

**Thunder Bay Indigenous
Friendship Centre**

Annual General Meeting Highlights

2023/2024





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The Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre is located on the traditional lands of Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. The land on which we live, work, and play is on the traditional territory of the Anishinabek.

We recognize and deeply appreciate our historic connection to the land. We also recognize the contributions of the Métis, Inuit and other Indigenous peoples have made in both shaping and strengthening our community.

Our Vision

A welcoming Indigenous community that nurtures healing, culture, traditions and self-determination.

Our Mission

Rooted in culture, the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre strengthens the lives of Indigenous people by providing holistic supports, services and advocacy.



Board of Directors

Tamara Spence

President

Derek West

Vice President

Sally Ledger

Treasurer

Christina Michon

Secretary

Lindy Sportak

Director

Ann Magiskan

Director

Beth Ponka

Director

Athena Hudson

Youth Director

Keira Essex

Youth Director



President's Message

BOOZHOO! Aaniin, Wachay, Welcome!

On behalf of the *Board of Directors* and *Staff of the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre*, we are pleased to provide to you our annual report for the fiscal year April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. We had a very exciting and productive year... lots of new initiatives that we would like to share with you.

Firstly, we are pleased to provide an update on our recent acquisition of the former *Bank of Montreal* building located at the corner of *Red River Road* and *Court Street*, and secondly, on the construction of the transitional housing being built on *Junot Avenue*. These two initiatives have kept us extremely busy; and both are very rewarding.

To our many volunteers and donors, I wish to extend our appreciation and say *Chi-Miigwetch*; you make our success possible.

With Gratitude

INDIAN YOUTH FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY
Ms. Tamara Spence, President
Board of Directors

Community Development Initiatives

256 Red River Road – Former Bank of Montreal Building

An offer to purchase 256 Red River Road (former Bank of Montreal building) was made in January 2023 with a closing date of March 30, 2023. The building, built in 1982, is on a main thoroughfare with high visibility and accessible by transit. It is approximately 12,000 sq. feet covering the main floor, second floor (mezzanine) and a basement.

On November 16, 2023, the Vice President and the Executive Director gave an interview to TBT News confirming the purchase and outlined the Friendship Centre's intentions of the building.

The new space will bring our *Justice* programs together with our *Healing & Wellness* and *Education & Employment* programs to provide wrap-around support services.

For the past year, TBIFC worked with *FORM Architecture* to redesign the building. It is anticipated that demolition and renovations will begin in the spring and could take up to a year to complete.

Tom Jones Construction was awarded the contract to complete renovations and *Prime Solutions* was selected to provide project management services.

We are excited; we look forward to when the building is ready for move-in.



Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OAHS) – Junot Ave Youth Transitional Housing

On May 16th, TBIFC, OAHS, ONWA and MNO gathered on the property with Elders and community members to have a traditional *Groundbreaking Ceremony*. Tobacco was offered to prepare the land for construction and build a lasting foundation.

On August 28th, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Steve Clark, and MPP Kevin Holland, announced that the province is committing \$8.7M to the Junot Avenue transitional housing facility operations. Construction began in the fall of 2023.

Just to recap...here is an overview of each of the partnering organizations roles:

- ▶ OAHS will build and maintain ownership of the building;
- ▶ TBIFC will operate 16 pod units and 12 individual units with 24-hour support;
- ▶ MNO will operate 30 single independent living units;
- ▶ ONWA will support TBIFC and MNO in programming, and support youth transitioning into community.

After many years of dedication and commitment, and working towards this initiative, we can finally say it is being built.



Reaching Home

TBIFC completed a five-year agreement as the Community Entity ending March 31, 2024, to administer the *Indigenous Homelessness* funding stream for Thunder Bay. We were further advised that effective April 1, 2023, *Reaching Home* would be moving from *Employment Social Development Canada (ESDC)* to *Infrastructure Canada (INFC)*. This transfer is a structural change within the *Government of Canada* and has no impact on the nature or funding of the *Reaching Home* program.

INFC renewed agreements with *Community Entities* and extended them to March 31, 2028. All TBIFC sub-projects ended March 31, 2024, and were subsequently renewed for a two-year period from April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2026.

Existing Reaching Home TBIFC Sub-Projects

Beendigen - Memengwaa House – a five-bed transitional house for single Indigenous women aged 16 who are at risk of experiencing violence and/or homelessness.

Kinna-Aweya Legal Clinic - Eviction Prevention Project – provides client support services to prevent evictions through landlord-tenant mediation.

Ontario Native Women's Association - Nihdawin Program – supports Indigenous women and their families who are affected by homelessness by providing supports such as housing placement, basic needs, transportation, system navigation, and access to cultural programming and activities.

Alpha Court - Coordinated Housing Access System Lead – coordinates and facilitates the implementation of the Coordinated Housing Access Table (CHAT) that enables access points to receive support for housing and for housing resources utilizing a common assessment tool.

Dilico Anishinabek Family Care – Transitional Aged Youth Supportive Housing – provides safe accommodations and client support services for youth 18-30 years of age in a transitional house setting.

Ka-na-chi-hi Treatment Centre – The Home is Life Program – assists Indigenous youth ages 18-29 in obtaining housing through the provision of pre and post treatment programming to clients entering and exiting Ka-na-chi-hih.



New Reaching Home TBIFC Sub-Projects – Winter 2023-24 Top-Up

In January 2024, TBIFC accepted additional funds and financial support was provided to the following agencies:

Norwest Community Health Centres – provides “*Client Support Services*” by providing transportation to “*Safe Place Warming Centres*” and local shelters by funding a “*Care Bus.*” Funds supported *Outreach Workers* to provide food, cold weather supplies, therapeutic listening, and referrals to partner agencies.

PACE (People Advocating for Change Through Empowerment Inc.) – provides “*Client Support Services*” through the operation of a daily drop-in “*Safe Place Warming Centre*” on the south side of Thunder Bay. Funds supported *Outreach Workers* to provide food, cold weather supplies and transportation support.

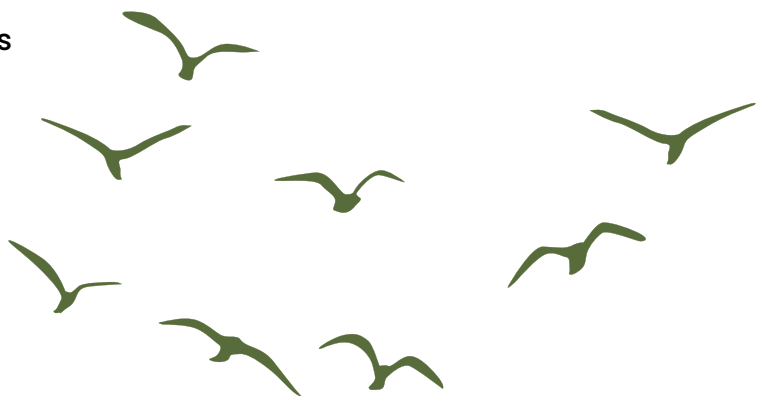
Elevate NWO – provides temporary accommodations during the winter months and provided “*Client Support Services*” through the operation of a daily drop-in “*Safe Place Warming Centre*” on the north side of Thunder Bay. Funds provide temporary accommodations, food, cold weather supplies and transportation support.

New Accessible Transit Van

In April of 2022, TBIFC applied to *Infrastructure Canada – Rural Transit Solutions Fund* to purchase an accessible transit van for transportation services. In July of 2023, TBIFC signed an agreement and proceeded to purchase from *Move Mobility* an accessible transit van. It arrived in November 2023 from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The transit van will provide transportation to *seniors* to access services in the Life Long Care Program. Since TBIFC has no direct funding to hire a full-time driver, staff began learning how to operate and drive it. It’s the first time the *Friendship Centre* has ever had such a vehicle; one that will make a difference to individuals with mobility issues.

We are hopeful that TBIFC will be able to secure other funding for a driver. We are waiting for a decision from an application submitted to the *Ontario Ministry of Transportation* for a full-time position for one year.



Drug Treatment Court (DTC)

On March 9, 2023, the *Ministry of the Attorney General* advised TBIFC that funding had been secured for the establishment of a *Drug Treatment Court Program* in Thunder Bay. DTCs operate within the criminal justice system and consist of two separate and distinct components: judicially supervised court dockets and treatment components.

The objective of DTCs is to reduce substance use, crime and recidivism through the rehabilitation of persons who commit crimes to support their substance use. DTCs provide non-violent offenders suffering from a substance use disorder an opportunity to participate in community-based treatment programs as an alternative to incarceration. DTCs use a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach that involves judicial supervision, comprehensive substance use treatment, random and frequent drug testing, incentives, clinical case management and social services support.



Intergenerational Strength and Resiliency Program (ISRP)

In April 2023, TBIFC was chosen to host the *Intergenerational Strength and Resiliency Program* for the 2023–24 fiscal year. Funding for ISRP is through the *Department of Indigenous Services Canada* to support communities in managing and overcoming the traumas associated with the *Indian Residential School* system and associated intergenerational traumas.

Indigenous People’s Court Operational Manual

TBIFC engaged with *Gimiwan Research and Consulting Inc.* to create an *Operational Manual* for the *Indigenous Peoples’ Court (IPC)*. From September 2023 – March 2024, Dr. Damien Lee met with Elders and knowledge keepers to begin discussions and draft the manual. Key areas noted in the manual are IPC mandate and intent, types of cases heard, ceremony in the courtroom, eligibility for participation, roles and responsibilities, and development of healing plans.

Trusted Source Partnership

In January 2024, TBIFC was advised by the OFIFC that TBIFC had been selected to deliver the *Trusted Source Partnership* to assist individuals to apply and register for a *Secure Certificate of Indian Status* for 2023/24 and for 2024/25. Staff participated in training with Indigenous Services Canada in February 2024 and an individual will be hired to begin helping people obtain their *Secure Certificate of Indian Status*.

Post-Charge Diversion Protocol

In April 2023, the *Thunder Bay Crown Attorney’s Office* and the *Restorative Justice Programs* signed a *Post-Charge Diversion Protocol*. Its intent is to provide a clear administrative process for criminal matters that may proceed by way of diversion in the District of Thunder Bay. The following agencies signed the protocol:

- ▶ Nishnawbe-aski Legal Services Corp
- ▶ Fort William First Nation
- ▶ Nokiiwin Tribal Council
- ▶ John Howard Society (Accountability Program)
- ▶ Thunderbird Friendship Centre
- ▶ Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre

Programs & Services Highlights

For nearly 60 years, TBIFC has been a leader in providing quality supports and services to the urban Indigenous community in Thunder Bay.

We provide many life-journey support services and programs, including Justice, Child & Family, Wellness, Education & Employment, and Housing Support Services.

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

Waabogonee EarlyON Child & Family Centre

Waabogonee translates to “flower that wakes up in the morning and blossoms throughout the day.” This program offers drop-in programming for caregivers and children from birth to 6 years of age. The program supports participants in learning and growing, and deepens family connections.



Programming was provided to 4372 participants this year!

Indigenous Family Support

Community Action Program for Children supports programming for caregivers and children birth to 6 years of age. The program offers family healing, caregiver support, child development, nutrition support, cultural retention and community development.



Over 1500 food supports were provided to families!

Akwe:go

Akwe:go translates to “all of us.” Provides support and guidance to youth ages 7 to 12 who are at risk by incorporating traditional cultural teachings and values that enhances life skills, knowledge, and encourages healthy lifestyle choices.



Programming was provided to 3227 participants in six different schools!

Wasa-Nabin

Wasa-Nabin translates to “to look ahead.” This program provides support and guidance to youth ages 13-18 who are at risk by incorporating traditional cultural teachings and values that enhances life skills, knowledge, and encourages healthy lifestyle choices.



Programming was provided to 2982 participants in six different schools!

Children’s Wellness Program

Provides services that assist children 7-15 years of age and their families to address a child’s behavioral and mental health needs.



Programming was provided to 3650 participants!

Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker Program

Provides culturally informed counselling support to high-risk youth ages 12-21. Youth and their families are supported with systems navigation in the community.



Provided 678 one on one connections with youth!

Youth Life Promotion

Supports leadership development, land-based learning, and knowledge building for urban Indigenous youth ages 13 to 24.



Provided a mental health conference to 150 students!

Community Support Program

Provides wholistic prevention and intervention support to individuals and families impacted by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).



Co-hosted the FASD Awareness Day Pow Wow with over 300 participants!

WELLNESS SERVICES

Cultural Resource Coordinator

Supports wellness promotion, healing, and reconciliation through access to cultural activities and teachings for urban Indigenous children, youth, and families.



Programming was provided to 1786 participants!

Indigenous Healthy Living

Program focuses on nutrition, physical activity, and smoking cessation for all ages.



Program was provided to 1936 participants!

Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin

Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin translates to "I am a kind man."

Encourages all male-identified persons to speak out and end all forms of violence and to foster healthy relationships.

Kizhaay is designated as an Indigenous-Specific Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Program that addresses the root causes of harmful behaviour.



Over 60 participants graduated from Kizhaay!



Wiisinadaa

Wiisinadaa translates to “let’s eat.” A diabetes prevention and management program improves health outcomes by increasing access, knowledge, and skills around healthy eating, traditional foods, and food security.



Over 3100 people accessed TBIFC’s Food Bank and over 700 participants attended our Elders’ Meal Program in partnership with Roots Community Food Centre!

Indigenous Healing & Wellness

Delivers culture-based programming to encourage all female-identified persons to end family violence and promote healthy lifestyles.



Over 70 participants were supported by this program!

Treatment & Aftercare Coordinator

Supports people who are seeking change with issues related to drug and alcohol use.



This program supported 520 participants with 61 activities this year!

Indigenous Mental Health and Wellness

Improves mental well-being by using strengths-based approaches to achieve and maintain a good mind.



Program supported 2639 participants!

Life Long Care

Enhances the lives of Indigenous seniors through supportive calls, friendly visiting, security checks, programming, transportation, and advocacy.



Program provided 1936 security checks!

Building Gender Diverse Communities

Provides support, resources, and programming to those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.



Program supported 1119 participants!

Creating Safer Spaces

Using a trauma informed lens, this program creates and enhances safer spaces for women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.



Program supported 1543 participants!

Indigenous Language Revitalization Program

Provides access to activities that support Indigenous language learning through reclamation of culture.



Program supported 1631 participants!

Intergenerational Strength & Resiliency Program

Addresses the intergenerational traumas caused by Indian Residential Schools through strengths based approaches with the goal of healing and living in balance.



Program supported 701 participants!



EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING & EDUCATION SERVICES

Anishnawbe Skills Development

Offers pre-high school upgrading in reading, writing, digital technology and mathematics while promoting life skills and cultural teachings.



Program supported 120 participants through the Literacy & Basic Skills Program and 10 participants through the Corrections Literacy Initiative with the District Jail and Correctional Centre!

Alternative Secondary School Program

In partnership with Lakehead District School Board, this program provides Indigenous youth a gentle transition into the mainstream high school setting at Hammar skjold High School and Westgate Collegiate High School.



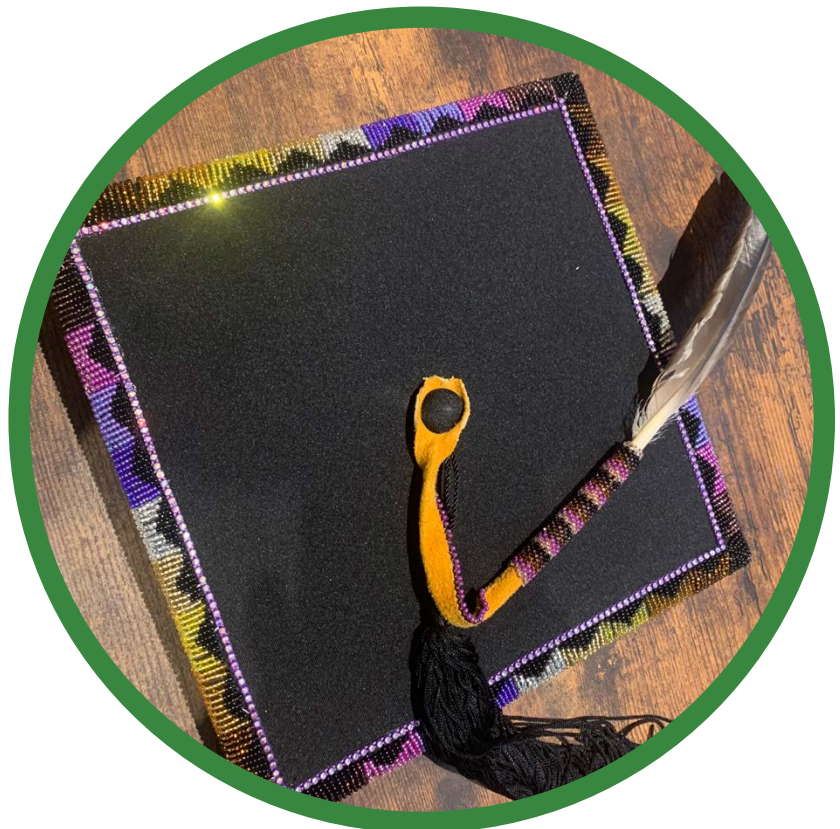
27 students successfully completed grade 9 credits!

Apatisiwin Employment

Supports self-identified Indigenous people to gain education, experience, and skills to achieve and maintain meaningful employment through funded and non-funded program interventions.



Program supported 92 participants!



HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Dibiniwaang Youth Outreach

Dibiniwaang translates to “Shelter from the Wind.” This program provides coordinated outreach and case management services to Indigenous youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



333 intakes were completed for case management this year with 8 individuals retaining housing for 6 months or more!

Reaching Home

TBIFC is the Indigenous Community Entity in Thunder Bay and administers Reaching Home funding for projects and activities. It aims to reduce urban Indigenous homelessness.



Reaching Home funding supported 9 community organizations to offer Indigenous specific housing supports, eviction prevention, community integration and unsheltered homelessness response!



JUSTICE SERVICES

Indigenous Community Council Program

A post-charge diversion program for Indigenous offenders who are committed in participating in a process that repairs harm.

 **Over 80 individuals participated in restorative circles!**

Victim Advocate Program

Provides supportive services to victims of crime and encourages participation in alternative mainstream court processes.

 **Over 25 participants completed the Grief and Loss Program!**

Gladue Services

Prepares a report for an Indigenous offender that outlines their life history and systemic background factors, and recommends alternatives to custody for the Judge to consider at sentencing. Aftercare support is provided during and following the completion of a Gladue Report.

 **15 Gladue Reports were completed and over 35 participants completed the Nishin Neen Program!**

Indigenous Peoples' Court

An alternative to mainstream court for Indigenous offenders that offers opportunity to accept responsibility for one's actions with a focus on healing.

 **24 individuals participated in IPC!**



Indigenous Criminal, Family, and Combined Court Worker

Assists Indigenous adults, youth and families in navigating the justice system.



Supported 402 individuals in the court process!

Indigenous Bail Verification Supervision

Provides supervision services and access to cultural programming for Indigenous individuals released with bail conditions.



Over 140 individuals were supported!

Youth Justice Committee

A pre and post charge diversion program for youth aged 12 to 17 that provides an opportunity to participate in healing and reparation circles.



Over 20 healing circles were facilitated!

Indigenous Peer Support

Reduces recidivism in the justice system, improves mental health and well-being while providing support and mentorship to urban people under supervision orders.



Program supported 15 individuals!

Indigenous Community Reintegration

Assists Indigenous individuals released from custody reintegrating into the community, and provides advocacy services for successful outcomes of conditional sentences.



Over 25 persons were supported!

Drug Treatment Court

DTC is a unique substance use intervention model operating within the criminal justice system that provides individuals an opportunity to engage in a judicially supervised treatment program.



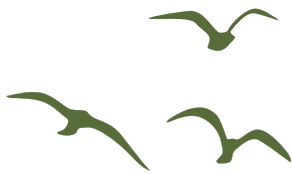
The first Drug Treatment Court is anticipated to be held in the Spring of 2024!



Annual Events

LOVE YOURSELF

TBIFC honoured over 150 women with an evening of self-care.





EVERY CHILD MATTERS ORANGE SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST

Youth Life Promotions Program held an 'Every Child Matters' Orange Shirt design contest. This contest was open to youth 13-24 years of age. Lily Poliquin's artwork was chosen. Lily is 15 years old and loves creating art, learning Indigenous languages and discovering more about her Métis culture. She is also a proud ally of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. She aspires to cover the earth with art in the form of tattoos.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

The 51st Annual Children's Christmas Party was held at the Heritage Centre on November 26, 2023. The celebration included traditional drumming, dancing, a puppet show, art activities, photo booth, fishpond, snacks and a visit from Santa. Over 250 community members attended the event.

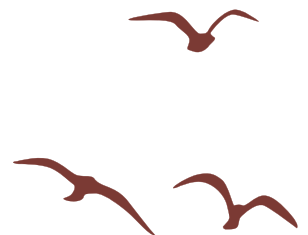


TBIFC YOUTH COUNCIL

The Friendship Centre's Youth Council (TBIFC YC) organized several community events focused on mental health, wholistic and traditional healing, and safety and well-being. Through participation, youth developed their leadership skills and understanding of relevant resources and mental health supports.

Raine McKay collaborated with the Youth Council to develop the campaign logo.

The "We Are Medicine" conference, in partnership with the Thunder Bay Police Service and local secondary schools, provided art therapy, sharing circles, educational sessions, land-based activities, and traditional teachings.





MINO BIMAADIZIWIN CAMP

Lakehead Public Schools, in partnership with the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Thunder Bay Police, and other partners, hosted Mino Bimaadiziwin (Leading a Good Life). This Indigenous Youth Leadership cultural camp was hosted at Fort William Historical Park. Designed for students entering grades 7 to 10, the curriculum focused on life skills, leadership, healthy relationships, self-esteem, self-awareness, and connections to education.





TWO-SPIRIT POW WOW

The annual Pow Wow took place on June 29, 2023 honouring our Two-Spirit community.

Attendees participated in drumming, dancing, and singing. Over 400 individuals participated.

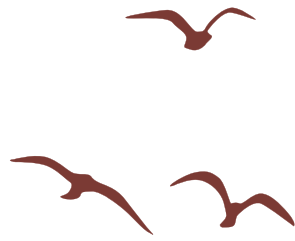
FASD AWARENESS DAY POW WOW

September is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) month. The FASD Awareness Day Pow Wow took place on September 9, 2023. Attendees with lived experience were able to share their individual journeys. Over 300 individuals participated.

REMEMBRANCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

The Friendship Centre attended Anemki Wajiw for the *Remembrance Day* ceremonies. A wreath was laid in honour of Indigenous veterans.





2023-24 ANNUAL ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Medicine Picking
- ▶ Drum Socials
- ▶ Family Cultural Days
- ▶ Healing Circles
- ▶ Full Moon Ceremonies
- ▶ Cedar Baths
- ▶ Healing with Mother Earth
- ▶ Language Camps
- ▶ Strawberry Picking
- ▶ Seasonal Feasts
- ▶ National Indigenous Peoples Day Events
- ▶ Truth & Reconciliation Events
- ▶ Sleeping Giant Tour
- ▶ Fall Harvest Activities



Recognition, Awards, Tenure & Volunteers

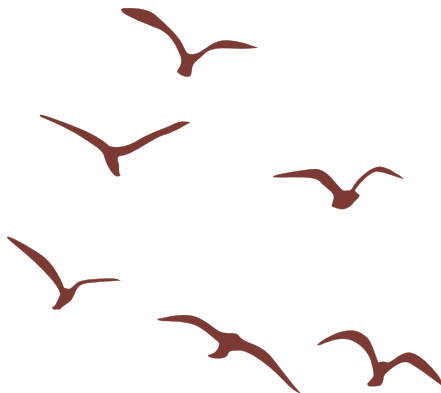
Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

With his capable direction and leadership, Mr. Xavier Michon started the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre in 1964. In his memory, we honour the Youth, Elders, and volunteers who have made invaluable contributions to TBIFC. We hosted the annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Celebrations on March 21st. Miigwetch to all for your commitment and support!

Xavier Michon Memorial Awards

TBIFC honours two Indigenous youth in Grade 10 for their demonstrated leadership, academic achievement, and local community involvement.

The recipients of the 2024 Xavier Michon Memorial Award were Daniel Wassaykeesic (Hammarskjold High School) and Celia Elizabeth Gladu (St. Patrick High School).



Tenure Awards

Five year tenure awards were presented to:

- ▶ Anita Fisher- Education & Employment Services
- ▶ Linda McGuire- Justice Services
- ▶ Ryan Sigurdson- Wellness Services
- ▶ Rhonda Turbide- Child & Family Services
- ▶ Kylie Marion- Child & Family Services
- ▶ Stan Legarde- Education & Employment Services
- ▶ Jayvee Arriola- Core Services
- ▶ Gene Nowegejick- Elder

Ann Magiskan, Beth Ponka, and Celina Reitberger here honoured for their twenty-five years of volunteer service to the *Indigenous Community Council Program*. Thank you for all your commitment and support to the Friendship Centre. Congratulations on this milestone!

Roseanna Hudson was honoured for her thirty-five years of service to the Friendship Centre's Justice Services. Chi-Miigwetch Roseanna for all your dedication and commitment to the Friendship Centre!

Miigwetch

Rooted in culture and guided by the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre is committed to strengthening our community.

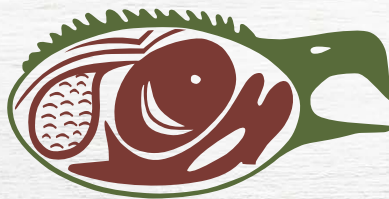
Chi-miigwetch to our funders, volunteers, donors, and community members for your support and generosity.

We will continue to strive in providing Indigenous people with enriching life journey supports, community-based services, and cultural programs.

Funders

- ▶ Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
- ▶ Ministry of Solicitor General
- ▶ Department of Justice Canada
- ▶ Ministry of Attorney General
- ▶ Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
- ▶ Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services
- ▶ Infrastructure Canada
- ▶ District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board
- ▶ Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services
- ▶ Rural Transit Solutions Fund
- ▶ Superior Shores Gaming
- ▶ Donations





**Thunder Bay Indigenous
Friendship Centre**