

**Mattagami
First Nation**

DRUM



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**Volume Eight
Issue Two**

WORDS FROM THE CHIEF



**Chief
Jennifer
Constant
Mattagami
First Nation**

Baamaapii 2024, Bi'indiigaan 2025!

As we say goodbye and baamaapii to 2024, we say Miigwech for all the good things afforded to us during this last year. We also want to take a moment to reflect on the lessons it has taught us all, and to remember all of our loved ones who were not able to join us up to this point in time. We send big love and a respectful and spirited greeting to them all.

As we move into 2025, we ask Creator to guide us all on our journey down the good path, we pray for those who have lost their way, and let them know that they are needed wholly by our nation now and for our future. I want to acknowledge all of our members and residents who contribute to creating a healthy, kind and safe space for all of us. Each of us have a responsibility and deserve to be the best versions of ourselves in all facets of our being: socially, physically, spiritually, mentally, etc. We are all tasked to recognize, nurture, and ignite the Warrior Spirit within us – that as a tribe, which we are – we have the onus of contributing in a good way to help make a stronger nation for now, for our future, and to honour our ancestors who did not have the opportunities we have before us now.

We are living in the prayers our ancestors set out for us and we must honour their struggle and sacrifices which I believe have shielded us from experiencing the struggles they knew all too well. Let us truly rejoice and celebrate through our actions this year and in the good intentions we are setting for our future generations. We now create our path for a better future for all of Mattagami.

As Chief, I have been very active in representing Mattagami far and wide, very purposefully elevating the profile of our nation while also attending council meetings, and visiting and speaking with our members at various events. Recently, I was given an award by Women In Mining Sudbury as a Trailblazer and I was happy to accept it not so much for myself as Chief of our First Nation but for all of our members, our past Chiefs and councils as well as Elders who for many years were marginalized by resource development in our territory, and the lack of inclusivity by both government and industry. Over the last two decades, I have sat in on many meetings,

negotiating Impact and Benefits Agreements (IBAs) and other agreements with resource development companies, primarily having to do with mining – I have personally witnessed and influenced changes for the better for our nation. Though much of this work stems from all of our past Chiefs, councillors and Elders who set the course guiding us with their knowledge, having always understood our right to participate in any development on our lands.

As a Council, Mattagami leadership is committed to many important issues our members are facing. One critical area is housing. Throughout the year and with the support of our full council, I along with Councillor Devin Naveau and Councillor Dereck McKay have been actively meeting with government leaders at both provincial and federal levels to advocate for an expedited Additions To Reserves process. While meeting with the Prime Minister's senior staff we expressed the critical need to increase lands for housing and infrastructure to meet the growing rate of our nation. Ours is a unique situation since we are ready and capable to expand – but do not have the land upon which to build. Mattagami's Land Use Plan developed and directed by our members identifies new lands for this very purpose. I've very frankly expressed the absurdity of our land being taken from us without our permission, and now needing to go through an arduous process to re-acquire it for our purposes. We are positive though that once government is no longer prorogued, we can pick up the momentum to successfully realize these goals.

Mattagami is also active in creating many synergies to maximize opportunities for our members. This is evidenced in our many partnerships and initiatives - such as Launch Canada, and other aeronautical research partnerships. One such event is the NASA Space Camp which is set to take place this June in Huntsville, Alabama where two Mattagami youth, Audrey Henderson & Lateisha Lewis have been accepted into. We are proud of them and are excited to see their success. Mattagami leadership is also actively looking for ways to increase services to our members – one area is aiming to secure a Canada Post office in our community. Councillor Kourtney Baulne and I have had initial conversations with Canada Post to determine the viability and options of postal service directly in the community, having initially hoped for mail courier service to remote mailboxes within Mattagami – we were informed that our area would require a specific office – Mattagami Council will be conducting a feasibility study to ensure we can secure this service for our members. As you may be aware Mattagami also now has bus and parcel services through Ontario Northland, Councillor Kourtney

Baulne helped to implement and establish this important service in the community and had staff trained to be a ticketing agent.

Mattagami leadership will also be actively lobbying for a new elementary school for the community, we are ensuring our administration securely submits applications without any conflicting submissions from other departments or leadership. Ultimately this new infrastructure is an investment into the growth of our First Nation and will be prioritized accordingly. Councillor Cindy McKay, and Councillor Dereck McKay along with our Executive Director will lead this process – and we will update once our submissions are approved. The new High School partnership with TVO ILC has been implemented, Councillor Dereck McKay has been ensuring our high school students are equipped to carry out the schooling needs locally. The new Fitness Gym is also open in Mattagami and has seen a good enrolment of memberships. We are elated to be able to offer a space geared to improving the physical and mental health of our members. Councillor Janelle Golinowski has been actively supporting the new space at the Odamino Centre. Mattagami is also hopeful that our newest investment into a cooling system for our rink will be up and running in the coming month. Councillor Devin Naveau has been actively leading this project to get the connection to the electrical components. We will conduct a Grand Re-Opening once the work is completed and I personally am excited to go skating once it is open. Mattagami Council is also active in the renewal of our ongoing lease agreements with Ontario Power Generation, Councillor Sue Prince is the lead on this file and brings her expertise in making great progress to ensure our lease is up to date and any outstanding matters are actively resolved.

We look forward to providing more updates and seeing everyone at our Annual Gathering of Mattagami (AGM) event which is scheduled to take place this August 13-17, 2025. The AGM gathering event consists Wednesday to Friday carrying out of our Annual General Assembly (half days), Community Activities (also half days), with evening entertainment in the evenings. Which will be followed by the Annual Mattagami Powwow on the Saturday & Sunday. We are hoping this facilitates a Mattagami Reunion so that all our members can plan to come back home on an annual basis, to be informed, and to gather and build relationships through visiting with one another.

I thank you all for taking the time to stay connected and look forward to seeing you when I'm in the community or on my various travels.

Ni'miigwechwendam.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Welcome to 2025 and things are looking great as we look back on what has been an incredible time of new developments for Mattagami First Nation. We have seen the positive result of many years of working with our Chief and Council, staff, Elders, Youth and community members through consultation and strategic planning. It is so gratifying for me to see our wonderful community move forward for the benefit of all of us and the future generations.

We all have our struggles and challenges and I am reminded all the time just how lucky we are to be living in a community that cares for each other. I am thankful for the fact that we help each other out through difficult times and we celebrate our future with great community spirit and kindness. As we forgive and heal on an individual basis we do so also with the support, guidance and assistance of our family, friends and neighbours. That is what makes Mattagami First Nation such a great place to call home.

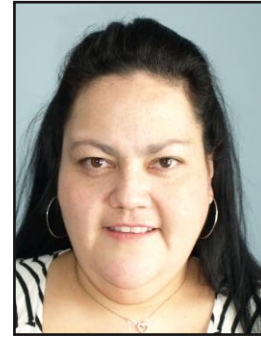
I am very proud of all of the good work our staff is doing in moving Mattagami First Nation ahead to meet the challenges of today as well as tomorrow. We have more and more of our young people accessing knowledge and education through all kinds of courses, programs and post secondary experiences. The good news is that many are returning to our community to provide their energy and skills in assisting with the continued

development of Mattagami First Nation. Our Chief and Council is also very open to and dedicated to supporting our youth, our staff and members in gaining skills and knowledge through further education. So many of us have been thriving in positions in the work place while also accessing diploma and degree programs as a means of self development and of course that also benefits all of us with their new found skills and knowledge.

It is so gratifying to see so many women in key positions in Mattagami First Nation. Our youth are fortunate to have a vibrant young woman Jennifer Constant as our Chief and four out of our six councillors are women. Over the years we have worked on developing planning for Mattagami First Nation through consultation and interaction with all of our members on and off reserve.

The traditional knowledge of our Elders has assisted in planning for the future

We have held our Elders in high esteem and made sure they were included in Chief and Council decisions through their valued guidance. The traditional knowledge of our Elders has assisted us in planning for the future. We have also been working with our youth in providing them with safe, positive spaces and access to all kinds of education and programming experience to assist them. The input from our Elders and our youth puts us on a good path for the future. I



Juanita Luke
Executive Director

find that comforting, satisfying and exciting.

It is so gratifying that every once in a while I hear positive feedback from an Elder or member of our community who has witnessed the developments in Mattagami First Nation over the past couple of decades. The views and input of our members has allowed us to build planning strategies that improve our governance in regards to Chief and Council, our administration and our staff. This community guidance has allowed us to create the vibrant and progressive First Nation we see today. Let's continue down this path together driven by the goal of making life better for all of us now and for the generations to come.

In these times that are challenging with all kinds of political developments in the world that are putting democratic systems in jeopardy we are reminded just how important it is for us to work with our First Nations governments at national, regional and local levels as well as governments provincially and federally. We are so lucky to be situated on our traditional lands overlooking the lake. We have produced many programs that are assisting us to developing Mattagami First Nation in terms of being self sufficient on many levels including providing for a safe and secure community that meets the needs of our Elders, youth and members in general. This is a great place to live and in a world of increasing chaos this is our place that represents peace of mind rooted in the honour of our ancestors on our traditional lands. We are survivors.

Front Cover

submitted photo

Mattagami FN was well represented at the Annual Mushkegowuk Cup Youth Hockey Tournament in Timmins from February 14 to 16 , 2025. Chief Jennifer Constant is pictured in front with the Mattagami Migizi mascot (Ava Naveau), Ameria Wesley (in centre), Conrad Iahtail (in dark hat) and Jennifer Wabano (in white hat)

New Education Initiative Progressing

Mattagami First Nation Education has taken a major step towards providing independent secondary school education through a partnership with TVO Independent Learning Centre (TVO ILC). Currently, this is being called the Mattagami First Nation High School in partnership with TVO ILC. Ian Vaithilingham, High School Lead Teacher / TVO ILC Program Facilitator, is leading the development of this independent program that will provide certified secondary school education for local students. The new program which started in September 2024 has 16 full time students ranging from first time grade nine students to adults and provides online courses with local support including land based learning and cultural components.

“We’re happy to say that we have a full and busy classroom now and I’m proud to say that I am the community’s first high school teacher. I am currently taking both roles in representing the delivery of the program and in acting as the teacher for the students. However, the whole point of our work is to allow the students in the community to have access to quality education without leaving the community,” explained Vaithilingham.

He pointed out that before secondary school services were provided in the community, students had to use daily buses to travel an hour to Timmins to attend school. It meant student’s time was consumed by hours of daily travel and sometimes longer if the weather was bad or traffic was stopped on the highway. Daily travel meant that students missed out on extracurricular activities, living at home, being with their family, concentrating on their studies or having more free time.

The new Mattagami FN High School is housed in a dedicated building across from the elementary school in the centre of the community.

“We have everything we need to get

all this started. It’s a small facility, a one room schoolhouse with everything we need from a kitchen, bathrooms, new computers and land based equipment we need in education,” commented Vaithilingham.

The new secondary school system for Mattagami FN is a change from the previous Keewatinook Internet High School (KIHS) which the community had been using since 2018. Vaithilingham has been working with the community for the past seven years. He originally started as a teacher and educa-

provides the facilities and the teacher to supervise the students,” explained Vaithilingham.

This new education system will provide one on one training, land based learning, culturally oriented guidance and support and encouragement for Indigenous language training. Since this is a partnership between TVO ILC and Mattagami FN, the community now has more autonomy regarding education programming and this allows the First Nation to grow and develop according to the needs of the students. Vaithilingham

added that this new control will mean that as their program grows over time, they will be able to add more assistance such as a classroom assistant or focusing more on land based learning.

“As we grow this education system, we can think of adding more programs such as co-op education or introduction into trades. The community is also developing a horticultural program so we could even think of education opportunities in that direction as well. The exciting thing is that since the community is in control we can cater to the needs of the local students and what the First Nation decides is needed,” said Vaithilingham.

Since TVO ILC has a long history of development in online and distance education programs this experience has resulted in a service that provides a wide variety of subject and course material

geared for the communities it services.

“TVO ILC provides so much content that we can access. My specialty is in math and science, so I am able to provide guidance in those subjects but the online course material provides a wider variety for students to use in all other subjects. The program material is of a high standard and the students describe it as tough as they are challenging and interactive. It’s also special to note



PHOTO PROVIDED BY IAN VAITHILINGHAM
MATTAGAMI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TAMIKA NAVEAU SETS UP HER ROCKET AT LAUNCH CANADA IN AUGUST 2024. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT MATTAGAMI STUDENTS TOOK PART IN THIS EVENT WHERE THEY CONSTRUCTED AND LAUNCHED MEDIUM-POWERED ROCKETS.

tion mentor through the KIHS program, which is an online secondary school program that was started by Keewatinook Okimakanak (Northern Chiefs Tribal Council) in northwestern Ontario.

“Previously I was working with a different setup but now I work directly for Mattagami First Nation. The system we have developed has been created so that TVO ILC provides the course material and credits while Mattagami FN

that TVO ILC provides a lot of Indigenous content that we can access,” commented Vaithilingham.

Derek McKay, Education Support Director for Mattagami FN provides overall supervision for this new education program in the community. McKay, who has a long career in local education services for the community, is also a First Nation Council member and serving as part of the First Nation leadership.

Vaithilingham lives in Mattagami FN with his partner Ava Rentelis. She is the Horticultural Lead for Mattagami FN’s new Project Miikogi, a food sovereignty and horticultural initiative. Vaithilingham was raised in Timmins but he was originally born in Dublin, Ireland as his family are both Irish and Indian root nationalities. At a very young age, his family immigrated to Canada first to Toronto and later moved north to Timmins where he spent his childhood. As an adult, he completed his studies and worked as a teacher in southern Ontario in Scarborough near Toronto for 15 years. In 2018, he moved north to take a position as a teacher with Mattagami FN.

TVO ILC, originally identified as just the ILC, is a high school education provider for distant and remote communities in Ontario that has been in service since 1926. It is accredited by the



PHOTO PROVIDED BY IAN VAITHILINGHAM

MATTAGAMI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN A ROCKET-BUILDING WORKSHOP AT LAUNCH CANADA ROCKETRY COMPETITION IN AUGUST 2024

Ontario Ministry of Education to provide high school credits as well as grant Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). As the largest online high school in Canada it has a huge library of courses for its students. Originally iden-

tified as the ILC throughout most of its history, in 2002, it was transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ontario Education Communications Authority which also operates TV Ontario and has since become known as TVO ILC.

New Community Centre Welcomed

Mattagami First Nation is developing a new community centre using repurposed mobile trailers that were donated to the community by IAMGOLD’s Cote Gold Project. The new facility will provide the community with a general gathering space for members to visit and use for recreation activities for all ages from children, youth, adults and Elders.

The new centre will provide a space for all ages to take part in various activities such as arts and crafts, live games, digital gaming, computer technology or to give opportunities for youth to interact and be around local Elders and traditional teachers. This will be a fully featured facility that will include nine offices, a kitchen space, storage space and a central open gathering space.

The project is being overseen by Curtis Fowler, Public Works Director.

“The new building will provide space for young people but it can also be used by our Elders and local people to show,

demonstrate and share traditional knowledge activities for everyone to learn from,” explained Fowler.

The trailers were received by the community in the beginning of 2024 and during the summer months, the Mattagami FN Public Works department used heavy equipment to establish a foundation and arrange the structures into position. They also did the work to provide the main connections to water delivery and a waste water system. Work was later carried out by contractors to complete interior work.

“It’s great to see this work being done for our community. We didn’t have anything like this when I was growing up and it’s good to see facilities like this being provided for our young people today,” said Fowler.

A lifelong resident who grew up in the community, he is happy to see the growth and development that is happening in the First Nation, especially with the prospect of more work and opportunities for members.

“It’s nice to see more of our members coming home to live here close to their families. Projects like this community centre is also important because as there are more people returning there is a demand for services and facilities to make their lives comfortable,” explained Fowler.

He has been involved for most of his career in working for the community since 2002. He also holds the position of Fire Chief for the Mattagami FN Fire Department. As Public Works Director he manages a nine member staff who are responsible for the management of local roadways as well as the maintenance and upkeep of First Nation administration buildings and infrastructure, including the water plant, skating rink and main administration building. The department takes part in servicing and maintaining community water delivery and waste water systems. Their work also involves the use of servicing, maintenance and operation of heavy equipment in order to carry out their duties.

Child And Youth Well Being Advanced

Peggy Claveau, is the Director of newly created Child and Youth Well Being Department for Mattagami First Nation.

Claveau explained that the new Child and Youth Well Being Department for Mattagami FN is to lead the community into developing their own protocols to support their children and families.

"The idea of wanting to help children and their families is simple but there are also many layers to how that can be done. We are there to facilitate the process of supporting the families so that when child and family services are involved, we are present to support the child and family through every step of the way," explained Claveau.

The main goal of the new department is to administrate the First Nations representative services. According to the government of Canada, "First Nation Representative Services (sometimes referred to as Band Representative Services in Ontario) support First Nations when children, youth, young adults, and families from their community are involved or at risk of involvement with the child and family services system."

The new department headed by Claveau includes new staff members Janet McKay, First Nation Representative; Priscilla Linklater, First Nation Representative; Sam Kloetstra, Administrative Assistant, Cindy Mathieu, Jordan's Principal Coordinator and Joanne Naveau, Family Well Being Coordinator.

"We have a great team of people to build this new department as we have been able to come together with a unified vision for what we would like to accomplish. The team is very heart centred as they bring a lot of caring and compassion. Our staff members have worked in related areas in different capacities and programs and the experience they bring is showing in the work they are taking on now. We are starting at ground zero but the people in our team are very effective at their roles," said Claveau.

Currently, the staff are working remotely in different locations but Claveau explained that a new office is being set up in the community to house their new department. This will also include a smaller office location in Timmins to assist clients there.

Claveau is proud to be serving her community in this newly established role.

"I am honoured to share my skill set and experience in this new role. It's really nice to see how far the community has progressed over all the years and to now see how much is being done and to be part of it all is an incredible feeling for me," explained Claveau.

Currently, the development of the new department is still in its early stages. Claveau and her staff are working closely with Chief and Council to outline future goals as well as covering activities they have achieved so far. They are following a phased in approach by first creating a foundation to build upon.

"We just got this new department started in August, our team is very new and we've

had some initial training to get started. The Chief and Council have tasked us by first starting with this building phase. We want to first step up a foundation to build internal processes, developing policies and setting our priorities," commented Claveau.

The new Child and Youth Well Being Department will include workers providing direct support to the community

In the new year, they will move into a second phase and introduce a law lead to assist them with legal questions. Together with a new law lead, Claveau and her team are planning on establishing a committee to help with community feedback as well as conducting community engagement sessions to begin the process of drafting new protocols in how to communicate with child and family service agencies and how this would work.

She is looking forward to the initial developments of this new department. She envisions the department to support the community through a variety of support mechanisms, initiatives and activities. Their work is already including the collaboration of other First Nation departments to create a well rounded holistic approach in development. The new Child and Youth Well Being

department will include workers providing direct support to the community, clients, children and families; a Family Well Being Coordinator and a Jordan's Principal Coordinator.

"These three areas will work very well together and complement one another to fill in the gaps of service to our young people and their families. This is our main vision, as a lot of our discussions in the past have revolved around filling in the gaps of service," said Claveau.

She added that they are developing their new department to provide permanent dedicated staff to provide these services. The workers would be available to act in times of crisis but also to provide ongoing services and supports in the form of providing programs and services such as sharing circles, support groups and referrals to other resources.

"It's about prevention and preventing situations from developing into anything serious. We are also there to empower the community because there is this assumption made by all agencies that everyone understands how their systems work when few people really do. We want to be there to educate our people and give them some clarity as to how these systems work. There is always the fear that whenever child services are involved that it means that children will be taken away but our role is to prevent that from happening and work with the families in a meaningful way," said Claveau.

The new Child and Youth Wellbeing Department will provide new contact information, email and website with up to date information for community members in the future. Community members can contact the Mattagami FN main office to be directed to the department for assistance at this time.

Sam Kloetstra Administrative Assistant

Sam Kloetstra, is the Administrative Assistant for the newly developed Child and Youth Well Being Department for Mattagami First Nation. The new department is being developed by the First Nation to create community based programming and services that will directly support young people and their families.

"I'm happy to be part of this new department for our community. It is a service where we are working directly for the health and well being of our young people. This type of service is important for helping the families in our community as the support we give them will make it easier for everyone to stay healthy and prevent negative situations from arising. It also feels good to be part of a solid team of people who are all supporting one another so that we can provide the best assistance we can for our community members," explained Kloetstra.

His responsibilities are to provide direct support to the Director of Child Youth Well Being Department Peggy Claveau and to the rest of the department staff. Kloetstra will provide administrative support by assisting in organizing and maintaining office services as well as scheduling and organization of meetings.

"I feel good taking on this new position in a new department that our members are creating. It's great to work for someone like Peggy Claveau and she is able to adapt and change all these services to best serve our community," said Kloetstra.

He will also move into the role of a law lead where he will be involved with the legal team of the department. In this added role, he will act as a communicator between community members and a legal team.

"I have seen family and friends become involved in family care situations in

Samantha Chookomoolin Featured

Samantha Chookomoolin is the Council Assistant for Mattagami First Nation. She started her newly created position in June 2024.

As Council Assistant, she assists Chief and the six member Councillors with day to day communications, scheduling and meeting coordination. She directly assists the First Nation Chief Jennifer Constant with regular event and meeting organization and coordinating and organizing relevant files, documents and information as they are needed. She also assists the Chief's office in managing and tracking key documents and in managing and organizing communications in and out of the leadership office as needed. She is on hand at Council meetings for meeting minutes and assists in making travel arrangements and scheduling for Chief and Council.

"There are many small details that take up the schedule of our Chief and the Council members. My job is to handle those small details so that they can focus on their main duties in leadership. My main role is to support Chief and Council and work with everyone in the office and the community," said Chookomoolin.

Before taking on her new role, she worked initially as a receptionist and later as a Program Support Worker for Kunuwanimano Child and Family Services in Timmins. In terms of education, she had initially was interested in nursing but instead moved towards office management. She went on to complete an Office Administration program at Northern College in Timmins.

She is proud to be working directly with her community's leadership.

"I grew up in Mattagami FN and I also worked as a youth in the community when there was not as much activity happening. To see everything that is being developed now is amazing. It was also special to be welcomed into the office by Chief Jennifer Constant. It feels good to have the support of so many

people in the community," explained Chookomoolin.

She was first raised on the James and Hudson Bay coast where her family spoke the Cree dialect and she was able to speak the language until five years of age. Later, she and her sister Natalie lived with a foster family in Mattagami FN with past Chief Gary Naveau and his wife Darlene.

"My foster parents are really caring people that have helped a lot of young people in our community. They really opened up my life and really gave us a lot of opportunities. I feel blessed that we were able to grow up with two sets of parents in our lives," commented Chookomoolin.

She was mostly raised in Mattagami FN with her sister and extended family in the community.

In October 2023, her family was saddened with the tragic loss of her sister Natalie Chookomoolin who was 34 years of age. A year later, their family suffered another loss when their mother Gladys Naveau passed in September 2024 at the age of 68. Gladys Naveau was the daughter of Stanley and Beatrice Naveau.

"My parents were awesome people because I can still remember them together when we were really young. Dad would tell mom he was going to play the accordion and he would tell her to play the spoons. Then everyone would sit down for a fun time with music," said Samantha Chookomoolin.

Her siblings are Kelly, Kathy, Sandra, Bobby, Pam, Amanda, Mona and Natalie.

"I remember my father Abraham when we were children. I remember mom dressing me and my younger sister Natalie in matching outfits and then dad playing the accordion as we danced in the living room. He'd play and then they would guide us and show how to dance. They were both people who enjoyed



SUBMITTED PHOTO

SAMANTHA CHOOKOMOLIN, WITH HER SON LIAM

life and knew how to have fun," said Samantha Chookomoolin.

She has a 12 year old son Liam whom she enjoys spending time with doing various activities and being on the land around their home in Mattagami FN.

"I enjoy spending time with my son and encouraging him in everything that he does. I like taking my Sundays with him to do things together like cooking, reading, listening to music or even just dancing and having fun," said Samantha Chookomoolin.

In her own time, she enjoys writing, journaling and spending time on the land.

"I'm happy to be working for my home community. It just makes me feel whole to work for my First Nation. I had always felt that I was searching for something elsewhere but now I feel good that I found what I needed here," said Samantha Chookomoolin.

Her father is the late Abraham Chookomoolin, a Cree Elder from Peawanuck First Nation on the Hudson Bay coast. He was well known in the small close knit community in the north as he was part of several knowledge keepers who had grown up learning the traditions, stories and history of the James and Hudson Bay coast. Abraham was also an old time traditional musician who carried a type of musical ability with fiddle, accordion and guitar that was historically passed down through European fur traders and explorers. As a child, he was also a survivor of the Residential School system, where he had been forcibly removed from his family at young age to complete an early education.

His family was severely affected by the tragic flooding of Winisk FN in May 1986, where springtime floods on the Winisk River destroyed the community with water and ice and cost the lives of two community members. One of the people who were tragically lost was Abraham's first wife Margaret Chookomoolin.

Abraham recovered from the devastating event and their family moved for a time to Attawapiskat First Nation while the new community of Peawanuck First Nation was built to replace the old settlement of Winisk.

Child And Youth Well Being Department

the past and it is always difficult to understand where government control and power starts and ends and how we as Indigenous can advocate for ourselves. I am hoping that in this new role, I'll be able to help everyone understand what we can do and what happens during these difficult circumstances. Most importantly, I care about our children and everything I do in this role is to provide for the well being of the youth and in supporting the families they are part of," explained Kloetstra.

He has had a varied career where he has concentrated much of his energy towards Indigenous advocacy at multiple levels, as well as working for representation and inclusion of transgender and LGBTQ+ issues.

He lived for a time in Toronto where he worked for Eshkiniigjik Naandwechigegamig - Aabiish Gaa Binjibaaying (EN-AGB) Youth Agency in Toronto, an organization in the city that provides pro-

gramming for Indigenous youth to build self esteem, confidence, skills and self determination.

He also attended studies for Public Administration and Governance at Ryerson University in Toronto as well as a Geology program at Algoma University in Sault Ste Marie.

After several years of travel, he recently moved back to his home community of Mattagami FN.

"I still find it important to help out and take part in advocating for important issues in our community and our region to represent our people. I'm also happy to be home again and to use my time and energy here for our First Nation," commented Kloetstra.

He enjoys learning about his culture but also in expanding his knowledge of the world. He has taken opportunities for international travel with trips to Europe and hopes to travel more in the future.

Staff Feature Janet McKay



Janet McKay
Child and
Family Well
Being
Representative

Janet McKay is the Child and Family Well Being First Nation Representative for the newly established Child and Youth Well Being Department for Mattagami First Nation.

Her main role is to advocate for families having to interact with child and family services. When she receives a referral from regional agencies such as Kunuwanimano Child and Family Services, Dilico or Paykotahno or any other similar agencies across Canada, McKay takes on the role of representing the family involved and advocating for them.

"I work towards making sure that families can access any type of resource or supports that they need. I am directly involved with the parents and the children as well as their families and with the service organization. I have multiple roles but my main task is to

represent and advocate for healthy integration, meaning that we do our best to keep everyone together and find ways to meet requirements and keep children with their family," explained McKay.

She previously worked for Mattagami FN under the Jordan's Principle Program. She had also worked under a similar role for the Moose Cree First Nation and later under Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN).

"I've always felt my role in life has been to advocate for others. I grew up listening to others speak for me, so I learned early on that it was important to take on that role of advocating and speaking for others. As Indigenous people, we are learning to speak for ourselves but in many situations it is difficult to advocate for everything that we need. So my role is to be there to act as that support system for everyone," said McKay.

She graduated with honours in June 2024 from a two year condensed Human Resource Management Program at Northern College in Timmins.

She is originally from Garden River First Nation and now currently lives with her family in Timmins. She and her husband of 26 years, Darryl McKay have three sons Damien, Dawyn and Brennan. She also has a grandson Elijah.

She enjoys being with her family and in her spare time and enjoys taking part in team sports such as baseball. She is

part of a close knit family that spends plenty of time on the land to follow traditional activities including hunting, fishing and harvesting. As a family group, they enjoy working together for seasonal harvesting activities throughout the year such as the fall moose hunt or in spending time on the lake for boat fishing or ice fishing in the winter.

"It's important to me to keep our traditional culture alive and we encourage our children and now our grandchild to learn our traditions. We gather a lot of food from the land and there is a lot of work that has to be done to prepare, butcher, package, gather and then store everything properly. I had never done much hunting or gathering when I was younger but the Creator gave me a husband, three boys and now a grandson so it has been natural for all of us in our family unit to want to head out on the land to gather food," said McKay.

She is excited and happy to see the level of development that has happened over the past two decades in Mattagami FN.

"To see the amount of growth that has happened over the years is phenomenal. There has been so much for our young people who are benefiting in so many ways and that is satisfying to see. I am excited to be a part of the great things that will be accomplished as Mattagami First Nation moves into the future," commented McKay.

Peggy Claveau Heads Up Mattagami FN



PEGGY CLAVEAU,
THE NEW DIRECTOR OF CHILD AND YOUTH
WELL BEING DEPARTMENT

Peggy Claveau, is the new Director of Child and Youth Well Being Department for Mattagami First Nation. She brings a wealth of work experience and knowledge through many years of involvement in First Nation Health Services and Indigenous service organizations.

Before taking on her role with Mattagami FN, she was involved with the Aboriginal Skilled Workers Association and the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Board of Ontario. Although still situated in southern Ontario, Claveau and her staff are operating remotely to develop the new Child and Youth Well Being Department for Mattagami FN.

"Most of the team is based in Timmins and in Mattagami FN. As the director, I am further away but I still take the time and effort to visit the community in person. We also all connect regularly through online meetings and it has been working really well for everyone," explained Claveau.

After many years of working for several major Indigenous service organizations and groups, she is happy to be working directly with her home First Nation.

"I have been involved in many organizations over the years and in many ways it was connected to my home community of Mattagami First Nation. Now that I have taken on this role, it feels like I have come full circle and now after years of experience and education, I've come back to work directly with my home community in a very important role and position," said Claveau.

She worked for Wabun Tribal Council Health Services for 17 years. While at Wabun Health, she obtained an undergraduate degree in Public Administration and Governance.

"I was very proud to achieve my post secondary education as I was the first one in both my parents families to attend university. It was a lot of effort as I had to continue my work and complete my education at the same time. I was thankful for the support I got from Wabun because that training has helped me to achieve a lot of success and opportunities in my work," commented Claveau.

Her past employment also includes working with Kunuwanimano Child and Family Services. Claveau is also an

Belanger Human Resources Manager

Amanda Belanger is featured as the Mattagami First Nation Human Resources Manager. She started in this position in July of 2024. Currently her focus is recruitment as well as involvement in employee pensions, benefits and staff interactions.

She is responsible for interviewing prospective employees as well as conducting reviews at the end of employee probation. She is also developing Human Resource (HR) policies, deals with health and safety and she follows up in terms of HR with supervisors and manager on staff. The HR position is new and was created to provide a more professional approach to hiring for the First Nation. Previously, this work was done by managers and supervisors on staff.

"There is a lot of work involved in setting everything for HR and I am enjoying assisting the community in this important role. I am also happy to take the extra work load that managers and supervisors were doing previous to the creation of the HR department," explained Belanger.

Currently she is enrolled in a two year HR management course through Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA).

"This is such a progressive First Nation in that the leadership and administration really believes in providing support and encouragement to staff in seeking education. I know that this approach is benefiting staff and in turn the community with new knowledge and skills being developed," commented Belanger.

Before starting in her new position for Mattagami FN she was the Coordinator of Administration for the Paramedic Service at the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board (CDSAB). Belanger served in this role for four years and during this time was also involved in HR.

She also operates her business Amanda Belanger Administrative Services which involves contractual work for First Nation administration, organizations and related business ventures.

She had taken online education through the International Correspondence School (ICS) with a focus on Administration Assistance. She lives in Timmins with her family but hopes to move to Mattagami FN at some point. She currently works from her home in Timmins but visits Mattagami FN weekly and when ever she is needed to be on site.

"I got my Native status about two years ago and two of my children are members of Mattagami FN at this point and the third is applying. My family ties to the community are connected to the Naveau family as one of my great, great grandfathers was a Chief of the community," said Belanger.

She is excited about learning more about her culture and hopes to learn some of the language at one point. She has high hopes for the continued development of the community.

"I really want our First Nation to move forward and it would be great to see our own high school in place, more housing development and more resources services



**Amanda
Belanger**
Human
Resources
Manager

and benefits for our Elders and youth," commented Belanger.

She pointed out that she is impressed with the managers and supervisors as well as all staff at Mattagami FN.

"Our supervisors and managers have so much knowledge and skills and that makes everything much easier for me in terms of developing in my new role. Things are moving along very well and we are having much success with the Choose Life Program and the new Child and Youth Well being department for which we just hired a new coordinator," explained Belanger.

She has been married to Greg Belanger for more than 20 years and they have sons Zachary and Jake, daughter Dilynn and granddaughter Ava.

Belanger enjoys being on the land and is enthusiastic about fishing and hunting. She also enjoys spending quality time with her family and friends and she is an avid traveller.

Child And Youth Well Being Department

entrepreneur who developed and is managing her own holistic healing practice which she operates on a part time basis.

"I encourage my team to see that part of our work is to create change for the community"

She is happy to see the continued development of Mattagami FN over the past few decades.

"The community has done a lot of work over the years and the membership has also been taking steps to bring back the culture and provide those spaces to

allow people to learn about traditions and identity. It's important to keep our people exposed to and aware of their culture as it helps everyone to lead more healthier and positive lives," said Claveau.

She added that the development of the community can be attributed to the contributions of generations of leadership.

"As our membership becomes more and more educated over time, we are able to have individuals in leadership who want to advance everything that has been accomplished. We have a lot of respect for past leaders who helped get us to where we are now. All that development has meant that new generations of leaders are able to tap into their creative side and expand on new opportunities," said Claveau.

In her new role, she wants to continue the progress that is happening in the community by encouraging and supporting her team members to take training and education opportunities to add to their experience.

"I encourage my team to see that part of our work is to create change for the community. This means that we have to

adapt and change in order to provide the best we can. I am happy to see that our First Nation leaders are also understanding and embracing that change. Our team members at the new Children and Family Well Being Program are adding to their training so that we can fill those nooks and crannies and offer as much help as we can to our membership," explained Claveau.

In 2019, she relocated to southern Ontario and worked for Six Nations of the Grand River for the Grand River Employment And Training organization. She started out in this organization as an employment and training coach and quickly moved up within a year to become one of the programs and services leads.

In 2023, she stepped away from her work to help raise her grandson and to be closer to her family.

"We lead busy lives and I felt like I needed time and space to step away from my busy schedule so that I could concentrate on family," said Claveau.

She and her husband Jean have daughters Brittany and twins Taylor and Jasmine. She also has grandchildren Zion and Jasper.

10th Annual Mattagami Pow Wow

Mattagami FN Hosted the 10th Annual Mattagami First Nation Pow Wow on August 24, 2024. The gathering was titled 'Bringing Everyone Together'. The event was held at the community's waterfront which had been recently landscaped and maintained to host the gathering and provide space for the event and visiting participants.

"Everyone I met said that they were amazed and that they loved the location next to the water. There was lots of participation from many people from all over the north and from our community. We had dancers, performers and some of youth even danced at the event," said Kourtney Baulne.

The event which drew an estimated 200 people was led by Coordinator Kourtney Baulne, First Nation Councillor who also worked with a Pow Wow committee which included Dorothy Naveau, Sue Prince FN Councillor, Gillian Prince and Natasha Naveau.

"We were happy to bring back our main Pow Wow again as the last one was held in 2019. We've had smaller events over the years but not a grand Pow Wow for the community. After this one, we hope to bring

back our main Pow Wow next year and turn it into a major two day event like we had in the past. We do have our usual Pow Wow grounds at the heart of the community but it was being worked on at the time which meant we had to move to the beach area. It all worked out and it was special to be able to enjoy the new space by the lake," said Baulne.

She added that the annual Pow Wow is an important cultural event for the community.

"It's important for us to have this event every year as it is a grassroots event that reminds our young people about their cultural past and heritage. We've lost a lot of our cultural teachings so we have to do our best to maintain what we have and encourage everyone to learn more. It's also a way for us to keep our community healthy, connected and positive. I've learned so much over the years through gatherings like this and it makes me happy to see others, especially our young people doing the same," commented Baulne.

The Pow Wow was held to coincide with the community's Annual General Meeting which has become a recently added event held for the First Nation as an annual assembly for local leadership to meet with community members.

The gathering was started with a sunrise ceremony at the beginning of the day and later led by traditional ceremonies and a grand entry with flag bearers to start the event with a march of dancers, performers, traditional people, leaders and Elders. A community feast was held at the end of day



PHOTOS BY TASH NAVO

CHIEF JENNIFER CONSTANT HELPED TO LEAD THE GRAND ENTRY OF THE 10TH ANNUAL MATTAGAMI FN POW WOW.

and catered by Sherry Naveau.

"At the time we held our event, we had also dealt with the recent passing of a community member. A honour song or blanket dance was performed and fundraising was also provided with proceeds to help the family. It was a difficult decision for us to carry on the event during this sad time but with the support of the family, it was agreed that we carry on as a form of healing that everyone could take part in," said Baulne.

**For information on the
2025 Mattagami FN Pow Wow,
contact Kourtney Baulne, Mattagami FN Councillor
at the Mattagami FN main office.**



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MATTAGAMI FN

AN OVERHEAD VIEW OF THE LAKEFRONT EVENT GROUNDS FOR THE 10TH ANNUAL MATTAGAMI FN POW WOW WHICH WAS HELD ON AUGUST 24, 2024.

Halloween 2024

Community members planned and hosted a fun Halloween dance event at the Community Complex on October 25, 2024. The event was organized and run by Koral Sloss and Amanda Thompson as well as the support of others including Deanna Naveau and Emily Ludebeck. The organizers received support from Mattagami FN as well as local organizations and ticket sales for entry also helped to finance the one night event.

"It was a fun night for everyone. This is the first time we planned and hosted a community event like this and we hope to do it again in the future," said Koral Sloss.

Music was provided DJ TAZ from Timmins. Organizers geared the event towards younger adults between the ages of 19 to 30.

"We wanted to have a night that was a more age appropriate for some of our community members. There are often events for younger people and gatherings for Elders but we just wanted to have something for those people in between," said Sloss.

The event featured plenty of fun for participants through contests and events such as awards for costume categories and individual and group games with prizes.

"We had a lot of fun at the event but it was a lot of work and organization to get everything together. Halloween is just a fun time for everyone and for adults it's a chance to bring out that inner child and play a bit. We learned a lot and we hope to put on events like this again in the future," commented Thompson.

The 2024 Mattagami FN Pow Wow included, Host Drum: High Ridge Singers; Co-Host Drum, Black Bull Moose; Elders were past Chief Walter Naveau and past Chief Joyce Constant; MC was Gabriel Herodier; Arena Director was Elwood Ashawasega; Head Dancers were Koral Saile and Max Worme; Youth Dancers were Neebin Prince and Beesym Couchie and Veteran was William Morin.

"We want to give our thanks to Chief and Council for supporting this event and to the community for their participation and encouragement. I want to thank our Pow Wow committee for all their guidance and especially to Dorothy Naveau and Dana Cosgrove who were instrumental in guiding me in the process of running a Pow Wow. We are also very grateful to the sponsors of the Pow Wow," said Baulne.

Major sponsors of the event included Mattagami FN Trust, Mattagami FN Aki LP, IAMGold: Cote Gold Project and Ontario Power Generation (OPG).



THE 10TH ANNUAL MATTAGAMI FN POW WOW SAW MANY PERFORMERS GATHER FROM THROUGHOUT NORTHERN ONTARIO, AS WELL AS LOCAL SINGERS AND DANCERS. PICTURED ARE HEAD DANCERS KORAL SAILE AND MAX WORME, WHO ARE BOTH FROM MATTAGAMI FN.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MATTAGAMI FN POW WOW

Chief Constant Honoured With Award

Chief Jennifer Constant, Mattagami First Nation was celebrated as one of the guests of honour at the inaugural Women In Mining Sudbury awards gala which was held on November 21. She was recognized as an Indigenous Trailblazer during the event in honour of her years of service and advocating for her First Nation as related to the mining industry.

"I am very honoured to receive this recognition. As an Indigenous woman I've worked for many years for my community and for my people. As Indigenous people, we have a strong connection to the land and we always need to be at the table in negotiations to share our input, to speak our truth and participate in serving our traditional role of protectors of the land," commented Chief Constant.

She explained that as Indigenous people one of the most important roles of First Nations is in their ability and responsibility to represent environmental and ecological protections and preservation and to honour the culture and traditions of her people.

"I grew up in a First Nation surrounded by all kinds of resource developments and mining exploration and initiatives with a history of operating on our lands with little or no inclusion of any representation from Indigenous people. This award by the Women In Mining Sudbury is a recognition of all of the work of past Chiefs and Councils as well as Elders from Mattagami First Nation who fought to make sure our voices were heard," explained Chief Constant.

She comes from a long line of leaders who have always represented their people and the land to secure real benefits for Mattagami FN members while protecting the land. Her great grandfather Chief Andrew Luke was the signatory to Treaty #9 between Mattagami FN and the government of

Canada in 1906. Chief Luke was the first recognized Chief of Mattagami FN.

"After my great grandfather Chief Andrew Luke signed that treaty, he realized later that what was promised on signing the treaty and what actually happened as time moved on was not fulfilled. As a result of his displeasure, he protested by refusing to take treaty annuity payments for himself as he felt that he had failed his community," said Chief Constant.

Her family has advocated and fought for the rights of the community for generations. Her mother Joyce Luke, served as Chief, as did her uncle Gerald Luke and grandfather Alec Luke.

"Thank you to Women in Mining

Sudbury for this wonderful award. I truly am honoured and humbled for the recognition of my many years of working with mining companies and industry while representing First Nations objectives, initiatives and overall advocacy for sustainable and socially responsible mining in our territory.

"Thank you to Robin Roy for the nomination, to Jason Batise of Wabun Tribal Council and on behalf of the Wabun Chiefs; Krista Maydew of IAMGold, and Devin Naveau of Mattagami AKI for the support letters to my nomination," said Chief Constant.

Mattagami FN is part of the Wabun Tribal Council along with the First Nations of Beaverhouse, Brunswick House, Chapleau Ojibwe, Flying Post and Matachewan.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

MATTAGAMI FN STAFF AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS FROM L-R ARE: MAHDABIIN MCKAY, NICOLE CHARBONNEAU, WABUN TRIBAL COUNCIL; SARAH MCKAY, COUNCILLOR CINDY MCKAY, IVAN MCKAY, TESSA THOMAS, CHIEF JENNIFER CONSTANT, CHELSEA DEBASTOS, JULIE MCKAY, AVA NAVEAU, AMERIA WESLEY, COUNCILLOR DERECK MCKAY, ASHLEY NAVEAU, AMANDA BELANGER AND SONIA CORBIERE.

Justin Trepanier Featured Youth



**Justin
Trepanier
Mattagami
FN Youth**

Justin Trepanier is the featured youth of the issue for this edition of the Mattagami Drum. At 27 years of age, he has endured many life struggles which he has dealt with through his passion for music creation. He is the son of the late Wendy McKenzie who is the eldest daughter of Elder Agnes Naveau of Mattagami First Nation.

Trepanier had a difficult life start when he was born with many medical complications. At his birth at the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto, he became one of the first children born to undergo heart surgery and to be implanted with a pacemaker.

He has two older siblings Brandy and Michelle and his father is the late Jean-Louis Trepanier of Timmins. Justin Trepanier was raised in Timmins and later St Catharines with his mother and extended family. They later moved back up north to live at different times in Timmins and Mattagami FN. When they returned north, he got to know his father who suffered from his own medical circumstances and difficulties from an auto accident.

"Many people say that I get my gentle nature from my father's Brazeau side of my family. My mother taught me a lot as she was a wise and charismatic person who was youthful but had an old soul. She was a great mother who was very resilient and persevered through a lot of hard times," said Trepanier.

His father encouraged his artistic talents and gifted him an electric guitar, which encouraged his musical interests. Jean-Louis passed on in September 2008 at the age of 34.

His mother Wendy had been taken away from her family at a young age as part of

the 60s scoop, a controversial government policy where Indigenous children were adopted into non-Indigenous families. Shortly after the passing of his father, his mother was diagnosed with lupus and they made the move to southern Ontario and eventually to Toronto for her treatment.

"Moving to Toronto helped my mom and it also gave me new opportunities with my education. I got the chance to attend the First Nation School of Toronto where I learned about my culture, my history and so much education from an Indigenous perspective," said Justin Trepanier.

He was introduced to traditional singing and drumming at the First Nation School of Toronto where he took part in traditional drumming performances for schools, organizations and events in the city.

His mother Wendy passed on in June 2011 at the age of 47 after years of battling her disease.

Trepanier then lived and stayed with family in Timmins and Mattagami FN. Although he had some difficulties in his early years in high school, he was encouraged and supported by family members. He took part in the 'Feathers Of Hope' youth gathering in Thunder Bay in 2013, which was a major event that brought together youth from throughout Ontario to address Indigenous youth issues.

He also began experimenting with music creation when he was introduced to the newest digital music creation tools and software. It was at this time that he also suffered from setbacks due to addictions and life traumas. Through the help of family and friends, he received treatment and support and he was able to return to his music.

"I always had that voice of my mom telling me to keep moving forward. I got the help I needed but I was an adult now and I had to make it on my own. I ended up on the streets without a home at one point and living from couch to couch to get by," said Trepanier.

In 2019 he was taken into a youth group home where he found support in addictions, counselling and education. He took his life experiences and expressed them into music by creating multiple new tracks of instrumental hip-hop and rhythmic music. In June 2021, he released an 11 track album

titled 'U.N.I' under his title JTea Music on SoundCloud, an online digital music outlet. Later that year he released another album titled 'Change' on SoundCloud.

In 2022, he returned to Mattagami FN where he began to live full time around family and friends. He found work in the community in road construction and in his freetime, he continued to pursue making digital music.

"A lot of the music I created early on dealt with my own self doubt and troubled ideas I had in my life. Once I came back to the community surrounded by family, living near the trees, the water and those I loved, I began to focus more on the good things around me and the hope that my mother gave me," said Trepanier.

He has since moved to his own living space in the community where he continues to learn about his culture and traditions. He feels that being in the community has helped him greatly as he is surrounded by a supportive group of family and friends.



Mattagami FN Drum

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**All photos and writing by X. Kataquapit,
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