on June 19. The after-school group has grown over the years, seeing more and more younger dancers/participants coming out! Pamela reminds students that they can join at anytime. Both she and Jason, along with their family, enjoy helping students to learn about and have fun taking part in this ancestral practice. Miigwech to them for their dedication, for sharing knowledge about Powwow dancing and protocol, and for creating a fun, safe space for students to engage with and learn more about this timeless tradition. The Biidaaban student dancers provided a wonderful addition to the Powwows they participated in, danced beautifully, and conducted themselves respectfully on each occasion. They represented Sagamok and Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik reverently in their beautifully designed regalia, presenting their individuality through their dance, as well as their school community's cohesiveness by being aware of one another, supporting one another, and interacting together while dancing within the circle. The students' attentiveness and respectful listening towards Mr. & Mrs. Solomon was exceptional, and they all thoroughly enjoyed the outing together with their classmates. Miigwech to the students for their commitment to the Powwow Group, for the learning they gained outside the classroom, and for being positive ambassadors of Biidaaban.



Spring Carnival

On April 2, Biidaaban staff transformed the afternoon instruction block into a Spring Carnival bursting with laughter and excitement. The highlight of the event appeared to be the initiation of Mr. Scott Restoule, in his new role as Principal, with a Pie-in-the-Face. Students lined up by classroom to launch plates piled high with Cool Whip at Mr. Scott. Sporting protective eyewear, Mr. Scott embraced the fun, taking hit after hit—whipped topping splattering across his face, hair, and chest, all safely shielded by an oversized garbage bag courtesy of the custodial team. Some throws grazed by, while others landed squarely with the accuracy of seasoned outdoors folk. The line on the floor seemed almost daringly close to the brave recipient, who waited in his 'ready stance' as each plate of fluff flew his way. If there was fear in his heart, Mr. Scott displayed none of it! Between rounds, he wiped his glasses, licked his lips, and readied himself for the next wave of students eager to take their shot. And when the Principal takes one for the team, his staff rally behind him: like Mr. Lester covering the floor and surrounding walls in plastic to lessen the impact of splatter, and Ms. Chelsea ensuring the plates were as soft as possible and maybe not loaded up TOO high.

Miigwech to all the staff who poured their creativity into planning engaging games and activity centers. Some even picked up new skills, like Mr. Brendan Abitong, who learned to make balloon animals that very day! Students beamed as they received balloon dogs and buzzed from station to station, eager to discover what surprises awaited them next.

A photo booth Selfie Frame captured silly moments, while a lively cornhole competition and a nerf ball toss kept the energy high. At the tattoo and crafting station, creativity flourished. A movie theatre was set up in one half of the gym for those seeking a quieter escape. Even the cafeteria ladies prepared a fun, themed menu including hotdogs and treats to match the festive mood. Out in the hallway, colourful posters designed by students decorated Biidaaban for the festivities underway. Who can resist the magic of a carnival?! The smiles on everyone's faces, learning through exploring, interacting, taking turns, being patient while waiting in line, challenging yourself at the various games, winning prizes, and jumping up and down were the lesson plans for this afternoon.

Chi miigwech to the dedicated education staff for once again creating a joyful, educational experience that helped everyone at Biidaaban shake off the last of winter and welcome Spring with classic carnival cheer.



GIMAAMIKWEN

GRADE 8 GRADUATES!

On June 25, from 5:00pm to 8:00pm, Biidaaban held its annual Grade 8 graduation ceremony honouring this year's students. Receiving academic awards in celebration of their achievements, students were greeted by many wonderful speeches from Chief Angus Toulouse, Principal Scott Restoule, and Artist Tracy Toulouse, who encouraged and guided them as they begin this next chapter of their lives. The evening was a great success in celebrating and recognizing the Grade 8 graduating class.

Scheduled for 5:00pm, the graduation started in spirit around 4:30pm as crowds began to form early in the gym. The entrance hall sat quiet as those in the gym shuffled around, and those outside hadn't made it in yet. The school was filled with an energy of excitement and anticipation, as the weather stood in stark contrast, cold and rainy. Cars arrived in constant waves, lighting up the parking lot as headlights reflected the misty weather; the atmosphere inside shifted. With a thin breeze running through the halls as the entrance doors repeatedly opened and closed, the school started to fill with chatter. Filled with laughter and small conversation, Biidaaban quickly became packed with parents and teachers sharing a moment of reflection about the coming event.

Starting at the hallway door and entering the gymnasium, the graduates stood side by side in pairs. Each pair lined up front-to-back, and the students marched towards the stage. Each student dressed in their own unique formal attire. Some students wore standard formal suits and dresses, while others chose to express themselves through modern fashion, including long tailored coats and different statement pieces—highlighting the uniqueness and creativity of each student.

The audience was sitting in a diamond pattern across the floor, each table making room for the other, making it as easy as possible to view the front of the gym. This is where the graduating class sat; in rows, along the front. On the right-hand side stood a podium where presenters would step up to speak. Sporting a blue ribbon shirt, with bright coloured ribbons stitched on the back, principal Scott Restoule stood at the front of the crowd and began his remarks. Starting with the evening itinerary, he quickly moved into a congratulatory speech about the students.





After this, the evening moved into students receiving their awards:

Anishnaabemowin

Presented by Amanda Hardisty

Recipient: Ryder Toulouse

Performance Award

Presented by Kevin Maracle

Recipient: Parker Abitong

Athletic Award

Presented by Kevin Lester

Recipients: Easton Eshkakogan, Kihanna Toulouse

Certificate Awards

Presented by Kevin Maracle

Art - Adriano Maiangowi

Music - Hailey Lavalee

Literacy

Presented by Stephanie Sonnenburg

Recipient - Kihanna Toulouse

Math

Presented by Stephanie Sonnenburg

Recipient - Easton Eshkakogan

On the Land

Presented by Michael Abitong

Recipient - Easton Eshkakogan

Citizenship Award

Presented by Scott Restoule

Recipient - Parker Abitong

Spirit Award

Presented by Janet Steinke

Recipient - Zendaya Southwind-Nakogee

Elder in The Classroom Award

Presented by Patrick Wemigwans

Female: Charlotte Wright

Male: Ryder Toulouse

What followed was a beautiful speech from Gimaa. Noting events like the COVID pandemic, he acknowledged the issues the class endured as a group during their time in the school system. He commended the graduates for their resilience and closed his speech with a firm but compassionate message: consider your future. This was a reminder to the young students that their future will come much faster than any of them are expecting. To avoid leaving on a heavy note, Gimaa followed up by congratulating the class on all their achievements and wishing them continued success!

With a complementary perspective, Tracy Toulouse then spoke at the mic, providing a great sense of balance to Chief Angus. Starting with her journey here at Sagamok, having been raised in the same environment and school system, Tracy remarked that, like her, any of these students can achieve their dreams. Hying the crowd up by specifically requesting that everyone stand and cheer for the graduating class, the room felt as if it were almost collapsing under the weight of all the celebration.

As the night came to an end, students returned to the tables where their families sat, and everyone took their last photos and shared their last hugs and congratulations. With this chapter closing for this year's Grade 8 class, a whole new set of doors opens for them. Celebrating with rewards and recognition, the students can carry themselves forward with the mental fortitude provided by the support of their community, family, and friends. (And of course the hard-working teachers!) Congratulations to Biidaaban's graduating class of 2026, and best of luck in high school and beyond!





COHI Dental Screening

Carla Blanchard, Dental Hygienist from Maamwesying North Shore Community Health Services, along with her aide during her visits, Marilyn Jones, CHR/Systems Navigator for Sagamok Naandwedjige-Gamik, attended Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik on May 19 to deliver a special presentation to students in Early Learning 1 (EL1) to Grade 3. COHI (Children's Oral Health Initiative) representatives visit the school two to three times throughout the school year to check on students' dental health and talk about oral hygiene. As an early intervention tool, COHI helps children and families avoid serious dental disease or cavities from rapidly progressing by recommending treatment plans and promoting preventative practices to maintain healthy teeth and gums. Both Carla and Marilyn have consistently provided this service to Biidaaban, and their upcoming dates will be shown on the online school calendar.



Within Education, the COHI initiative serves First Nations children ages 0 to 7 and their caregivers. The initiative's main goal is to improve the population's oral health through early intervention, education, and prevention measures. COHI improves access to this specialized care by bringing services, programming, and resources directly into the community. The representatives visit the school and encourage oral health and care as part of everyday family life.

Miigwech to Carla and Marilyn for actively bringing this service to the Biidaaban community and building capacity for oral health and hygiene knowledge-sharing and education within the school as an important part of keeping our students smiles (teeth) healthy and happy.



**Young Warriors
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DECADES DANCE



Niimindaa – Come Dance!

At the end of April, the Sunshine Room hosted a Decades Dance to wrap up a month of activities celebrating Autism Acceptance Month.

The dance was held on the afternoon of April 27, and everyone was invited to attend, dressed in their favourite musical era, spanning the 1960s all the way to the present-day. What a diverse and spectacular range of musical genres! The costumes brought joy and laughter to many, as well as an air of intrigue (students had lots of good questions about the eras!). Clad in colourful and identifiable costumes from the vast time span were fellow students, teachers, classmates, and friends – still themselves, just ‘different.’ The decades were represented by:

- Poodle skirts, sequins, ‘James Dean’ style blue jeans, rolled pant cuffs and t-shirt sleeves from the 60s;
- Head bands, flower power pants, and psychedelic shirts from the 70s;
- Big hair, spandex, neon louvered glasses, oversized knee-length sweaters worn with wide belts, and Micheal Jackson leather jackets from the 80s;
- Parachute suits, Spice Girls garb, taffeta dresses of the 90s; and
- Flared pants, Jelly Roll concert ‘merch’, plaids, and ‘everyday’ fashions that remain timeless or just like history, find themselves popular again in the 2000s.

A mashup of the eras danced freely around the gym – it was epic fun, exhilarating, and nostalgic at its core.

The dance held a simple, symbolic note – one of acceptance, a ‘relax-and-come-as-you-are’ and ‘dance like nobody’s watching’ vibe. It was refreshing. As a welcome escape from the classroom; teachers and students alike embraced this self-expression opportunity, dancing and jiving around the gym, faces

lighting up as they heard their favourite song, and recalling memories triggered by the first few cords and lyrics.

The level of enjoyment was as individual as each participant. Supported by the musical journey through the decades, with neon-flashing lights and bracelets vibrating in sync with the pumping speakers, everyone’s experience was unique to them.



Miigwech to Ian Henry and Kayla Blondin who provided the DJ equipment and services for this dance! You played some incredible music (niimindewejige – play music), such diverse tracks from Tom Jones and ABBA to John Cougar Mellencamp and Britney Spears! You had the room hopping from the first notes that hit the airwaves. It was a trip down memory lane for many – one to be cherished for years to come. Music is medicine too! It heals; it restores and brings memories to the surface that needed dusting off so we can take another look at how far we’ve come and move forward to where we want to go. Music leads us, fuels us, gives us courage and tranquillity, and reaches our minds, hearts, and souls simultaneously, overflowing as our arms, legs, heads, hips, feet, and bodies move to the symphony of sounds that strike our senses. Learning doesn’t just happen from books or sitting at desks. It happens when we least expect it. At events like this – school dances – students (and staff!) are free to reveal their true nature, explore the past, present, and future, and make space for learning about friends, coworkers, fellow students, and oneself, too! Miigwech to the Sunshine Room for shining their bright light on this important life lesson through a dance across the decades, bringing joy and laughter to the Biidaaban gym and to the faces, minds, and memories of students and staff.



Earth Day In Education

April 22, 2026

Earth Day celebrations held on April 22 were a huge success this year, with activities hosted at Maa Jii Chi Ge Win (Sagamok Greenhouse). It was still the talk of the town a week later!

Adam and Angela White, Greenhouse Technicians, began planting in preparation for Earth Day and Spring back in January! Following extensive work throughout Fall and Winter, overseen by the newlyweds, they could finally use the greenhouse for year-round planting and harvesting. With the goals of food security and education always in sight, greenhouse activities have blossomed to include:

- Engagement with Elders from the Eagle Lodge through visits across the way;
- Seed/seedling/flower giveaways, paired with tilling and building garden beds for Sagamok residents to plant/maintain in their personal garden spaces, both at the EEL and across Sagamok neighbourhoods;
- Supporting neighbouring Mississauga First Nations as they get started with creating their own greenhouses; and
- Ongoing opportunities for Biidaaban students to get their hands dirty and learn about growing plants and food!



For anyone who hasn't been to the Greenhouse recently, it's worth a visit! The warm, humid air when you first pass through the doors, envelopes you like a hug, and your eyes don't know what to take in first. Crawling vines of yellow string beans and green peas run the entire length of the greenhouse, perched at standing height for easy picking access for children, adults, or Elders. There is a carpet of colourful petunias covering the floor on one side – reds, purples, fuchsia, and white -- their soft fragrance reaches your nose way ahead of brushing up against their delicate flower heads. The fresh green tops of carrots, beets, and spring onions growing in over-sized aluminum drum planters, emit a fresh odour you can almost taste when you run your hand over them. Kind of like the smell of fresh mown grass when you make the first cut of spring. It fills your nose and lingers in your senses reassuring us that summer is here once again. Adam and Angela planted numerous fruit trees around the perimeter of the greenhouse yard, started the petunia pots from seed for a community-wide beautification project (hanging baskets to be disbursed all around Sagamok), and the large vegetable plots in the greenhouse were grown to help students and community members learn about sowing, growing, and harvesting the crops for sustainability and to fill their bellies.

On Earth Day, classes walked over from Biidaaban to participate in activities, explore information tables, get their hands into some earth, pick their own vegetables, and put their name in for a grand prize – 6 trees were donated by Maa Jii Chi Ge Win; 2 cherry, 2 plum, and 2 pear. They enjoyed a fresh BBQ lunch of burgers, hotdogs, salads, and

drinks. A very popular way to welcome Spring and shoo away the remnants of winter webs. Miigwech to the volunteers who kept the BBQ full, along with over 130 visitors' tummies. The CFAU provided mini greenhouse kits, with other giveaways and prizes donated by Claims & Negotiations.



Allen and Chevaun Toulouse, both from the LRE Department, hosted a booth offering free seed bombs and packets to visitors, and there was great excitement about the experimental growing of Brussels sprouts and parsnips – something recipients had never tried. Angela and Adam assisted students and teachers with learning how to search for a well-developed carrot top and pluck it from the soil bed. Much to the enthusiasm and shouts of glee from students when they discovered a hidden, bright orange carrot at the other end of the greenery! They picked from the bin of spring onions and beets too, placing their harvested goods in an Earth-friendly tote provided by the Greenhouse. Students explored the flowers and assortment of other growing goodies within the humid and inviting greenhouse walls. They were even surprised by a visit from the Sagamok Eagle mascot who kept an eye on the excitement (though I think he was merely trying to determine his footing on the greenhouse floor – a somewhat different environment than what an Eagle would be used to, perhaps). Students could fill a peat pot from a large pre-mixed bucket of soil, and ‘plant’ a seedling of

their choice to take home. Some students were naming their seedling too! Already beginning the process of nurturing their plant by speaking kindly to it.

It was a wonderful experience for all who attended and a great way to offer gratitude for the gifts Mother Earth provides us when we use her lovingly and responsibly. With more than enough of everything to go around, Earth Day celebrations at Maa Jii Chi Ge Win reinforced the importance of sharing our knowledge, gifts, and resources. And a shout-out to students from the alternative class at Biidaaban, who represent this message beautifully. With guidance from Adam and Angela, every Wednesday and Friday since February, students from this class have had an hour in the afternoon to participate in ‘hands-on’ work. And by that, they learned about planting and nurturing seeds, and have successfully grown an assortment of vegetable plants which they continue to water and care for. They may be delivering these seedlings to Mississauga First Nation sometime in June, as a meaningful contribution of reciprocity and food security. Stay tuned for the follow-up story should that come to fruition!

Miigwech to Adam and Angela for hosting and organizing the day’s amazing array of activities, allowing all members of Sagamok to give Earth a great big hug of gratitude and enjoyment that will continue to thrive and grow right alongside the garden plants now in the care of the community.



Grade 8 Year-End Trip

The students in Grade 8, along with Teacher Mr. Kevin Maracle and Educational Assistant Jeanette Steinke, want to take an opportunity to thank parents, caregivers, families, community members, Biidaaban staff, students, and supports for a successful and very fun Graduation trip!

This year, Grade 8's elected to travel to Niagara Falls, with a stop in Toronto at Canada's Wonderland on the homeward journey. Travelling by coach from May 25-28, the class enjoyed a 3-night stay at Great Wolf Lodge, taking in the sights in the area, including the spectacular Niagara Falls and the lively atmosphere of Clifton Hill. "Students learned valuable financial literacy," commented Mr. Maracle upon their return. This looked like how to budget spending money while on a class trip and discover just



how far a dollar really goes. "The kids were really awesome, super well-behaved, and we had a really great time," he shared.

When students were asked what they enjoyed most about the trip, the pools, water slides, and swimming won hands down! Runners-up were the rides at Wonderland and Clifton Hill (in Niagara) attractions. The All-You-Can-Eat Buffet was a very close contender, noteworthy for some students in particular, whose eyes lit up just talking about how they could fill their plate up as much as they wanted, with whatever they wanted, and as many times as they wanted! Doesn't get any better than that, right?!

Mr. Maracle's favourite part of the trip was, "I got sleep this year!" He was impressed by the level of security at Great Wolf Lodge, with a guard stationed right outside their block of rooms all night!

Miigwech to Trista and Frederick Toulouse, Jeanette and Stephanie Steinke, Trina and Roberta Abitong, and Mr. Maracle for their involvement in planning and executing this fun-filled, meaningful, and celebratory year-end trip for the Grade 8s! The students expressed their appreciation for the time and generosity gifted to them by people throughout the school year. They expressed their thanks through a hand-made poster, signed by each of them, for the support received towards their fundraising efforts, canteens, BBQs, and hair-dying event. Chi miigwech, everyone, for this special trip celebrating the accomplishments of our Grade 8 graduating class.



EL1 REGISTRATION

Forms for the Upcoming Year Available Now
at Biidaaban! Please Stop By to Pick One Up.

2026-2027 REGISTRATION FORMS

www.SagamokAnishnawbek.com



SAGAMOK ANISHNAWBEK
EDUCATION

Congratulations on your Retirement, Marlene!



Sagamok Education would like to give a shout-out to Marlene Fournier. Surrounded by colleagues, friends, and her husband, Gary, Marlene was acknowledged at a Retirement Luncheon at the Lifelong Learning Centre, honouring her years of service and dedication to Sagamok Education.

Marlene began her lifelong career as a teacher in 1990. She worked for 35 years in this role, which involved teaching students at Biidaaban, witnessing the progression of the former school buildings as capacity

increased, imparting her knowledge, stories, tradition, and life experience to support students on their personal education and life journeys. Her kind and gentle demeanour were qualities both students and staff loved and valued about Marlene. Heartfelt comments, stories, and humorous recollections were shared during the luncheon with some of the very students she taught as young children, present at her Retirement celebration, and now Teachers themselves!

Marlene thanked everyone for being present to share in her celebration and for the beautiful gifts of roses, floral bouquets, balloons, a commemorative cake, and Chinese food lunch. She was gifted a queen-sized handmade quilt of varying blue fabric prints, inscribed with "Chi-Miigwech for your 35 years of dedication to Sagamok Education 1990 to 2026."

Marlene, you remain an inspiration to many, a dear friend and colleague, and a respected and valued educator. Enjoy your retirement and all the activities you mentioned you will now turn your focus to! Miigwech for your positive contributions over the years; we appreciate you!



Mini Prom

Teresa Abitong, Biidaaban's Early Learning teacher, provided the following summary and photos regarding the Mini Prom the EL 1 and 2 classes collectively participated in at Biidaaban, the beginning of June:

"The Mini Prom was such a special event, and the students had a wonderful time."

The Mini Prom was a collaborative effort by the Early Learning 1 (myself & Roberta Abitong) and Early Learning 2 teams (Juliet Ozawanimiki, Courtney Leclair & Destinee Toulouse), with support from staff such as Eric Johnson & D'arcy Trudeau, who helped make the day extra special for our students. The goal was to provide a memorable experience where students could dress up, celebrate with their peers, build confidence, and create positive school memories.

Throughout the event, the students shared many heartfelt comments that reminded us just how meaningful the experience was for them. We heard things like, "This is just like a real prom, it's so awesome!", "This is the best day ever!", and one student even said, "You did this for us? Thank you." Hearing these comments and seeing the excitement on their faces made all of the planning worthwhile.

The smiles, laughter, and joy we saw throughout the day were thanks enough for us. We were truly happy to create such a fun, memorable, and meaningful experience for our students, and it is a day we hope they will remember for years to come."

Teachers contributed a lot of personal thought, gesture, and creativity to this event. Biidaaban staff support the development of students, and this is one of many examples of where staff go above and beyond to provide meaningful content, opportunities, and experiences. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated and kind staff who want the best for our children.



MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN WALK

On Tuesday, May 5, Sagamok community members gathered at the Multi-Educational Centre to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit individuals (MMIWG2S). The event focused on raising awareness of the violence Indigenous women face and highlighting often overlooked stories. Participants entered the Multi-Education Centre and saw a large mural made by Biidaaban students from grades 4 to 8. The mural spread awareness about MMIWG2S, using beautiful but sorrowful imagery. Three birch trees had “Respect,” “Zaagidwin,” and “Honour” written on them. Between the trees sat about seventy-eight faceless figures, each unique in skin tone, hair colour, and accessories. Red handprints encircled them, with words like “No more,” “Sister,” “Women,” and “Red Dress” on the palms.

The mural project was led by Colleen Toulouse, Student Success Program Coordinator. She shared what Bernadette Southwind’s reminder had been to the students: “Everyone has a voice and is special in this community.” Colleen echoed Bernadette’s message and explained some of the mural’s artistic choices. Instead of focusing on a single person, students explored the idea of faceless dolls. This allows both the artist and the viewer to see whoever they need in the doll. This choice to show Indigenous people on a wide spectrum helped demonstrate a broader message: that Indigenous people are not a single identity group, figure or statistic, but individuals with distinct voices, identities and stories. The mural reminds us that everyone deserves to be seen, heard, and remembered as an individual.



TALENT SHOW



Biidaaban students had the chance to showcase their talents at this year's talent and art show. On May 26, starting at 1 p.m., students from several grades took to the stage to demonstrate a wide range of interests and abilities. From Early Learning through grade 8, students performed songs, dances, and played instruments for an enthusiastic audience of their peers, as well as parents, grandparents, and staff!

As you entered the school from the stinging sun outside, into the dimly lit gymnasium, you couldn't help but be greeted with nostalgia. The sound of the shuffling chairs and the hushed murmurs of many conversations echoed around the room. The space was filled with anticipation. The event began with rehearsals; as the gym filled up, students stood on stage, tuning guitars and practicing rhythms. Some enjoyed playing familiar tunes, while others played repeating melodies as an inside joke that made their friends laugh. Even though performing can be nerve-wracking, most students seemed calm and confident (or at least they did a good job hiding their nervousness)!

The practicing performers consisted of a singer, two guitarists, a drummer, and a teacher. Roughly 30 minutes after the doors for the event opened, the audience started to pour in. People spoke amongst themselves as they entered—students who would perform later, sat in front of the audience to watch the first acts. Sitting on the floor near the stage, they waited patiently for their turn and enjoyed the show.

After teachers and staff finished setting up the equipment and loading all the songs from YouTube as backing tracks for the students, the first performance featured the Early Learning classes, who danced to the nursery rhyme "Follow the Rainbow." They waved strips of red, blue, and different coloured cloths in time with the music. Some of the little ones on stage were very focused and steadfast in concentrating, while others seemed to dance to their own song, prompting laughs from many of the parents. The following group from the same grade danced to "Axel F" by Crazy Frog. Wearing Mickey Mouse hats, they sang and danced in unison. Some shy, and some eager to be at the center stage, you could see such a distinct portrait of all their personalities in such a small performance.



As the afternoon developed and the event continued, the show featured a wide range of student performances. From Alicia Keys and Benson Boone to The Weeknd, Baha Men, and The Lion King; there was plenty of musical variety. Some students played guitar by themselves, while others performed as whole classes using boom whackers—hollow plastic tubes that make different pitches when struck. A few students also tried non-musical performances such as puppetry and stand-up comedy.

Taking a moment to reflect on the twelfth act, the students telling jokes on stage, I noticed an interesting twist. In a non-mean-spirited way, the audience of students in the front row began to force laughs as the performers told their jokes. Each punchline sparked a wave of exaggerated laughter, which soon turned into real grins on the performers' faces. You could see the genuine smile on each performer's face; each time the audience would fake laugh, and in turn make the performers laugh, too. An interesting dynamic began: the audience and performers fed off each other's energy, blurring the line between stage and seats. This spontaneous back-and-forth made the act feel like a shared inside joke that everyone in the room got to see. The students on stage would share their material, and the audience would organically join in, creating a back-and-forth between the performance and the audience that highlighted the whole act.

As the show closed, the audience and the parents were reminded why moments like this matter for everyone. They give students a chance to express themselves, be creative, and learn new skills while having fun. For parents, the talent show gives them a chance to support their children's creativity and emotions while watching them perform. Biidaaban's talent show highlighted the best aspects of what a variety show is all about—Miigwech to everyone who came out and to all the students for their great performances!

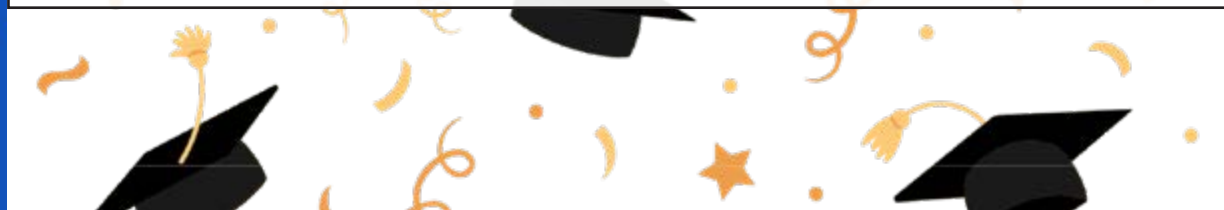


Lifelong Learning Centre

Adult Education Graduation

June 25, 2026 - Submitted by: Anna Bourcier, WALC Teacher

The Adult Education Graduation Ceremony held by Espanola High School (EHS) was a very exciting one! Throughout this past year, the adult students enrolled in the program have worked incredibly hard to overcome a variety of obstacles. Whether it was childcare, full-time work, aiding a sick family member, or lack of resources, this group of students conquered those obstacles and were able to complete their OSSD (Ontario Secondary School Diploma). EHS was beautifully decorated, and students donned cap and gown to walk their processional march. It was such an inspiration to see Sagamok students celebrating this enormous accomplishment and we look forward to celebrating with these graduates again at our own Sagamok Anishnawbek Graduation the end of July. Unable to attend the EHS ceremony were: Alexander Southwind, Jordan Toulouse, Russell Jones, and Kiana Corbiere. It will be lovely to see all of the Waawaasnoode Adult Learning Centre (WALC) graduates come together one last time to cross the stage before moving on to their next opportunity!



EHS Graduation 2026

On June 11, the EHS gym was packed like seedpods on a milkweed with relatives of the 111 graduates, 28 of whom were Sagamonians, present to celebrate their students' impressive achievement! Utilizing the school's colours, the gym was decorated in fresh green and soft white faux floral arrangements with twinkle lights throughout, creating a festive feel. The stage, which held the guest speakers, faced the grads and guests, and was framed with tall white pillars, greenery, mini lights, and fresh potted petunias offering a hint of fragrance and a pop of colour. The 2025-2026 Graduation marked the 74th ceremony of its kind for Espanola High School.



Guests stood to acknowledge dignitaries and graduates as they entered during the processional march and opening songs. A land acknowledgment was offered, followed by the playing of the tri-lingual O Canada anthem and traditional Honour Song performed by Mr. Dan Garcia with his drum. Vice-Principal Andrew Kendall filled the Master of Ceremonies duty for the evening, making everyone feel welcome in multiple languages and addressing the crowd in his poignant manner. His opening remarks were accented with bursts of humour, much to the delight of everyone gathered.

The celebration for the evening was special but serious, exciting, and full of eager anticipation. The moment of truth - 14 years of elementary and secondary education that delivered the graduates to this moment in time - was writing the end of this chapter in their lives as young people. The stage was now set for the grand adventure of life as an adult that stretched out ahead of them.

Feelings of happiness, pride, introspection, and relief, mixed with some sadness, fear, and confusion were both the spoken and unspoken truths of the evening. You could feel the questions swirling silently in everyone's minds: How did we get here? How did it happen so quickly, and yet these past four years felt like they would last 'forever'? Amidst these deep musings, the vibe was one of happiness, laughter, hugs, handshakes, blessings, and congratulatory remarks. Words like success, resilience, determination, perseverance, and bright futures rang throughout the gym. "We are so proud of you and your achievement!" echoed on everyone's lips.

Greetings from the Rainbow District School Board Trustee, Bob Clement, included an important sentiment: "It only took 14 years to get here. Learning doesn't stop here; it is just beginning. Be intentional as you go forward in your life." Next, an address from Whitefish River First Nation Council Member Richard Shawanda was presented. He joked about how he roamed these very halls 40 years ago! "As you start your journey on to whatever you want to be, when I look back at my time at this high school, it was one of the happiest times in my life. You have many options, and I'm proud of your accomplishment. This marks the successful culmination of your high school years. Strive to develop your passions! Find joy in the journey ahead of you," he stated.

Gimaa Angus Toulouse presented his greetings next: "Graduation is a deeply individual honour," he shared. Gimaa Toulouse congratulated the students on their hard work, perseverance, determination,

and resilience in completing the work needed to achieve their diploma. The Sagamok community was proud of each of them and thankful for the partnership of the Rainbow Board to ensure success and Anishinaabe cultural embracement. You can listen to Gimaa's heartfelt address to the graduates in its entirety on Bimaadiziwin Radio: The Sagamok Hour's archives. It is a beautiful delivery filled with meaningful sentiments, regards, and support for the future of the young Sagamonians and graduates, acknowledging the numerous opportunities available locally for them to explore careers and fill roles within their own community as they step forward in their lives.

Principal Andrea Therrien offered the closing remarks: "You can do hard things. You've already proven it. Here you are, not just surviving, but thriving." She went on to remind graduates, "While this achievement is yours, none of us arrived here alone. Miigwech to parents and caregivers, grandparents, aunties, uncles, family, friends, neighbours, and community members. Take a moment to look at the people around you tonight who walked alongside you." She went on to add some advice regarding their life beyond high school: "It's about showing up, looking out for one another and advocating for others. Working hard and caring about community. Carry hope. Keep showing the world what it means to be a Spartan."

The presentation of plaques, scholarships, bursaries, and awards followed, with a beautiful musical interlude performed by the EHS Band. Then came the presentation of diplomas as each graduate walked the stage to receive theirs. Principal Therrien personally greeted each graduate, shaking their hand, awarding them with their diploma, and posing for a memorable photo together at centre stage as the graduate was applauded and recognized for their momentous achievement. The symbolic gesture of moving the tassel over to the left side of the cap was observed, as were several magnificent-looking handmade

beaded caps, ribbon skirts, and shirts, worn proudly by our First Nations students. The Valedictorian's Address, presented by student council president, Andi Sokoloski, concluded the ceremony. Graduates were applauded once again as they departed the gym on the Recessional March to the Band's musical exit.

Graduates, families, educators, honoured dignitaries, and guests gathered in the courtyard outside of the cafeteria to witness the graduating class assemble one last time and perform the traditional 'tossing of their grad cap' into the air, symbolizing their successful completion of this phase of their education journey. The crowd cheered, clapped, hugged each other, and snapped endless photos. While everyone shared a commemorative cake and iced beverages together, words of praise for all the students flowed freely throughout the conversations in a communal show of support, encouragement, and zagidwin.

Congratulations to the following Sagamok students who earned the following Awards:

Wellington Mowry Memorial Bursary – Joseph Ozawanimiki – Presented to a male and a female graduate who are continuing their education in the field of technology.

Lee Valley Autumn Leaves Bursary – Michael Toulouse – Presented to a deserving graduate continuing in agriculture, veterinary medicine, forestry, or environmental science.

Quantum Builders Award – Julien Kiernan – Presented to a graduating student who will be continuing in the trades.

Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) presented to the graduate with the highest academic standing in the field of: Construction - Julien Kiernan, Hospitality – Joseph Ozawanimiki, and completing the Transportation SHSM - Michael Toulouse.

Minister's Certificates of Recognition for Community Involvement were awarded to Nimkiins Nahwegezhic and Joseph

Ozawanimiki, reaching the Bronze status for completion of 50-99 community involvement hours. Very impressive, men!

Indigenous Student Success Awards were given as follows: Bravery – Lennox Toulouse, Honesty – Jaslyn Assinewe, Humility – Draiden Abitong, Love – Jaycee Nashkawa, Respect – Joseph Ozawanimiki, Truth – Aaron Owl, and Wisdom – Nimkiins Nahwegezhic. Congratulations, everyone, on your exemplary continuance of the 7 Grandfather Teachings.

Congratulations to our Grade 12 Graduates!



Waawaasnoode ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

HOURS

Monday	9:00AM - 3:00PM
Tuesday	9:00AM - 3:00PM
Wednesday	1:00PM - 8:00PM
Thursday	9:00AM - 3:00PM
Friday	9:00AM - 3:00PM

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Quiet learning space
- Access to computers
- Support from an OCT-certified teacher (Anna)
- Re-engagement opportunities for adult learners to earn OSS Diploma credits
- Guidance on education requirements
- Support for job readiness and employment opportunities through the Lifelong Learning Centre



Contact Anna Bourcier:
705-501-8950
bourcier_anna@sagamok.ca



Adult Night School

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

- **FREE** two-hour night 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 705-501-8950.



**ATTENTION:
PARENTS AND GUARDIANS!**

Second Semester, Final Report Cards and Grade 12 Graduate Diplomas can be picked up at the Lifelong Learning Centre

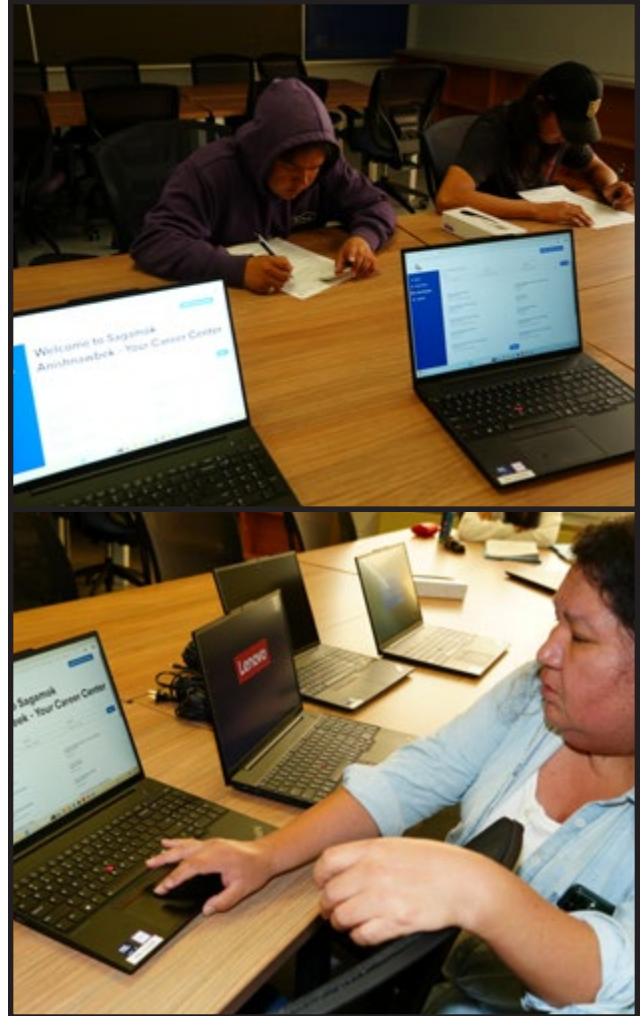
Contact: Josephine at 705-863-0612, or Kristy at 705-863-0980

Summer Student Job Fair

Summer employment is available at Sagamok and the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) helps students to access it! Guidance & Career Coach, Tracey Stoneypoint, organized this year's Summer Student Job Fair and Application Session. The ISET (Indigenous Skills and Employment Training) Program helps Indigenous people in Canada build their skills, access training opportunities, and find meaningful employment through specific funding and support services, of which Tracey Stoneypoint is the specialist at the Lifelong Learning Centre. The LLC has orchestrated a pretty impressive support approach to assist youth in our community find and access jobs locally, receive on-the-job training and real-time work exposure, as well as develop skills applicable to their interests and desired life paths.

Held on June 17 with applications due by June 19, the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) provided a suitable space for Sagamok students to come and learn more about available Summer Student job opportunities within Sagamok and receive assistance with the application process. Students, whether on their own or accompanied by their parents, attended the application session. We are ecstatic to report that 35+ students were placed in positions within community!

With computers set up and available for prospective employees to conduct job searches, Tracey was at the ready nearby to assist them with completing the necessary forms and ensuring the required documentation was submitted correctly along with their application. Tracey noted that this year the Summer Student Jobs process was implemented through ADP (Always Designing for People), the Human Resources Department's new employee management system. Previously run through Bamboo, this was a learning experience for Tracey as well, exemplifying that learning continues lifelong! Tracey mentioned her gratitude to Courtney Sutherland in HR,



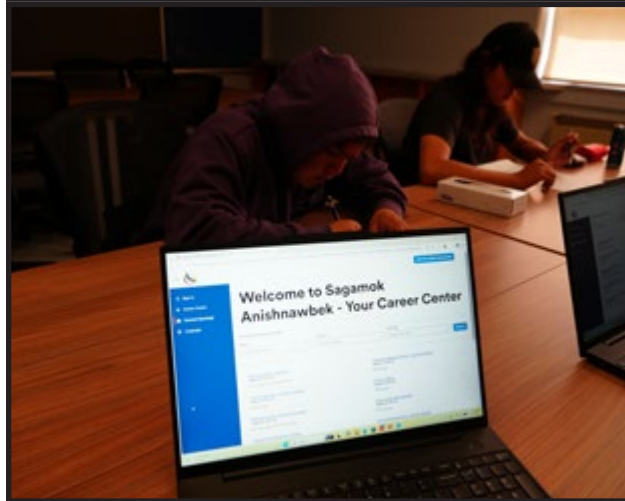
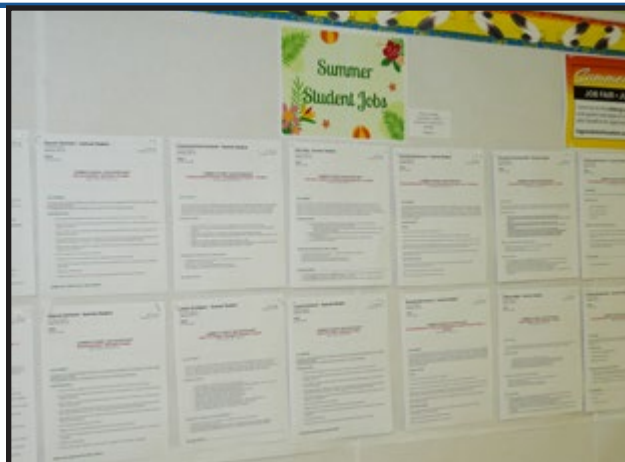
who provided support during the application process, as well as after jobs were awarded.

The first step involved students checking the Job Board at the LLC, choosing a suitable position based on interest and skill set, uploading their resume, completing the intake forms for ISET, and providing any necessary letters, certificates, or qualifications specified in the job description. After that, students would go through a screening process, ensure all their documents were in order, and then Tracey would reach out to Managers of Sagamok Departments to assess placement needs, opportunities available, and number of students required to fill the roles identified. "Once the students get selected, they become an official employee of Sagamok; on the payroll, logging in their hours, adherent to

policies and procedures, etc.,” shared Tracey. “This is a very collaborative effort between the Lifelong Learning Centre and Human Resources to onboard local students for jobs in Sagamok.”

There are numerous unique, interesting, and educational summer student jobs to be had right here at home, with Departments all too eager to share their knowledge, expertise, and open doors for Sagamok’s young adults. It is a wonderful way to gain experience on the job and test the waters to see if the fit is right for you. Our Guidance & Career Coaches are available every step of the way to support you and guide you should you wish to pursue higher education or make a detour.

Miigwech to the partners involved in this meaningful program, and congratulations and best wishes to the students on their summer job placements. We can’t wait to hear about your experiences and share your stories with other young adults and community members, so they too can come to appreciate your efforts and the training you received. By providing these opportunities we are helping to employ our youth locally and prepare them for success in future employment roles and responsibilities.



Planter Boxes A Welcome Touch at the LLC & Daycare

Miigwech to the Greenhouse Team, Adam and Angela White, for the vibrant petunias they planted in the planter boxes [which they constructed last year, 2025] out front of the Daycare and Lifelong Learning Centre. The pop of colour and fragrance they emit adds a welcome touch to both locations and is appreciated by staff and visitors alike.



Ravens Program Involved in Art Mural

The Ravens program led by Mr. Beamish at Espanola High School, joined by Mr. Stewart's Art Class, received guidance and instruction from alumni artist, Mike Cywink, to collectively create a large-scale mural. Mr. Beamish researched artists in the region who could provide a 'modern woodland style' of art instruction to his students, and came across Mike, a former EHS student. His uncle, the late Mike Cywink, painted the mural that adorns one whole wall of the EHS cafeteria. As an artist who has created murals for several universities, Mike wanted to give back to his community and inspire the high school-aged students in the fields of First Nations culture and art, both of which he holds dear. He visited the two classrooms at EHS, the week of May 25 to 29, to impart his artistic knowledge, talent, and cultural awareness, working with the students to create a mural that would be placed in the school.



Mike created a painting to be positioned in the centre of the mural, with the students creating their own individual paintings to attach at each corresponding-coloured section; the colours found in the medicine wheel. Through group discussions and in talking with Mike about some of his life experiences growing up and going to school in the region, the Artist and the students drew parallels together. Through this sharing, the classes developed a guideline to take inspiration from and use to create a cohesive art form. They utilized the colours and meanings found in the four directions of the medicine wheel as their foundation for the piece. The individual canvases were the students' contribution towards the mural, depicting their interpretation/thoughts/knowledge towards the subject of the medicine wheel and how they related to it. The four directions are represented by the colours: white (North), yellow (East), red (South), and black (West). Each student selected the colour from the brainstorming-discussion and guidelines they had created together that resonated most with them. They were invited to think about concepts they wanted to include, and to then create their canvas towards the mural over the next several days. "Not sure where it is going yet," Mike and the teachers observed, but as with any artistic piece, it takes on its own spirit and form. And becomes much more interesting and complex when you have 20+ artists involved.

Interpreting his painting, Mike explained the significance of the four directions of the medicine wheel to him personally, and the presence of a large and small raven sharing thoughts or knowledge, which he depicted as 'young Mike' and 'old Mike' letting him know everything is going to be okay. "This (Whitefish River FN) is home for me and always will be. Mind, body, and spirit will always lead you home." He went on to impart on the students "Everything we do is not for us. What I do is not for me. It's what we are leaving for the next generations." He encouraged students to look out for each other; support each other. His painting depicted the 7 generation 'bubbles' since "we are to think 7 generations ahead" Mike added, "each part (bubble) is connected demonstrating everything is interconnected."

The mural still had work to be done before it was complete. Mr. Beamish, Mr. Stewart, and all the participating students thanked Mike for his instruction in 'new school' woodland art' and presented him with a personalized, hand-made art card signed with grateful sentiments. "It has been a pleasure working with you this past week!" offered Mr. Beamish. "Miigwech, Thanks! It has been a great time, and I really enjoyed my time here with all of you," Mike spoke to the entire room with gratitude. Miigwech to everyone involved in this collaborative effort to bring a unique and personal art style/technique to EHS and students. We look forward to seeing the full mural on display!



LLC Hosts SP106 Wildland Fire1 Training Course



It was a scorching hot day on June 23 and 24 for 8 registrants in the Wildland Fire 1 Training Course facilitated by Fire-1 Training Lead, Dave Cowan.

The two-day course organized by the Lifelong Learning Centre offered the following core instruction and certification upon successful completion:

Basic Wildland Fire Suppression, Fire Behaviour, Aircraft Operations, Fire Pump and Hose Procedure, and a Full Day of In-Field Training.

Participants began with a classroom study unit including proper terminology used within the field, “shop talk”, and procedures they could expect to use and learn how to implement during the in-field training portion. In speaking with the students, all of them agreed that they found the course informative, enjoyable, and valuable for personal or professional use. They appreciated having the course brought right to Sagamok, making it easy to access and cost-free. The content was relatable as the instruction was adapted to the terrain found right here at home.

A slight glitch in the training occurred on day two. Dave Cowan ran into a pump malfunction while demonstrating the operational components of the course. While he would normally carry a spare pump, or several pumps while in the field/on firefighting missions, he had brought a smaller vehicle this time around and was limited on the amount of space for supplies. Some of the items (backpacks carried into the field for fire suppression) are quite bulky, and with pumps being routinely maintained and serviced, it is a rarity that a full malfunction would occur. But this scenario lent itself well to the training exercise, since a fire situation is always an emergency and requires quick thinking and troubleshooting on the fly. Through some quick decisions and the helpful generosity of the Sagamok’s Emergency Response Coordinator and Acting Fire Chief, Doreen Abitong, Conan Eshkakogan was dispatched to deliver a certified pump to Little Lake so the course could continue. Chi miigwech Sagamok Fire Department for coming to the rescue! A fine example of helping each other in a time of need. Students were able to complete the course, and Dave was extremely grateful for this act of trust and generous spirit.

Overall, the Fire1 program was well received, well attended, and helped participants see themselves in roles involving fire suppression as a career, in personal/community safety scenarios, or sparked interest in volunteering for local emergency squads.

Waawaasnoode (WALC) Graduation

The Class of '26 Continuing Education/ Night School Program celebrated 12 adults [ranging in age from approximately 20 to 60] who earned their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)! The Class of 2024-2025 was also celebrated, with 8 adult graduates from that year! This was the first Night School Convocation celebration of its kind in quite some time. Teachers, Administrators, and Leadership wanted to acknowledge the efforts and achievements of these adult students, who, by their choice and resolve, took the necessary step(s) to complete the requirements to graduate and receive their Grade 12 diploma!



Surrounded by proud parents, siblings, Aunties, Uncles, Grandparents, children, spouses, Board Trustee, Superintendent of Schools, Program Administrators/Teachers, Principal and Vice Principal, everyone stood and applauded the graduates during their processional march.

Expressing welcoming comments and congratulations to the group of graduates and their loved ones. Vice-Principal and Lead for the Continuing Education Night School program for Espanola High School/ Rainbow District School Board, and Master of Ceremonies, Andrew Kendall, delivered the following speech:

"It is a really exciting moment. It does take courage and dedication, commitment, among

many other things, to choose to come back to school and work towards your diploma. You balance this commitment with the other demands of life—jobs, family, life events—it's no easy feat, but you've done it! You've set goals for yourself, put in the work, shown strong effort, and dedicated yourself to earning this. And I emphasize that word earn. This is your accomplishment, your achievement, and your success. I know your teachers echo my thoughts when I share that we are so very proud of you. This is a tremendous accomplishment.

As you head off to the next chapter of your story, wherever that is and whatever that looks like for you, I hope that you continue to strive to develop your passions. You have great things to offer the world, and there is so much waiting out there for you. Remember to find joy and remember your strengths and what has gotten you to this point. Thank you all for bringing us together today to share this with you."

Greetings from the Rainbow District School Board Trustee, Bob Clement, included proud sentiments:

"Learning does not end when you leave school; learning happens lifelong. Life has a way of presenting new opportunities, new challenges, new reasons to keep growing. Many of us discover that education is not a single chapter of our lives, but a journey that continues throughout the years."

Expressing his personal education journey, being one of returning to school to complete training programs or upgrading skills, Bob drew the parallel to the adults graduating by saying:

"I was reminded that learning is not about age; it's about curiosity, determination, and a willingness to grow. That is what makes your achievement so meaningful – you have proven that it is never too late to invest in education for yourself, pursue your goals, values, work, family responsibilities, and education required – all the while exploring courage, discipline, and perseverance. The diploma you receive today represents far more than completed assignments or passed exams. It represents obstacles overcome, sacrifices made, and

goals achieved. You are role models for your families, your friends, and your community."

Superintendent of Schools, Maureen McNamara shared in Andrew's excitement about this graduation being the first adult-focused graduation engagement in quite some time! "It was for our community and our First Nations partners that we felt it was important to support your goals for education and your future," she shared. "Life brings you all types of experiences, and when you get older you recognize what you can bring back to your learning. It takes a lot of courage, motivation, and confidence, and most importantly you did this for yourself! Congratulations to you all!"

Principal Andrea Therrien acknowledged the night school teachers, Superintendent McNamara, "Trustee Bob" (as he introduced himself), Vice-Principal Kendall, Board Members, and the administrative team, the community and partners of Sagamok and Whitefish River First Nation during her remarks:

"It's nice to see all the faces of the people who make this program possible. So many people. But at the end of the day this [program] is life-changing. This is why we do what we do; why our teachers work late in the evening, spending extra time and reaching out to students, and we do it because seeing you here tonight

makes everything worthwhile. It is our joy, our pleasure, and our honour to be able to do this. The two things that resonate with me the most tonight is that you are role models whether you recognize it or not -- the people here celebrating with you tonight are a testament to that -- because you have shown yourself that you can do this, but also, I hope this opens up opportunities for you, and if nothing else, it gives you the satisfaction of knowing that you have accomplished this for yourself."

Graduates walked onto the stage to receive their diplomas amid elated cheers and shouts of praise from family members, teachers, and guests. Time was given for each individual graduate to be honoured, to take photos, and to be deeply acknowledged for their achievement as they held centre stage, diploma in hand, smiling proudly. With celebratory applause, endearing words of encouragement, and overwhelming happiness enveloping all occupants of the room, the graduates assembled at the front of the stage and in unison tossed their caps -- symbolically completing this part of their journey.

'The sky is the limit, doors are opening, the pathway is unfolding, follow your dreams, the possibilities are endless!' Congratulations to each graduate, and all the best to you on your journey.



Lifelong Learning Centre - Student Success Stories

Arieanna Ago-neh

student at Espanola High School, agreed to offer her insights about her first year of secondary school.

Very confident, and with great conviction, Arieanna stated that she attributed her success to joining as many athletic teams as possible. An avid athlete, Arieanna has already joined the volleyball and badminton teams and plans to try out for the softball team this spring. She has set sights on trying to win '*Student Athlete of the Year*. "I will keep striving for that," she remarked passionately. She recommends joining as many teams as possible and making lots of new friends. "It really helps tame nervousness," she assured.

When asked what her education pathway or career goals might look like [of course, enjoy high school first!] Arieanna replied that she is looking into becoming a Police Officer. She would like to work locally, which this career option would offer. She has a desire to help people and ensure safety for everyone. She has been inspired to pursue this type of career through her love of solving mysteries and watching related TV shows/movies.

Arieanna acknowledged her awareness of Sagamok's Guidance & Career Coaches at the LLC, including Josephine Toulouse, who is a direct contact at EHS offering student support and who Arieanna knows to be an available resource should she need it. From assistance with applications and funding opportunities, to guidance for employment or education pathways, including aptitude testing, to cultural support and building confidence to take the next step towards your goals, the Lifelong Learning Centre can assist you. It's as easy as simply picking up the phone and calling or dropping by the office.

In closing, Arieanna left us with her sentiment for high school success, "Make lots of new friends! They will help you through it. Join teams, band, the arts, and you will meet people." Miigwech for taking time to meet with us and sharing your sentiments for success, Arieanna.

Emma Crimp

My name is Emma Crimp, and I am currently a student at Laurentian University studying Education and English. Through the support of the Sagamok Education Department's Post Secondary Funding program, I have been able to continue my education and focus on achieving my academic and professional goals while partaking in extracurricular activities like cheerleading!

The financial assistance provided has significantly reduced the stress that can come with pursuing post-secondary studies -- knowing I do not have to deal with financial stressors I am able to focus strictly on academics.

In addition, working with my Guidance & Career Coach, Edie, has been a very positive experience. Having someone available to offer guidance, encouragement, and practical advice while checking in on me has helped me stay focused and confident in my academic path knowing I have support. The LLC's Guidance & Career Coach support has made navigating university and planning for my future career much easier knowing I have someone to refer to.

Overall, the services offered through the Sagamok Education Department have had a meaningful impact on my educational journey. I am very grateful for the opportunities and support provided for me during my academic journey. It truly has helped me continue moving forward toward my goals both inside and outside of school!

Thank you for the continued support.



At the March Regional Qualifier for the Ontario Skills Competition (OSC), Sagamok member and Espanola High School Grade 12 student, Julien Kiernan, won 1st place in the Cabinet Making division of the competition! His assigned project was a dart board built from poplar materials. The geographic area that this Northern qualifier draws from is quite expansive and, as a result, the competition is stiff.

In mid-April, Julien travelled to North Bay to compete in the OSC's Regional Individual Carpentry Skills Qualifier. Julien won Gold and earned his place at the Toronto-based Provincial Skills Competition on May 5, where he will represent EHS, Rainbow District School Board, and the region of Ontario Northeast! The winning project utilized all his accumulated talents and skills to date, including reading construction plans, calculations, layout and material use efficiency, cut and assembly, all while working under the pressure of a timeline, in front of spectators, to produce a top-quality [winning] finished product.



During an interview with Julien in the woodshop at EHS, he showed us several completed projects that helped him prepare for the initial qualifier. He demonstrated his 90-Degree corners, dovetailing, mitring, tight and even-hinged door construction, gables, trusses, and pride of workmanship in sanded and stained furniture-grade pieces. Julien has been exploring woodworking for most of his high school career and is continuously honing his carpentry skills. He has placed at several qualifiers and, you may recall, won 4th place in last year's OSC! Some of his projects include cabinets, tables, and shelves, as well as large-scale projects like a gazebo and a shed. Julien has even built several homes in Sagamok and Sheguiandah!

What led to this successful story? In Grade 9, Julien says he, "started exploring Technologies class where students get to spend a few weeks in different trades: wood, auto, foods etc." This led him to summer carpentry jobs with local contractor, Z'Gamok, through the Co-operative Education program. In Grades 10, 11, and 12, he switched to the Construction stream entirely, finding this to be his niche. Julien expressed great appreciation for what he has learned through the program and two co-op placements, and the numerous skills in the industry he has acquired during his years at EHS. "Thanks to Mr. Keresztesi, for all of his guidance and support over my high school career," Julien shared in a heartfelt acknowledgement to his mentor. Mr. K is very highly regarded by students and known for providing a wealth of knowledge about the industry, as well as various cultures and job markets, having worked both in Canada and abroad. Plus, he is the Coach for the Arm-Wrestling Club, which we will highlight in a separate article in this newsletter edition.

Julien went on to add that one of the benefits of earning a spot at the OSC is the opportunity to connect with potential future employers. Julien spoke about his learning journey, adding, "My experiences throughout all of this have helped me to think of a career path, and I now know I am most interested in carpentry or working in the mines. Coming into high

school, I didn't really know what I would choose for a career path. [My] first choice was always carpentry, but now one of the two [above mentioned] options as an Operator of heavy equipment or utilizing carpentry in the mining industry" are in his sights. Julien also shared that his uncle provides him with inspiration, having talked about his work in the mines, the opportunity for remote fly-in work, and the potential to generate solid earnings.

"Sagamok has supported me throughout competitions with food costs, training certificates such as Working at Heights and associated fees, and membership at the Azilda Carpenters Union," Julien noted gratefully. He added that taking the Specialist High Skills Major program through high school has supported him throughout his Carpentry career exploration through training being offered, acquiring certificates and transferable skills (working at heights, forklift operator), which Julien acknowledges gives students a head start and looks great on a resume.

In closing Julien offered this: "Find an interest, put yourself out there – you never know where it will take you. Try different courses at EHS you may not have known about or thought of...For example, Exploring Technologies; I knew nothing about carpentry, but it has inspired my deepest interest."

Miigwech for this interview time, Julien, to share your education and career journey, to celebrate local talent and skills, and to congratulate you on winning Gold at the Ontario Skills Competition, and on your successful high school career! You are an inspiration. Sagamok Education is proud of you, and we wish you ongoing success in your lifelong learning journey and all your future efforts.



Will Sayers Shares Arm Wrestling Tips

Pictured here, is Will Sayers, Z'Gamok Enterprises Chief Executive Officer (CEO), with students from Espanola High School's Arm-Wrestling Club. Approached by Guidance & Career Coach, Josephine Toulouse, Will accepted the invitation to attend EHS, joining Woodshop Teacher, Mr. Keresztesi, Arm Wrestling Club Lead for the high school. Sharing his knowledge of the sport, highlights of his own experiences as a competitive arm wrestler, providing tips, and demonstrating form with students, Will engaged the young audience of avid arm wrestlers. Taking the podium with Gold and Silver winnings at the competitive level, Will is a local legend in the world of arm wrestling. Miigwech, Will, for providing your time, being a positive role model to our students, and encouraging love for the sport!



EHS 2026 Spring Powwow

Friday, May 15, 2026, brought us to Espanola High School (EHS) to participate in the Spring Powwow. This annual event hosted by EHS celebrates the Spring season and new beginnings, sharing a culturally significant event for Indigenous members of the school community ahead of the busy summer Powwow Trail. It provides an educational experience and an opportunity for personal development for anyone in attendance. And the invitation to attend is extended to surrounding schools, community members, staff, and students!

"The annual Powwow, hosted at Espanola High School, has been a beautiful experience for teachers, students, and invited guest from other schools," responded Josephine Toulouse, Guidance & Career Coach at EHS, when asked to share her feelings about the Spring Powwow. "As an individual who is part of the coordination efforts, when I stand back and observe, the energy in the room changes as people begin to join in the inter-tribal dances and the spot dances.

It leaves you with a feeling of being overjoyed with the spirit of connectedness within Indigenous culture," Josephine shared.



For this year's Powwow, let us acknowledge the following individuals for their contributions during the event itself: Arena Director - Ozzie Osawamick, Master of Ceremonies - Mike Abitong, Student Master of Ceremonies - Julien Kiernan, and Helper - Dan Garcia. The following individuals were selected as Flag Carriers: Sagamok - Joseph Ozawanimiki, Metis - Rebecca Seel, White Fish River First Nation - Melody Hester, and Anishnabek Flag - Hayden Barrette. Entering the Powwow arena procession first, they stoically carried their respective flags. The beat of the drum and chanting exploded within the gym, consuming the space and visually filling all onlookers with awe – instantly riveting and connecting them in this moment, this togetherness. Providing the Host Drum was Whistling Wind, and Co-Host Drum, the Sagamok Young Warriors. Chi miigwech to them for their tremendous effort during the entire event! And chi miigwech to the dancers! Clad in their beautiful, colourful, and personally significant regalia, head dancers, Daniel and Dakota led the procession, followed by wind and grass dancers, jingle dress, and fancy shawl dancers – some of Biidaaban's Powwow dancers performed as well. What a magnificent display of dances – so much concentration, feeling, and emotion put into them, with vibrant colours and ribbons swirling around as though the whole gym was moving and flowing in a mesmerizing powerful experience.

Everyone was invited to join the circle after the first round was completed, and the gym floor quickly filled up with students, teachers, Elders, and performers. The Powwow continued for nearly three hours; an exciting and rewarding way to kick off the May long weekend and Spring! Through cultural events such as this, students and guests can build a deeper understanding of Anishinaabe culture, the significance of the various dances, dancers, their regalia and the stories behind the creations, and the drum. By bringing together various age groups from babies to Elders, school communities like



A.B. Ellis and Espanola High School, and visitors from near and far, unity is nurtured -- connections are made with each other, with fellow communities, and to the land. It teaches us about protocols, traditions, knowledge, and storytelling. Sharing causes this significant and historical art form and communication method to continue. Creator is acknowledged and beckoned through all of these actions and offerings.

This annual event received contributions from EHS, Z'gamok Enterprises, and Noojmowin Teg, as well as prize donations and support from many local businesses and citizens. Miigwech to Allison Owl, who donated a pot of chili to help feed the performers! Miigwech to Angela Southwind, who provided hand-made beaded earrings, a ribbon skirt, and ribbon shirt towards the grand prize draw. The beautiful creations and generous donation were appreciated deeply! There were numerous gift

cards provided as well, which were randomly awarded during spot dances throughout the afternoon, much to the delight and surprise of recipients.

A.B. Ellis classes, as well as Biidaaban students in Grades 4, 5 and 8 attended, along with supporting staff. Sagamok Community Elders from the Eagle Lodge were spotted on the sidelines and on the dance floor, kicking their canes to the side (literally)! And the event welcomed many community members from Birch Island and the surrounding region as well. One visitor commented that this was her first time attending the high school Powwow, travelling all the way from Wiki! She expressed that she thoroughly enjoyed the gathering; a great experience seeing the students participate and contribute to this cultural celebration.

Chi Miigwech to Powwow organizers from EHS, including Andrea Therrien - Principal, Ashley Pichette - Graduation Coach, Josephine Toulouse - Career & Graduation Coach, and Karen Boyer - Indigenous Student Support Worker. The set-up and take-down was provided by EHS staff and student volunteers. Chi miigwech to everyone involved in coordinating this event! If we didn't mention your name, please accept our apology, but know that your help and contributions were very much appreciated! Miigwech to Josephine Toulouse for providing many of the details regarding the Powwow included in this article. She left us with this sentiment; "We look forward to our 2027 Powwow gathering, it won't be long...hope to see you there! Biindigen."



Apprenticeships Session

Anna Bourcier, Waawaasnoode Adult Education Teacher at the Lifelong Learning Centre, summarized an **Apprenticeships** information session that she and Guidance & Career Coaches hosted on April 23 from 3-6pm:

“The purpose of this session was to connect community members and students with the Ontario apprenticeship office to eliminate barriers in the trade apprenticeship process. Participants had a chance to explore the advantages of becoming a trade apprentice, how to go through this process, and how it might benefit them in the long run (career-wise).”

Tracey Stoneypoint, also a Guidance & Career Coach at the LLC, is the ISETPs (Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program) Lead and can connect people with various services and program options. You can contact the LLC directly at 705-501-8950 and ask for Tracey, Anna, or any of the Guidance & Career Coaches to find out more about apprenticeships, post-secondary education, employment, information programs and services, funding, application processes, and personal assistance with any of the above.

The **Apprenticeships** session was one of many featured sessions offered by the Lifelong Learning Centre since January 2026, including: OCAS/OUAC Meet & Greet, Career Presentations, Unions, Trades Fair, and Summer Job Fair -- with **more** exciting and informative sessions being offered throughout the remainder of the year.

If you need help figuring out education or career paths, or just want someone friendly to bounce ideas off and become inspired, the staff at the LLC are knowledgeable about:

- Job Boards
- Post-secondary educational institutions,
- Careers and education requirements,
- Resume writing,
- Special Interest Programs,
- Skill development/training,
- Local employment opportunities,
- Apprenticeships,
- Co-op placements and on-the-job training,
- Funding options,
- And ISETP/programs existing for employers and employees to connect and hire locally



Give the Lifelong Learning Centre a call, email, or drop in for a visit. The staff is welcoming and eager to assist you, wherever you may be on your journey. They are passionate about their work, have a wealth of industry and life experience, and can help you explore and customize something to meet your needs and your vision of the future you.

Whether you are starting high school, about to graduate, want to earn a degree or diploma, want to live and work locally, know a niece, nephew, or grandchild who is seeking direction, or you just want to learn about what services and programs exist, the Lifelong Learning Centre can get you pointed in the right direction.

You don't know until you ask, so don't hesitate to reach out. It is up to you to take the first step: call 705-501-8950, message us at llc_intake@sagamok.ca, or visit 717 Sagamok Road. See you soon!

Lifelong Learning Centre Student Success Story nominee, Arieanna Ago-neh, a Grade 9

Espanola Job Fair

The La Cloche Foothills Job Fair, held at the Espanola Recreation Center on May 12, was visited by Sagamok Education Student Support Workers and Guidance & Career Coaches. With about 23 booths available to visit, staff members circulated throughout the Fair to learn more about programs available to help local youth and adults secure meaningful and gainful employment in the region.

Community Paramedicine, Manitoulin Sudbury District Services Board, Espanola Fire Department, Rainbow Schools, Glencore, UCCM Anishnaabe Police, NATT Safety Services, Vale, Whitefish River First Nation, Z'Gamok, and the Massey Fair are just some of the organizations that were represented. Several post-secondary institutions, including Cambrian College, Laurentian University, Kenjgewin Teg, and Northern Ontario School of Medicine, were present. They provided information about pathways to upgrading education credits, as well as courses offered to help individuals pursue their profession of choice. Visitors were encouraged to consider careers related to the various sectors specialized by the schools. Most booths offered pamphlets, interactive displays, and giveaways, with visitors leaving the fair with tote bags full of goodies and brains full of valuable information!

Students from Espanola High School also dropped in throughout the day to:

- explore local career options;
- talk with prospective employers;
- gain a clearer sense of the programs and career paths available to them; and
- understand the type of education they need to pursue depending on their career choice.

The Fair buzzed with energy and drew a great crowd, giving Education Department staff the chance to discover fresh insights about local employers and organizations. They left with valuable leads on programs, recruitment, and training opportunities, all ready to share with their students. For Guidance & Career Coaches, learning never stops. They take pride in uncovering new knowledge that can open doors for their students, finding unique opportunities, and building connections that might help a student launch a career or achieve a lifelong dream.



Medicine Walk

On a brilliant, azure-blue sky day, Mr. Beamish's Ravens and Mr. Hannah's Outdoor Education class, along with Teacher Apprentice, Ms. Clairmont, participated in a hike at McLean's Mountain on Manitoulin Island. Situated between Little Current and Aundeck Omni Kaning (AOK), the site of this educational outing offered Espanola High School students an opportunity to go on a reflective journey. The journey began with glimpses of the shelves and rock cuts of the Precambrian shield, Whitefish River First Nation territory, and the famous swing bridge at Little Current while en route. Creator's classroom unit today, organized by student Daniel Morningstar, invited Wiikwemkoong's Sophie Pheasant to facilitate a medicine walk.

The experience began with Sophie engaging students in a discussion of the four directions of the medicine wheel, and where we were positioned accordingly. A large cloth medicine wheel was spread out on the ground, facing the correct direction in relation to the colours:

- White to the North (symbolic of the moon, winter, and elder stage of life);
- Yellow to the East (location of the sun rise, symbolic of new beginnings, childhood);
- Red to the South (symbolic of warmth, element of fire, summer and youth); and
- Black to the West (symbolic of the setting sun, the element of water, autumn and adulthood).

Through gentle stretching and focusing our attention, we brought ourselves and our minds into the space we were inhabiting and towards our purpose for being there. With arms stretched skyward, we pivoted first toward Mishomis (Grandfather) Sun and then to the ever-visible Nokoomis (Grandmother) Moon, offering gratitude and expressing our internal intentions for the medicine walk ahead. Sophie reminded everyone that even in the middle of the wild terrain, we can feel supported by Grandfather Sun and Grandmother Moon, always there to protect us with their comforting presence, and connect us to creation. The spring wind still held a chill as it rustled the golden grasses beneath our feet, and the aundeck (crows) squawked their presence, as they drifted sideways through the sky, haphazardly entering our sight, watching us with curious



and deeply observant eyes.

With Sophie leading the expedition, students hiked the Skyline trail, offering spectacular panoramic vistas of Little Current, the La Cloche Mountain Range, and the North Channel of Lake Huron. The hike led everyone along the high, forested ridge of the mountain, with Sophie pointing out various plants and tree species along the way. Her knowledge was shared to help students identify the plants and trees used in traditional medicines, the places where they grow, the proper seasons to for harvest, and to learn about their healing benefits, which are still used today. Some of the plants included:

- Wild leeks (a source of nourishment tasting much like an onion) which grow near Maple trees and sprout from the earth in springtime;
- Trout lily (a speckled pattern on oval-fish shaped leaves that mimic a trout and have a small yellow star-flower in spring);
- Poplar buds with their notable aroma when crushed open;
- Red willow (used for pain relief and the main ingredient used in the pharmaceutical Aspirin);
- Aspen bark (used as sunscreen);
- Juniper berries/bushes (used for flavouring meats; tea remedy); and
- A few remaining cedars (medicine for healing, tea, cleansing) framed the view at the conclusion of the hike and the precipice of the trail.

Returning to the medicine wheel, participants were invited to choose from a selection of wooden beads to thread onto a leather strip. The beads were meant to symbolize the walk we had completed together, and each person was invited to share a couple of memorable moments or pieces of knowledge gained from the day. The circle of



reflection allowed everyone to connect in a special way, understand each other a little bit more, and perhaps recognize something that had gone unnoticed but was brought to their attention through the joy it sparked in the speaker. Most expressed a great

sense of freedom and connection to the universe experienced through the simple act of the gratitude prayer to the sun and moon at the very start of the hike. Daniel offered some words of gratitude and meaningful reflection to close the medicine walk in a good way. Everyone was invited to take a pinch of semaa (tobacco) using their left (heart) hand, to present to their favourite part of the hike and offer an intention there.

The following summary was submitted by Daniel Morningstar, giving his student perspective on his involvement with organizing and facilitating the outing:

“When Mr. Beamish first brought up the trip assignment, I was nervous. However, after a few days of brainstorming, Mr. Beamish and I came to a selection impasse and chose to reach out to Sophie Pheasant for a Medicine Walk. After a few weeks of planning and communicating among the three of us, we chose a date and time. Mr. Beamish added, “We’ll be there rain or shine.” His motivating words uplifted my spirit, and I was no longer nervous. After we selected a date and time, we had to plan transportation, so we asked Mr. Hannah’s outdoor education class to join us on the trip so that we could reserve a bus. Mr. Hannah agreed almost immediately! Mr. Hannah asked me to go to his class and explain what we will be doing on the trip to encourage attendance.

I found myself nervous again, however, I still went to his class and found that his class wasn’t full of strangers but people I’ve interacted with throughout my time at EHS. I explained to them what we were doing and they sounded excited when I left. Mr. Beamish and I finished forms and handed them out and went to pick up water bottles for the students. The day of the trip arrived, and we loaded up the bus and headed out to McLeans Mountain Lookout, where we met with Sophie and started introductions. Sophie took the lead and we went across the road atop the hill where she had set out her bundle and everything she would need for the day. We started with stretching and a prayer. Sophie then led us into the beginning of the bush and showed us Wild Leek; an onion. We picked some, and a few of the students tried taking a bite. It was fun and brought laughter. We then hiked up the trail and proceeded to acknowledge plants and medicines that were used for healing and miijim (food). The trail became a circle that led to a steep hill that we climbed and joked about together at the top.

We came to a lookout where we observed the lakes and the Reservations in sight. We then moved on, back to where we started, taking turns sharing one thing we were grateful for learning today. Everyone made their round and it was a nice icebreaker, even if a few of us were still nervous. I brought a bag of Semma



(tobacco) and shared a few words about it “We grab medicine with our left hand because it is closest to our hearts, it connects them. It is important to remember that it is not how much you have or take but what you put into the medicine that matters. The same as our children or the plants we grow, we have to put our good thoughts into them for them to sprout.” After my words, we ended and returned to the bus, I handed out the exit tickets (evaluation) that Mr. Beamish and I had made, along with pencils. We went to 3 Cows for lunch, and everybody got some food or ice cream. It felt like a short bus ride back to the school, mostly because I slept through it. We got off the bus and acknowledged that it was fun and educational.”

Mr. Beamish provided the following summary regarding the educational value of the outing:

“The Medicine Walk connected directly to the Ravens Program curriculum by blending outdoor education, physical health education, and Indigenous cultural learning. Many students are working toward Physical Health Education and Outdoor Education credits, and this land-based learning experience provided an opportunity for students to participate in outdoor activity while developing plant identification skills and learning about medicinal uses of local plants.

The activity also supported the cultural focus of the Ravens Program through teachings connected to the Medicine Wheel. Students are currently completing their Medicine Shields, where they earn beads through participation in field trips and experiential learning opportunities. For this Medicine Walk, students earned a black bead in the Mental quadrant of the Medicine Wheel, recognizing their participation in a learning experience focused on plant knowledge, observation, and understanding medicinal properties.”

Miigwech to Daniel Morningstar, Sophie Pheasant, Mr. Beamish, Mr. Hannah, Ms. Clairmont, and the students, for inviting everyone to take part in this culturally meaningful, physically invigorating, and informative excursion.



EDUCATION SUPPORTS



Mental Health Awareness Week, held May 4-9, was supported by staff from Sagamok Education during the Information Fair & BBQ on May 4. The Education Department booth featured an informative display and resources about Mental Health, awareness signs, and self-help measures, fidgets, uplifting stickers, take-aways, and draw prizes, including a smudge kit.

Raven Hammond, Student Mental Wellness Specialist, and Edie Fairburn, representing the Lifelong Learning Centre, were available to answer questions and provide pathways of support to improve and encourage mental wellness.

Kicking off the weeklong awareness campaign, the Information Fair provided an opportunity for visitors to speak with specialists from Sagamok's Mental Health services as well as regional organizations.



BEADED GRAD CAPS AND HATS



A two-day beaded grad cap and/or hat program was organized by Gail Trudeau in early June, ahead of the upcoming graduations. Participants chose from a variety of graduation caps, cowboy hats, and ball caps, and an assortment of coloured seed beads to adorn their hats with. Learning how to assemble their supplies, to quickly string beads onto the thread, to properly prepare their hat brims to securely hold the beads once sewn on, and to master their pattern, tension, and spacing, participants worked away at their individual projects in the comfortable maker's space in the Lifelong Learning Centre.

Gaining inspiration from samples on hand, internet searches, and each other, participants created graduation caps for their daughters, sons, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. In one case, a mom was beading a graduation cap for her younger brother graduating from Early Learning at Biidaaban, with the same

cap to then be passed on to her own son once he graduated from Daycare. Other participants were decorating cowboy hats and ball caps to wear at the upcoming Sagamok Powwow.

Quiet creativity and companionship flowed as the projects came to life, and the recipients of the graduation caps wore them proudly, showing them off to anyone who complimented them and sharing the story of the special person who lovingly created them on their behalf.

Registration for this program was required, but there was no cost to participate. Check our website/digital sign/posters/social media platforms for programs like this and so many other unique and interesting options that you could take part in. If you don't see what interests you, make a suggestion!



SERT Network Meetings Re-established

On June 23, Systems Principal of Student Success, Allison Abitong, reinvigorated the regular meeting of the SERT Network. The Special Education Resource Teacher Network consists of special education and education leadership from the North Shore and Manitoulin region. These specialists meet to consult best practices, explore training, compare assessment tools utilized, brainstorm policy writing, and rotate meetings, allowing a visit to each other's reserves and classrooms, to observe various teaching styles, models, and support mechanisms.

Following an opening prayer and smudge by Delores Trudeau, Allison opened the meeting by joyously welcoming everyone to Sagamok in Anishinaabemowin. She explained her role—working in each sector of Lifelong Learning from Daycare to Post Secondary --providing specialization in Special Education strategies to support student success. She said, "I am happy we are all here together again in Sagamok; it has been a long time, but I am excited to learn what other schools are doing to support students; what tools or programs or practices you are using and perhaps use or integrate these into my schools."

This networking opportunity is highly advantageous; together, the group can bounce ideas off each other for curriculum development and review best practices for how to assess literacy and numeracy needs/scores across the region. Since many outlying schools across the region are 'feeder schools' for Rainbow District School Board's Espanola High School, it makes sense that representation from each is welcomed to be involved in the discussions. Allison went on to explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to reach out to other educators, foster collaboration, align practices, improve structure and

support, close gaps, and discuss land-based instruction opportunities, such as those our Anishinaabemowin program is continuing to evolve here in Sagamok.

Going around the table, each educator introduced themselves, their role, and the school/grade they serve. The group consists of SERT teachers, Principals, Administrators, Numeracy and Literacy Leads, all from Rainbow District School Board and First Nations schools within the region. It is a broad and diverse range of professionals, upwards of 15. Each participant expressed gratitude for receiving the invitation to attend and are pleased to have this networking group revitalized thanks to Allison spearheading the reestablishment of SERT regular meetings. Everyone shares a common motivation: to provide students with a positive educational experience, serving their diverse needs, and ultimately striving for students to succeed in education and in life. And their goals are clear too: support Indigenous learners to improve performance, and result in increased graduation rates within the RDSB and the region. In service of this goal, a discussion about how to best improve transitions between schools (i.e., Daycare to Biidaaban, Biidaaban to Espanola High School, etc.) was also key. All representatives are passionate about supporting students to achieve success across all systems of education. Delores Trudeau, Chairperson of Sagamok's Education Committee, introduced herself as a Mother, Grandmother, and Great Grandmother, and added, "I have been involved in education for as long as I can remember, even back at the old River Road School. We try to instill confidence so our kids will turn out well and contribute to the community." Among many other sentiments shared, Delores and members acknowledged the diverse range of student population that each school represents, and the broad range of programming currently being implemented across the region. Delores continued, "As a family [referring to everyone gathered in the room], that's what we need to do – help them know who

they are and where they come from. As a community of educators, we need to provide students with confidence so they can pursue their dreams and feel supported by those of us who are behind them.”

Encouraged by the Director of Education, Vance McPherson, Allison took the initiative to build out relationships and capacity to bring Special Education Resource Teachers and Leadership Representatives together to meet with partnering First Nations communities, and the meeting was very appreciated by all! This preliminary gathering was a successful reinvigoration of the SERT Network, one that all members voiced (past



and present) is crucial to the success of students across the region. It also supports those within these education roles be successful in providing an opportunity to align best approaches to accessibility, curriculum, assessments, and inclusivity of all learners wherever, whenever, and however possible as the key foundation of their commitment -- Miigwech to all members for their dedication to students and education.

Z'gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg

Lifelong Learning Center,
717 Sagamok Rd.
(705) 863-0209

Contact Person:

Marjorie Southwind,
Anishinaabemowin Manager
southwind_marjorie@sagamok.ca



Waaseyaankaan Teg is the community hub for Anishinaabe Aadziwin.

Our goal is to revitalize and sustain Anishinaabemowin and culture by creating accessible, community driven programming supporting all learners.

We want to:

- Increase Anishinaabemowin fluency through structured and informal learning programs
- Develop and deliver levelled classes (beginner, intermediate and advanced language classes and support immersion opportunities)
- Document and preserve our traditional teachings, stories, and practices from our community Elders to ensure the transfer of knowledge within the community
- Deliver programs that connect language and culture to the land
- Connect with our ancestral way of life

Program Availability

- Anishinaabemowin Classes for Beginners, Intermediate and Silent Speakers (In-person and online learning opportunities: formal and informal (Lunch & Learn))
- Anishinaabemowin Resource Library
- Ehkinoomagejig miinwaa Shkaabewis & Shkaabewis Kwe - Cultural Teachings & Activities
- Bwaachiwe Table Talk
- Anishinaabemowin Land-based Learning Opportunities – harvesting traditional medicines
- Anishinaabemowin Second Language Resource Support – assist second language learners
- Translations

Coming Soon

- Anishinaabemowin Learning Materials for home, online digital resource links
- Family Immersion Nights

Summer Hours: 10:00am – 2:00pm

Land-based Cheemaun (Canoe) Classes

Michael Abitong, Land-based Lead shared the responsibilities of providing educational instruction on the subject of canoeing with new Summer Student recruit, Madisson Owl, and Physical Wellness Teacher, Mr. Kevin Lester.

For the entire month of June, students from every grade in Biidaaban had an opportunity to not only learn about canoeing, but experience it firsthand. Offering a three-hour block of instruction, each class attended Fort LaCloche to take part in paddling a canoe in tandems (regular canoe with seating for 2 paddlers) or in the Voyageur canoe holding upwards of 20 paddlers; Miss Abigail Toulouse's entire Grade 1 class for example!

Michael hauled the loaded canoe trailer to the launch site for each of the canoe styles. Students were then gathered around to listen to safety instructions including how to correctly size/wear their required personal flotation device (PFD), the parts of a paddle and canoe, how to correctly hold and operate the paddle to get the desired speed and directional navigation while on the water, and how to safely board the canoe and assist fellow passengers/partners.



Unloading and carrying the canoes, paddles, and other safety equipment down the muddy trail (it had recently rained) to the water's edge just below the rapids at the Fort, provided another level of understanding about what is involved with this enjoyable, recreational activity and ancestral part of Anishinaabe life. After successfully launching a dozen or so canoes, students were guided on how to propel the canoe on the water, but it quickly became apparent that it was instinctual to almost all, even those who were brand new to canoeing! Michael, Kevin, and Madisson all outlined that the person in the back (stern) was in control of the steering, and the person in the front (bow) was supplying the power to propel the canoe forward/onward. Lands, Resources, and Environment (LRE) worker, Mitchell Eshkakogan, and his son, Dominic, (studying to be a Fish & Wildlife Conservation Officer) were at the ready in a nearby motorboat to provide assistance should anyone run into difficulties due to the strong wind gusting them downstream or if anyone dumped their canoe. (Yes, the latter did happen, much to the surprise of the soaked students standing in knee-deep water!) Miigwech, Mitchell, for your support on the water to keep students safe and feeling confident.

Michael could be heard advising "Don't stand in the canoe!" to the inexperienced paddling group and quickly demonstrated safe manoeuvring in/out/around the canoe when embarking or disembarking. "When it's time to get out, stabilize the canoe for your partner, turn around, and work your way back, staying low and holding the gunwales (sides) with your feet stepping in the center of the boat," he instructed. Mr. Lester addressed students about water safety,

proper life vest usage and directed the Grade 8 helpers to assist young Grade 1 students to step over and into the deep-hulled Voyageur canoe. Once the big cheemaun was launched and the paddlers developed a rhythm, Michael encouraged the semi-nervous students. “Okay, everyone, paddles in the water, let’s go....paddle, paddle, paddle. We’re heading North to Hudson’s Bay!” he exclaimed, adding a historical component to the activity. The bluebird sky held clouds high above, making the days hot ones. Some days involved gusty winds forcing the groups to stay closer to the Fort, but it was welcome to keep blackflies and deer flies away! Dragonflies by the droves flittered about, iridescent wings sparkling in the sun, landing on lily pads, reminding us just how healthy the environment was where everyone was experiencing nature in all its wondrous beauty.

The unspoken parts of the day’s lesson were: teamwork, trust in your canoe partner, putting out effort, responsibility for safety, and land stewardship. The enjoyment, learning, confidence-building, and feelings of independent capability belonged to the learners individually. Students who did not wish to participate in the canoeing class were offered the opportunity to stay supervised on shore and go fishing. Lunch was eaten outdoors as students enjoyed this unique opportunity with their friends.

The Voyager canoe used for this learning series is the same one used during the Fall Harvest to provide ancestral instruction to students regarding its historical place in our culture, and the purpose/environment in which it was used. The cheemaun (canoe, as it implies the translation of kissing the water with your boat/paddle according to Mr. Steven Bennett, Anishinaabemowin Speaker) was purchased from Wally Van Dyke of Webbwood several years ago. Mr. Van Dyke provides local training and Ontario Recreational Canoe and Kayak Association Certification (ORCKA), of which our staff members Michael, Kevin, Skye, and recently Madisson, have obtained. Education Assistants from the classrooms, along with parent volunteers and grandmas delivering forgotten fishing poles and lunches to the Fort, helped ensure students had a happy and safe experience. Chi miigwech to everyone involved with this fun and informative education!





Giigoonh (Fish) Netting Land-based Learning



A Land-based study unit on Netting Fish was explored at Biidaaban.

Students were given the opportunity to see how the fish were trapped within the net, informed about this style of fishing, how to remove the catch, and prepare/repair the net for future use.

Michael Abitong, Land-based Instructor provided this teaching along with the photos.

EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING

We're exploring the possibility of offering Equine Assisted Learning programs locally. Is EAL something that you feel would benefit you, or someone you know?

Let us know! Contact Deanna at 705-863-2657



Gok (Porcupine) Land-based Learning



A local farmer gifted the gok (porcupine) to Land-based Learning Lead, Michael Abitong, who in turn consulted with community 'quill specialists', Theodore and Myna Toulouse.

The porcupine was utilized first in a land-based teaching opportunity with Biidaaban students. Theodore shared his knowledge with the students about the animal, the proper way to harvest its quills, followed by the correct cleaning and dying processes to prepare the quills for use in artisanal projects.

Students were able to get a close-up look at the porcupine, touch it/feel it, and see the quills in their before-and-after state. Working together, Michael and Theodore offered the students a unique opportunity to learn some of the extensive knowledge they had, having worked with the mammal and its quills for many years. Anishinaabemowin and ancestral teachings surrounding the porcupine and its significance to Anishinaabek were incorporated throughout this study unit.

Miigwech to Theodore for visiting students on this day and sharing his knowledge about the porcupine. He and his wife, Myna, have been creating hand-made quill boxes and a wide array of quill embellished items for many, many years. They have been involved in restoration projects in the United States, as well as provided teachings, workshops, and presentations on their craft. A full story coverage about this aspect of their lives will follow in the months to come. Stay tuned to learn more about this amazingly talented, hard-working, and knowledgeable couple, their family, and their lifelong story devoted to this unique mammal and craft.

Zones of Regulation & Wellness Station

Aanii, my name is Kari-Anne Piche, and I have the privilege of serving as one of the Student Support Workers at Biidaaban Kinoomagegamik. Supporting the mental health and well-being of students is something I am deeply passionate about.



I have worked with children and youth for the past 14 years as an Educational Assistant. I have a background in Child and Youth Work and Early Childhood Education. Throughout my career, I have seen first-hand how important mental health, emotional well-being, and positive relationships are to student success.

I joined the team at Biidaaban in 2021 and quickly developed a strong connection to the school, students, and community. In 2024, I decided to return to university to pursue a degree in Early Childhood Studies with a specialization in Infant and Child Mental Health. As I continued my studies, I realized that supporting student well-being was where my passion truly lies.

When Principal Scott approached me about taking on a new Student Support role, neither of us knew exactly what it would look like. We started with an idea and allowed it to grow based on the needs of our students.

One of the ideas I brought to life was the **Wellness Station**.

What started as a simple cafeteria cart has grown into a mobile support space that I created to meet students where they are. I transformed the cart into a welcoming Wellness Station on wheels, complete with resources, art supplies, sensory tools, visual supports, snacks, calming activities, and comfortable spaces for students to connect and reset. Being mobile allows me to move throughout the school and provide support wherever it is needed.

As part of this initiative, every classroom has been provided with a yellow hallway pass that students can use when they need support with self-regulation. When a student is feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, anxious, or otherwise not ready to learn, they can access the Wellness Station for a brief check-in. Together, we identify how they are feeling, explore coping strategies, and work toward returning to class calm, focused, and ready to learn. Over time, students build emotional literacy, self-awareness, and healthy coping



skills that support their overall well-being and success at school.

One of the most important lessons I have learned is that sometimes students simply need someone to listen, acknowledge how they are feeling, and remind them that they matter. Letting a student know, “It’s okay to feel this way. I’ve got you,” can make a significant difference. Having a trusted adult who takes the time to listen can help students feel seen, valued, and supported.

I have also been visiting classrooms from Kindergarten to Grade 3 to teach the Zones of Regulation. Together, we are learning about emotions, self-awareness, and understanding that everyone experiences feelings differently. We discuss the clues our bodies give us when we experience different emotions and how recognizing those signs can help us identify what we need in the moment. The goal is to help students become more self-aware, communicate their needs effectively, and develop healthy coping strategies that support their ability to return to a calm, focused, and ready-to-learn state.

Teaching the Zones of Regulation is a proactive, preventative approach that helps students build lifelong skills both inside and outside the classroom. By developing emotional awareness and self-regulation strategies at an early age, students are better equipped to support their overall well-being, build positive relationships, and navigate challenges throughout their lives.

The Wellness Station has become a welcoming space where students can pause, reflect, and work through challenges in a supportive environment. Together, we build confidence, strengthen problem-solving skills, and develop strategies that help students feel successful both in and out of the classroom. It has been incredibly rewarding to see students using these tools and successfully returning to class with a calm, focused, and positive mindset for learning. Some of the most meaningful moments in this role are seeing a student walk toward the Wellness Station feeling overwhelmed, upset, or discouraged and leave with a smile, renewed confidence, and the skills they need to move forward successfully. Knowing that I have helped turn a difficult moment into a positive one and supported a student in getting back on track is what makes this work so fulfilling.

My goal is to continue creating a school environment where every student feels safe, heard, valued, and supported. I am grateful for the opportunity to do this work at Biidaaban and to be part of a community that cares so deeply about the well-being of its children.

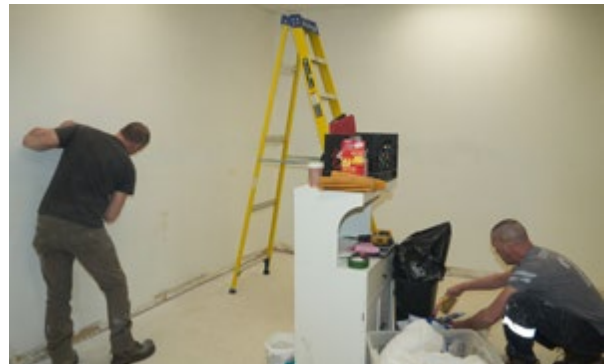
I feel truly honoured to be in this role. Supporting students through difficult moments, celebrating their successes, and helping them develop skills that will benefit them throughout their lives is incredibly meaningful work. It is a role I am deeply passionate about and one that I consider a dream job. Every day, I have the privilege of making a positive and lasting difference in the lives of students, and for that, I am grateful. Miiigwetch.



Infrastructure Update: The New Library!

Pictured here are Simon and Luc, crew members from the contracting company, Martian Trax. Completing final touches on the framework of the new community Library: installing baseboard trim and caulking, following the installation of new flooring and a fresh coat of paint, Martian Trax is bringing the site closer to opening its doors this fall! Their successful tender included taking care of demolition and restoration needs to ready the space.

When asked 'what type of work do you do?', Simon says 'what do you have?' with a chuckle and full-face grin. Luc Jacques is the Lead Hand, Daryl Guitard is the Founder, and Simon Inkster is the Owner/Operator of Martian Trax. Congratulations to them as they branch out with their new company, and miigwech to them for their effort and diligence while creating the essential infrastructure for Sagamok's Library.

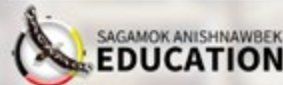


NEW Sagamok Library

SERVICES SURVEY – WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

The Sagamok Library is reopening soon at the Lifelong Learning Centre and we want **community input** to help shape it! Scan the QR code to complete our **short survey**.

Rebecca Toulouse | 705-862-2165



Literacy Department Update

Building Strong Readers, Step by Step

Submitted by Stephanie Sonnenburg -
Literacy Resource Teacher



School Wide Literacy Growth

Throughout the 2025–2026 school year, students across the school demonstrated measurable growth in reading skills. Progress monitoring data showed a steady increase in the number of students making meaningful gains, growing from 33 students showing progress in November to more than 100 students by spring. While many learners are still working toward grade level benchmarks, the data clearly shows forward movement in reading development, particularly when instruction and interventions were delivered consistently.

Early Literacy: Strong Foundations Taking Shape

Early literacy continued to be a bright spot this year. Preschool and early primary students showed improvements in letter recognition, early decoding, and oral language skills. EL2 students demonstrated the largest overall growth in reading scores, highlighting the positive impact of focused early literacy instruction. These early gains are critical, as strong foundational skills support future reading success and help prevent long term learning gaps.

Reading Growth Across Grade Divisions

Students made progress across all divisions, with especially strong growth in the junior grades. Primary students (K–3) continued building foundational skills, with Grade 1 and Grade 3 cohorts showing consistent improvement over the year. The junior division (Grades 4–6) demonstrated the strongest overall gains, with several classes more than doubling their reading performance from the beginning to the end of the year. Intermediate

students (Grades 7–8) also showed continued growth in reading comprehension, particularly in classrooms where instruction was highly structured and consistent.

Writing Development

Writing achievement showed steady, gradual improvement across the junior and intermediate grades. Students demonstrated stronger idea development and improved organization in their writing over the course of the year. While progress is evident, many students continue to need support with spelling, sentence structure, and writing conventions. These areas are closely connected to reading skills, reinforcing the importance of strong literacy instruction across all grades.

What the Data Tells Us

This year's results confirm that students make the strongest gains when literacy instruction is explicit, structured, and consistent. Early literacy support is making a positive difference, and targeted interventions are helping students move forward, even when learning gaps are significant. While there is still work to be done, the progress seen this year shows that our literacy approach is moving in the right direction.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, the school will continue to strengthen early literacy foundations, improve consistency across classrooms, and focus on key areas such as reading fluency, vocabulary development, and writing. Targeted supports will remain in place for students who need additional help, ensuring that every learner continues to move forward as a reader and writer.

Anishinaabe Aadziwin Update

Aanii Sagamok Members,

Sagamok Education has taken the lead in establishing a language and culture program, Anishinaabe Aadziwin. Over the last six months, we have been working to develop Anishinaabe Aadziwin programming for our learning facilities and for community.

A few exciting things have happened in the past three months. First, Z'gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg had its Grand Opening on June 19 at its new location in the Lifelong Learning Centre at 717 Sagamok Road. We distributed two questionnaires: Z'gamok Anishinaabemowin Strategy Questionnaire and Z'gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg Programming Questionnaire. Please take a few minutes to complete them if you haven't already. This information will help us determine the services and deliver the content that is most meaningful to our community's needs.

Z'gamok Anishinaabemowin
Strategy Questionnaire



Z'gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg
Programming Questionnaire



Z'gamok Anishinaabemowin Strategy Questionnaire is the community language strategy that is currently under review with the Language Committee. Z'gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg (Anishinaabe Aadziwin Resource Centre) Programming Questionnaire is to determine what community wants and needs in terms of language and culture programs. Please see the Z'gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg flyer following, listing our summer hours and programming.

Secondly, our Anishinaabemowin team has expanded to include traditional knowledge teachers and helpers. We hired three new Anishinaabe Aadziwin team members: Shkaabewis Chase Abitong, Shkaabewis Kwe Marie Toulouse, and summer student, Shkaabewis Kwe Apprentice, Madison Owl. Traditional Knowledge Teachers, Kinoomaage nini Darren and Kwe Ehkinoomaaget Teresa McGregor will be joining us on July 20. Our Anishinaabe Aadziwin team, along with the new curriculum development team, Rebecca and Colleen Toulouse, will be working to develop a holistic program that encompasses community curriculum in language, land, culture, and history. This will be delivered to Shki Waase-Aaban Binoojiinh Gamik, Biidaaban Kinoomaagegamik, and to community beginning in the fall. Our team will also be out and about, harvesting medicines this summer in preparation for upcoming school year activities.

Miigwech,

Marjorie Southwind

Please welcome the Anishnaabe Aadziwin Team!



Shkaabewis

N'dizhinikaaz, Chase Abitong. My grandparents are Celina and Francis Abitong. I am the proud father of three children: Declan Abitong, Elliott Abitong, and Tatum Abitong. One of my greatest responsibilities is teaching them why being Anishinaabe is so important. I want them to understand where we come from, to know the strength of our people, and to walk the good life—Mino-Bimaadziwin.

I applied for the role of Shkaabewis because I understand how important our language and culture are to the strength of our community. This role allows me to work closely with my own children while also supporting other students as they grow in their identity, language, and culture. My hope is to help Waaseyaankaan Teg continue to flourish alongside our community and to ensure that the next generations are grounded in who they are as Anishinaabeg.

My journey began when I was introduced to fire keeping at the ceremonies held in our community. That experience sparked a deep love for our culture and set me on a path of lifelong learning and service.

What inspires me most is the revitalization of our language and culture and helping to reduce the lasting impacts of residential schools and colonization. I believe reconnecting with our teachings, our language, and our ceremonies strengthens our people and creates a healthier future for our children.

I spend much of my time on the land and water within our community, learning and sharing that knowledge with my children. The land is one of our greatest teachers, and I want them to grow up with a deep connection to it and to the values of our ancestors.

My vision is to see Z'gamok become fully immersed in our language and culture, ensuring that future generations are proud, confident Anishinaabeg who carry our teachings forward with strength and respect. Miigwech.

Shkaabewis Kwe

Aanii kinaweya

Waaseyabno Kwe n'dizhinikaaz. Anishnaabe Kwe endow. My English name is Marie E Toulouse, and my parents are George (baa) & Levina Southwind, my grandparents are Isaac and Elizabeth Toulouse and Nicholas and Rose Southwind (nee Debassige).

I am filled with gratitude to be back working with our home community of Sagamok Anishnawbek as your Shkaabewis Kwe within the Education Department for Anishinaabe Aadziwin and will be based out of Waaseyaankaan Teg “the place of enlightenment”.



I have three children Waasnoode, Nimkiins and Niibin. I'm auntie to my niece Triniti and nephew Taylor Jay who currently live in our home.

I am excited to promote community connections by sharing cultural retention with our Elders and Knowledge Keepers for the continued wellbeing of our community.

I am passionate about cultural revitalization and investing in youth intergenerational relationships with our elders, which is fundamental to our emergent speakers to keep the circle intact for the individual youth but also their interconnectedness and place in this world.

Practicing and living the Good Life has always been my intention.

Shkaabewis Kwe Apprentice

Aanii! My name is Madison Owl, and I am the Anishinaabemowin Aadziwin Summer Student Helper. This summer, I'll be supporting land-based learning at Biidaaban, Daycare, and working at Z'gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg.

I'm currently studying Adventure Recreation and Parks Technician at Sault College. I love spending time on the land and water, learning about our language and culture, and being outdoors. Paddling through our ancestral homelands and home waters is one of my favourite ways to connect with the land and continue learning from it.



Feather Keeper

Madison Owl, Shkaabewis Kwe Apprentice, with instruction provided by Shkaabewis Kwe Marie Toulouse, created a feather keeper to protect the eagle feathers presented to them by Shkaabewis Chase Abitong. The three members recently began their new roles within Z'Gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg Anishinaabemowin Aadziwin 'place of enlightenment' department which has found its new home in the Lifelong Learning Centre. Teachings, resources, and support such as the feather keeper for example, will be available to community along with many more opportunities for members to connect and engage in language and cultural exploration.

Kwe Ehkinoomaaget (Traditional Knowledge Teacher)

Aanii, my name is Teresa McGregor. My spirit name is Shining Star, and I am from the Wolf Clan. I am originally from Wiikwemkoong and currently reside in Sudbury. I am happy to be joining the Anishinaabe Aadzawiin team and to have the opportunity to be part of this program and community.



Over the years, I have had the privilege of learning our Anishinaabe customs, teachings, and cultural knowledge from Elders in our area. Those teachings have helped shape who I am and the work that I do today. I am passionate about sharing what I have learned with those who are willing to learn and grow in their own journey.

I am also a mother of two children, whom we (my husband Darren and I) have raised with a strong connection to our Anishinaabe ways through traditional parenting and ceremony. My heart is in traditional parenting and in supporting families, children, and youth in building a strong sense of identity, belonging, and pride in who they are. I look forward to walking alongside the community, sharing teachings, and learning together in a good way.

Miigwetch.

Ekinomahgehjig (Traditional Knowledge Teacher)

Ahnii, my name is Darren McGregor and some know me as DJ. My spirit name is Thunderbird and I am from Sagamok Anishnawbek. My Clan is Sturgeon.

Boozhoo, Baagaanahgeshenh
N'Diizhnaakaaz, Z'gamok N'doojinbanh,
O'Gimaa name N'Doodem.



I have been a powwow singer for 35 years and been attending ceremonies for equally as

long. Living the good life Mino Biimadzwin has brought many opportunities to learn who I am as an Anishinaabe and I'm glad to share what I have learned. As an Ekinomahgehjig I am always willing to help wherever and whenever needed.

I am grateful and happy to be working back at home for Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation.

Shkaabewis Kwe Apprentice

Aanii, Niibin Nahwegezhic ndizhnikaaz, I am both Ojibway and Cree living here in our beautiful home of Sagamok Anishnawbek.

My mother is Marie Elizabeth Toulouse and my dad is Gabriel Nahwegezhic, who has families in both Moose Factory and Serpent River First Nations. I'm currently working as a summer student as a cultural helper with Waaseyaankaan Teg to build a strong Anishnaabe foundation to reach future goals.

Miigwetch Baamaapii gwaabmin

Waaseyaankaan Teg Access

May-July 2026 -- The new site of Waaseyaankaan Teg received a labour of love on the exterior of the space. The pathway leading from inside the cultural hub to the arbor was revitalized with new paving stones and poured concrete, making the surface more accessible and defined. The area surrounding the arbor itself was re-freshed, with the greenspace trimmed and cleaned up, wood for sacred fires gathered and piled neatly, and old chain-link fencing was removed to make the space more open and inviting. Miigwech to everyone who played a part in getting the area ready for the Grand Opening held June 19, and making the new centre a beautiful and welcoming space for everyone in the community to visit and enjoy.



Waaseyaankaan Teg Grand Opening

The Grand Opening for the new location of Z'Gamok Waaseyaankaan Teg took place on June 19. Hosted on the same day as Treaty Day festivities, the open house-style event welcomed community members to drop by between 9am and 5pm. Waaseyaankaan Teg translated means 'The Place of Enlightenment'.

Re-opening its doors at 717 Sagamok Road (inside the Lifelong Learning Centre), the space will act as a hub for all things Anishinaabe Aadziwin (language and culture). Prizes, giveaways, and games were held throughout the day, and visitors were requested to bring their feast plate to enjoy a traditional pickerel fish fry, with minoomin (wild rice) salad, berries,



giizik nibishaboo (cedar tea), and more. Respecting tradition, guests were also invited to wear their ribbon skirt/shirt, and to be mindful of moon time protocol.

To start things off in a good way for the new centre, an opening ceremony, led by Cultural Manager and Councillor, Leroy Bennett, took place first thing in the morning in the arbor just outside Waaseyaankaan Teg's doors. Anishinaabemowin Manager, Marjorie Southwind, and her new team members, Chase Abitong and Madison



Owl, supported the Grand Opening throughout the day, welcoming visitors, providing information, and assisting wherever needed. Additional support was provided by Steven Bennett who hosted Anishinaabemowin Bingo, and Micheal Abitong, who shared a teaching on making wiigwaas naagaans (birchbark bowls/baskets). The helpful crew conducted a door prize draw, two information-gathering surveys, and handed out 'swag bags' containing sweatshirts, notebooks, and water bottles all bearing the newly created Waaseyaankaan Teg logo. Miigwech to Rainbow Agawa Designs for designing the meaningful and colourful logo. Everyone was welcomed to come out to "Discover the Place of Enlightenment" which will offer resources, learning, sharing, and reviving our Z'Gamok Anishinaabe language and culture," Marjorie shared. Guests flowed through, inspecting and enjoying the new and welcoming space.



Miigwech to Marjorie Southwind, Dan Owl (Infrastructure Manager for Sagamok Education), Stan Abitong, and Martian Trax for the tremendous amount of work they did towards preparing the arbor and exterior landscaping, as well as revitalizing and re-designing the interior to better serve the needs and vision of the new space. It's hard to believe this used to be the Early Learning classroom in the former Biidaaban school!

If you haven't stopped in yet, a fresh pot of coffee or nibishaboo is always on hand, and the helpful, smiling faces of the shkaabewis/kwe (helpers) will greet you as you enter. Waaseyaankaan Teg's summer hours are Monday to Friday from 10:00am to 2:00pm. All are welcome!



Aapji Gdo Mshkogaabwim *(You are strong, You are beautiful)* **Building Confidence Program**

April – May 2026

Deanna Southwind, Children's Wellness Worker with Sagamok's Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), delivered a six-week confidence-building program at Biidaaban during April and May. Designed to help students develop a stronger sense of self-esteem, boost confidence, and build personal awareness of beauty, strength, and uniqueness, the program was something Deanna felt very passionate about. Aapji Gdo Mshkogaabwim was born of her vision and brought to life through a collaborative effort with Biidaaban Leadership and Youth Mental Wellness Specialist, Raven Hammond.

When asked about the program's development and purpose, Deanna offered the following:

"When I took on this role as the Children's Wellness Worker in September 2025, I envisioned creating a program about Confidence Building that could help our children understand and recognize their unique strengths, thereby empowering them to take pride in who they are -- embracing their individuality and uplifting one another. The children will learn to build their confidence and inner beauty through this program. They will be working on speaking kindly to themselves and others, through nurturing their mindsets, helping them to thrive while living a healthier and positive lifestyle, and embracing this affirmation, 'Aapji Gdo Mshkogaabwim – you are strong, you are beautiful' throughout the six weeks."



Deanna went on to share her sentiments at the program's introduction on April 21:

"I am thrilled to collaborate with Raven Hammond, Student Mental Wellness Specialist, on this Confidence Building program, who helped me develop my thoughts and ideas towards this program. Raven and I first sat down together to discuss how I envisioned this program to be developed – initially structured into a once-per-week schedule for 6 weeks, for children ages 6-12 who wished to sign up. But after meeting with school representatives to discuss offering this

as an after-school program and providing detailed information about what the program would entail and the proposed schedule, it was decided that the program would evolve into becoming part of Biidaaban's curriculum. The initial vision has now blossomed into weekly sessions for all students from the Early Learning classes to grade 8. By empowering students with essential tools, nurturing, and workbooks [provided resource], students can focus on building their self-confidence and motivation, improving themselves and their peers both within the school as well as outside of the classroom. I'm grateful to be part of this initiative to create a sense of pride and self-empowerment in our children," expressed Deanna passionately.

The program was offered Tuesday through Thursday during the morning instruction blocks, with Deanna and Raven visiting classrooms together to provide guided instruction and support to each class. A key component was actively listening to students' responses during discussions, as well as activities focused on building self-confidence. Deanna provided the following summary about her observations and general feelings about the program's success:

"Over the six weeks, it was truly inspiring to engage with the students, equipping them with valuable tools to enhance their confidence and unlock their full potential, and having Raven as a mentor and having her help make this experience incredibly empowering and to help me learn more within my role as the Children's Wellness Worker. I look forward to working together more with Raven in the future, creating programming for the children."

Youth Mental Wellness Specialist, Raven Hammond, offered, "The confidence-building program has been well received. The students engaged in thoughtful discussions on building their self-esteem. Some of the activities included drawing and games that promoted wellness."

A Biidaaban-wide Pizza Party was provided by the FCSS on May 22 to celebrate the success and conclusion of the six-week program. Miigwech to everyone who was involved in creating this empowerment program and in making it available to help students build their confidence, recognize their unique gifts and abilities as individuals, and provide them with the tools to inspire themselves and their peers towards reaching their full potential.



'Burnout' Session for Staff of Elders Eagle Lodge

Student Mental Wellness Specialist (Education), Raven Hammond, accompanied by Youth Mental Health Worker Allison Owl (CWD), provided support to Elder's Eagle Lodge staff through a presentation about Burnout.

Beginning with an introduction of herself and her professional background, Raven outlined a range of training, knowledge, and personal life experiences she draws on to offer informed support to the Personal Support Workers (PSWs) who care for residents daily. Her presentation catered to all learners in the room, providing auditory (listening), visual, and hands-on (interactive) learning styles.

- Raven defined to the group what burnout is and some of the signs to help recognize it. Burnout occurs when individuals experience chronic stress that overwhelms their ability to cope at work, in caregiving roles, or in personal life situations. It can reveal itself as emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and mental depletion, and is most often accompanied by feelings such as cynicism, detachment, and a sense of ineffectiveness. Unlike short-term stress, burnout develops gradually and significantly impairs daily functioning and motivation."

Early warning signs include:

- struggle,
- dragging yourself to work,
- reduced empathy towards clients or workplace,
- low energy,
- lack of interest,
- emptiness,
- head/stomach aches

Our minds and bodies are connected, so physical and mental pain indicate something is happening, Raven went on. Pay attention to

what your body is telling you, or to what others tell you they see happening to you and seek help.

She then talked about how to recover from burnout:

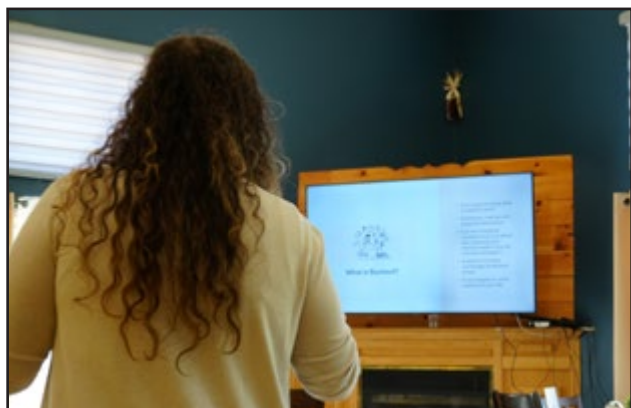
- self-care – you are important, and you matter! You provide care and support for Elders/Members here (the Lodge), and you deserve free time to bring balance to your life/work.
- having networks (friends, neighbours, trusted people you can call on when in need)
- setting boundaries (No is a one-word sentence and you have a right to use it)
- keep personal and professional time separate,
- incentives like a reading program at work, or fun activities staff can partake in not related to work



Raven went on to talk about prevention and recovery strategies:

- physical movement – a minimum of 30 minutes per day is recommended!

- journaling or self-expression (arts, crafts, jotting down positive thoughts or dreams)
- get proper sleep! It is the foundation to wellness!
- make life more than just about work.



“Self-care is not just bubble baths and hot tea,” Raven emphasized, “It is prioritizing your needs, setting boundaries, making time for yourself and valuing yourself.” Her next slide in the presentation listed Mental Health Resources – where to go if you are struggling or feel like something is ‘off’. She reminded staff that supports are available in Sagamok and through outside sources as well that they can be connected to. A portfolio of handouts, including a colouring/reflection page, a self-care action plan, a resource contact pamphlet,

journaling pages, and an interactive craft idea, all demonstrated self-support/care as a priority.

Raven concluded her presentation with references to materials discussed, a Question-and-Answer time period, and gave her miigwech to participants and the Elders Eagle Lodge for inviting her to provide this mental wellness information. She summed up the presentation by saying, “You matter. What’s going on in your life matters. Take care of yourself so you can continue to give your best while caring for others. You can start now. You don’t need to wait to start taking care of yourself. Do it today, little by little, and you will see and feel improvements.”

Miigwech Raven and Allison, for providing this necessary and meaningful mental wellness session to all staff at the Elder’s Eagle Lodge. By presenting over several days, you helped ensure all staff members received the information by considering varying work schedules. Your presentation underscored that self-care is critical when it comes to avoiding burnout as well as being conscious of the key signs/symptoms when you feel you may be suffering from it. Seek help and take care of yourself because you are important and you are appreciated. Miigwech for offering follow-up presentations to Daycare and Lifelong Learning Centre staff as well.

Celebrating Student Success!

Submitted by Allison Abitong: System Principal of Student Success

Congratulations to all the 2026 graduates—from the young learners in Daycare and Early Learning 2, to students completing Grade 8, reaching the milestone of Grade 12, and those graduating from post-secondary programs. Each of you has achieved something meaningful, marking a step forward in your journey of growth, learning, and success. Your hard work, perseverance, and dedication have brought you to this moment, and it is something to be proud of. As you move ahead into new experiences and opportunities, may you continue to strive for your goals with confidence and determination. Wishing you all the very best in your future endeavors and a bright path filled with success and happiness.





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