



BMO Financial Group

# 2026 Indigenous Partnerships and Progress Report

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wîcihitowin



## wîchitowin

(pronounced: wee-chih-hito-win) is a nehiyawewin/Cree term meaning “helping and supporting each other.”



Read our  
Sustainability  
Report



Access  
Nisitohtamowin  
eLearning

### Carried throughout the report

Water is life .... In many Indigenous cultures, water is understood as a living being, not only a resource. It sustains life, connects us and carries the stories of our ancestors. In ceremonies, water can symbolize cleansing and renewal. It teaches us to move with purpose, adapt with grace, and nourish all we touch. Water is both pathway and guide, carrying our bodies, stories and wisdom entrusted to it.

On the path of reconciliation, we can follow water’s knowledge: by building respectful relationships, taking responsibility, listening deeply, acting intentionally, and staying committed to change. Just as water carves stone and carries travelers to new horizons, we too can create transformation through time and persistence.

*Across Canada, many Indigenous Peoples continue to live without safe and dependable access to drinking water – despite many promises of change. We carry this awareness forward, recognizing our shared responsibility to support the healing, restoration, and future that communities deserve.*

#### Design & illustration

by: Vincent Design [vincentdesign.ca](http://vincentdesign.ca)

**Cover Photo** courtesy of Sarah Jane’s Photography in editorial collaboration with Odyssey Photography and Video Production





## Land acknowledgement

From coast to coast to coast, we acknowledge the ancestral and unceded territories of the First Nation, Inuit and Métis Peoples who call this Land home. We recognize the original Peoples of Turtle Island who live, work and care for this Land, and we respect Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

The Land on which BMO's offices sit in Toronto was once known as Tkaronto, meaning, in Mohawk, "where there are trees standing in the water." It was originally inhabited by many Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabeg, the Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat Peoples.

Today, the Greater Toronto Area is covered by Treaty 13 and the Williams Treaties.

We acknowledge the broken treaties and colonial policies that displaced Indigenous Peoples and attempted to erase their cultures – the impacts of these harms persist today. We reflect on this and recognize our shared responsibility to help build a better future. Reconciliation is a continuous journey, and we commit to walking it with care – listening deeply, learning openly, and working in partnership with Indigenous communities to implement meaningful, consultative change.



# Note to readers

This report reflects how BMO is responding and delivering on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action 92 and how we are partnering with Indigenous Peoples, communities and businesses in Canada to support economic reconciliation.

There are more than 630 First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada, representing more than 50 Nations. Within and across these communities, more than 70 distinct Indigenous languages are spoken today. Language carries history, place and meaning, and it is shaped by the people who speak it – as a result, there may be several accepted spellings for a single term. When Indigenous words appear in this report, we have used the spelling preferred by the person, community or business featured in the story. Similarly, each story headline is presented in the traditional language connected to that story. A map accompanies each feature to help readers understand where the story is rooted.

In keeping with the understanding of water that flows through this report, you will find illustrations of water-related animals and life.


This report was shaped through the care, insight and generosity of many individuals, and we offer our sincere thanks to those who contributed to its creation, including:

- Tace Ens-Buchacher, a Member of Waterhen Lake First Nation, for generously sharing her personal graduation photograph for the cover of this report. The photograph was taken by Sarah Attrell of Sarah Jane's Photography (Calgary), with editorial collaboration from Odyssey Photography and Video Production (Toronto).

- Shaun Vincent, from the Métis community of St. Laurent in Manitoba, and the team at Vincent Design in Winnipeg, for designing this report from cover to cover, including the illustrations.
- Jennifer Ashawasegai, our editorial consultant, from Henvey Inlet First Nation.
- The team at NATIONS Translation Group, a 100% Indigenous-owned firm, for their assistance interpreting story headlines across Indigenous dialects.
- Ntlole Emmeline Felix of the Splatshin Tsm7aksaltn Language Program, Enderby, BC, for translation of the words "Built with Care."
- Elder Janie Jack of Ulkatcho First Nation for her translation of the words "Building the Future Together."
- Knowledge Keepers Duane Mark and Tina Ayoungman, and Elders from Tsúut'ínà Gunáhà Nás?ághà Program, for translations of the words "Sharing Tea, Sharing Stories."
- John Chabot of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation, and the team at Anish Branding, for printing this report.
- The many photographers of Indigenous descent whose photo credits appear alongside their brilliant images throughout.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the clients, colleagues and community members across this Land who shared their stories with us.

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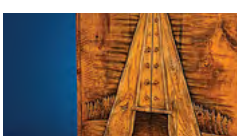
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# Walking Forward Together

## Message from the CEO

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**“We are grateful to the Indigenous communities, clients, and partners who walk this path with us.”**

At BMO, reconciliation is a responsibility grounded in relationships, learning, and action. We established our Indigenous Banking Unit more than 30 years ago to continue to work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and communities, guided by a shared commitment to advance economic empowerment and create opportunities shaped by Indigenous priorities. This work informs how we show up as an organization and how we live our Purpose – to **Boldly Grow the Good in business and life.**

Progress requires trust, built through consistency and accountability over time. We are honoured that Indigenous clients, colleagues, and partners place their trust in BMO, and we are committed to earning it every day. Our partnerships are based in respect for Indigenous rights, cultures, and knowledge, and are strengthened through collaboration with Indigenous businesses and community leaders across Canada.

We value the commitment of the BMO Indigenous Advisory Council members, whose perspectives help guide the bank’s policies, practices, and approach to reconciliation. We are pleased to welcome Tammy L. Brown to BMO’s Board of Directors, who is a member of Shawanaga First Nation. Tammy’s experience and knowledge are a valuable addition to the Board.

Reflecting on the stories and partnerships shared in this report, we are reminded that progress happens when we work together with mutual respect. We are grateful to the Indigenous communities, clients, and partners who walk this path with us. Their trust inspires us to continue learning and take action that supports lasting economic empowerment and shared prosperity.

**Darryl White**  
Chief Executive Officer, BMO Financial Group

# Rooted in Relationship, Focused on Impact



## Sharon Haward-Laird

Group Head, Canadian Commercial Banking and North American Integrated Solutions, Co-Head, Canadian Personal and Commercial Banking

Progress in reconciliation is built through sustained commitment, trusted relationships, and a willingness to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. This year's report highlights how that approach continues to shape BMO's work and deepen our impact alongside Indigenous Peoples, communities, and businesses.

We continue to focus on removing barriers to access. Through our Virtual Indigenous Banking services, BMO is expanding access to banking support for Indigenous clients and communities across Canada, regardless of geography or remoteness. This work reflects our broader commitment to inclusive access and relationship-based service.

Creating additional space for reflection and conversation remains an important part of how we learn and grow. This year, reconciliation-

focused conversations were included as part of BMO's Sustainability Leaders Podcast through a dedicated Reconciliation Series, offering another way to share perspectives, experiences, and insights.

This year's report reflects a deliberate focus on how reconciliation is carried forward through accountability, learning, and impact. A new Reflections section looks back with intention, demonstrating how commitments made in previous years continue to influence outcomes today. The report also includes links to BMO's Reconciliation Action Plan, which helps guide our ongoing work with Indigenous clients, colleagues, communities, and businesses.

As this work continues, we remain focused on strengthening relationships, applying what we have learned, and carrying those insights forward in ways that matter.



## Mike Bonner

Head, Canadian Personal & Business Banking Distribution

It is a privilege and an honour to contribute to BMO's reconciliation efforts alongside colleagues, partners, and Indigenous communities across the country. This work carries responsibility and continues to reinforce the importance of learning, listening, and approaching our role with humility and respect.

We are supported in this work by teams dedicated to serving the distinct needs of Indigenous clients and communities. Through our dedicated Indigenous trust team and specialized Indigenous wealth team, we aim to provide advice and services that are relationship-based, responsive, and aligned with long-term financial well-being.

As Co-Chair of BMO's Indigenous Advisory Council, I have deeply valued the insight and perspectives shared by Council members. Their guidance continues to inform our thinking and reinforces the value of listening as part of responsible leadership.

BMO is proud of our multi-year Gold-level Partnership Accreditation in Indigenous Relations (PAIR) by the Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB), and in being named to the *10 to Watch List* by the Indigenomics Institute, recognizing progress in supporting Indigenous economic participation. These recognitions reflect the collective efforts of teams across the bank and the trust placed in us by Indigenous businesses and communities. We understand that while recognition is meaningful, and the progress we've made signals movement forward, the work is not complete, and we remain committed to the continued and ongoing responsibility of reconciliation.

The people and organizations featured in this report are breaking down barriers and leading important work in sustainability, language revitalization, respectful land use, and more. Their stories highlight the leadership and resilience of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island.

# Indigenous Advisory Council – Driving Meaningful Change at BMO

The Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) is a cornerstone of BMO’s commitment to reconciliation, consistent learning and Indigenous inclusion. Formed in 2020 as the first council of its kind among major Canadian financial institutions, it brings together respected leaders and changemakers from First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and organizations across the country. The lived experience, cultural insight and collective wisdom of the members, provide essential guidance, ensuring programs and services are inclusive, culturally grounded and aligned with community priorities.

By embedding Indigenous perspectives into day-to-day operations, the Council helps shape programs, services and practices rooted in respect, humility and shared purpose. This collaboration stands as a transformative partnership, not simply an advisory one. The IAC sparks innovation, opening new pathways for economic empowerment, leadership development and broader prosperity for Indigenous Peoples.

Through this partnership, BMO continues to advance its commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action 92 by strengthening relationships grounded in trust, Indigenous perspectives, and a shared vision. Together, we are shaping a future where Indigenous voices guide progress, and financial institutions act as trusted partners.

The IAC’s impact is reflected in the progress achieved to date. Their commitment elevates BMO’s approach to reconciliation, delivering meaningful outcomes for Indigenous employees, clients and communities. We respect this partnership and remain committed to listening, learning and moving forward together with humility and respect.

Together, we are creating a future where Indigenous perspectives guide progress, business practices reflect inclusion, and financial institutions stand as true partners in advancing equity and reconciliation.

## Membership

The IAC recently named Nadir André (Partner, JFK Law LLP) as co-chair. Mike Bonner, BMO’s Head, Canadian Personal & Business Banking Distribution, and Head of BMO’s Enterprise Indigenous Strategy, remains as co-chair. The IAC continues to be sponsored by Sharon Haward-Laird, Group Head, Canadian Commercial Banking & North American Integrated Solutions, and Co-Head, Canadian Personal & Commercial Banking. BMO sincerely thanks all current and former IAC members for offering their insight, experience and continued wisdom.

## Internal IAC members



**Sharon Haward-Laird**  
Executive Sponsor,  
Indigenous Advisory  
Council



**Mike Bonner**  
Co-chair, Indigenous  
Advisory Council



**Dan Adams**  
Secretary,  
Indigenous Advisory  
Council

## From Dialogue to Impact: Partnerships with Purpose

**Giig’doo’win wii Moosh’  
chi’gaa’de: Tkob’ji’gem’gag  
temgad Nji** ANISHINAABEMOWIN

As President & CEO of the Canadian Council for Indigenous Business, and a proud member of Nipissing First Nation, I have witnessed firsthand how meaningful change begins when Indigenous voices are not only heard but trusted to help shape the path forward. BMO’s Indigenous Advisory Council reflects this commitment – bringing together leaders whose lived experience and insight guide the bank’s reconciliation and economic inclusion efforts.



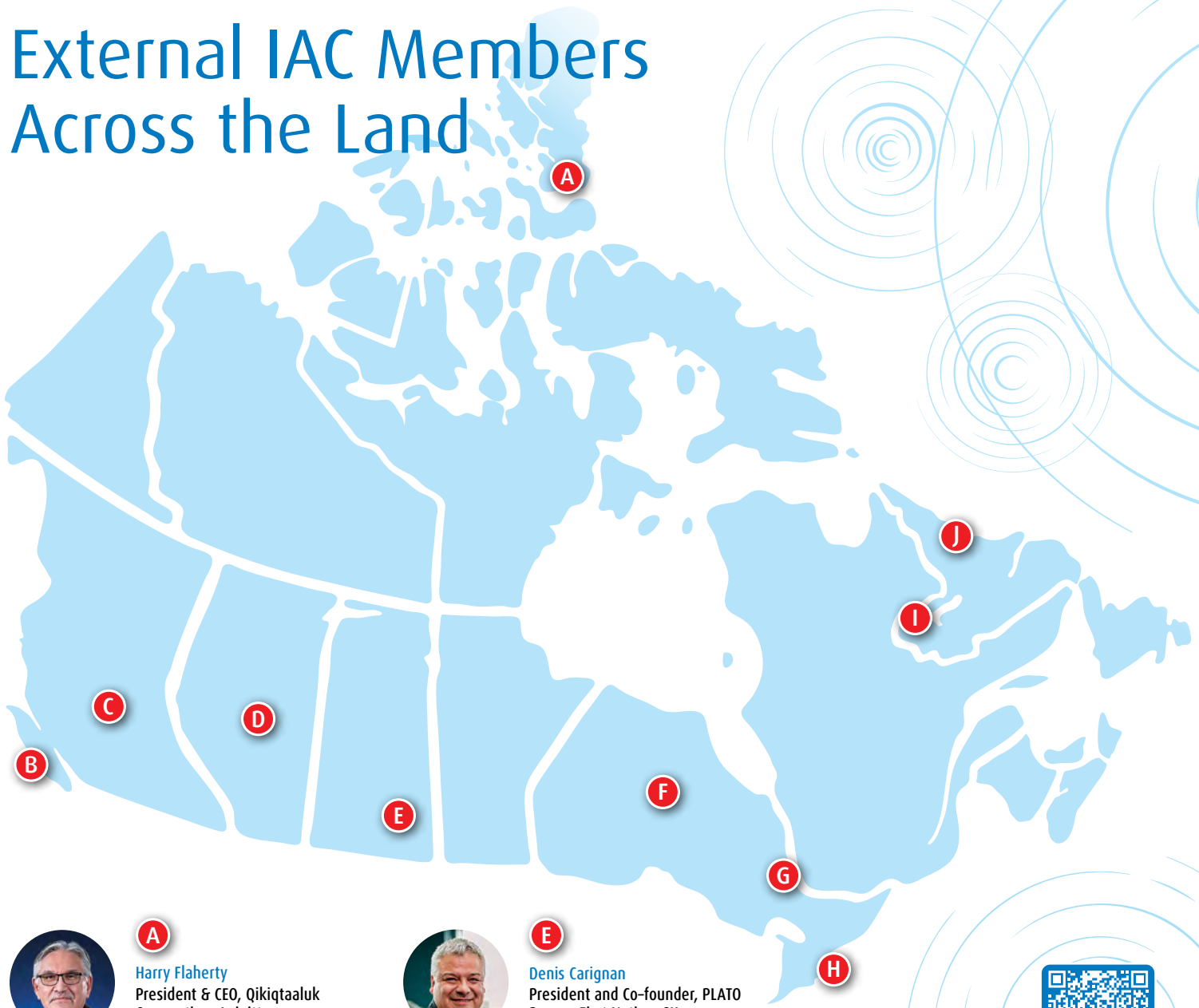
Indigenous businesses are driving innovation and growth, creating significant economic impacts across Turtle Island. When financial institutions listen, learn, and work in true partnership with Indigenous communities, leaders, and businesses, the result is more than progress – it is a model for shared prosperity built on respect and accountability. BMO’s ongoing work, from tailored banking solutions to procurement, partnerships, and investment initiatives, demonstrates what is possible when Indigenous perspectives inform every step.

Reconciliation is not a destination, but a continuous journey – one that requires truth, transparency, and the courage to address systemic barriers. Economic empowerment is central to this journey. By supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs and fostering opportunities for inclusion, we build a stronger, more resilient economy for all.

I am proud to contribute to this important work, and I encourage others to join in advancing partnerships grounded in humility, accountability, and a shared purpose. Together, we can move closer to a reality where Indigenous economic success is not an exception, but an expectation.

**Tabatha Bull,**  
President & CEO, Canadian Council  
for Indigenous Business

# External IAC Members Across the Land



**A**

**Harry Flaherty**  
President & CEO, Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, Ajujittuq (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ), Nunavut



**E**

**Denis Carignan**  
President and Co-founder, PLATO Pasqua First Nation, SK



**B**

**Carol Anne Hilton**  
Founder and CEO, The Indigenomics Institute Hesquiaht Nation, BC



**F**

**Denise Baxter**  
Vice-Provost of Indigenous Initiatives at Lakehead University. Marten Falls First Nation, ON



**C**

**Chief Willie Sellars**  
Williams Lake First Nation, BC



**G**

**Tabatha Bull**  
President & CEO, Canadian Council for Indigenous Business Nipissing First Nation, ON



**D**

**Sarah Midanik**  
President & CEO of the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, Métis citizen from St. Albert, AB



**H**

**Jennifer Harper**  
Anishinaabe Entrepreneur, Founder and CEO, Cheekbone Beauty Cosmetics, St. Catharines, ON



**I**

**Nadir André**  
Partner/Lawyer JFK Law LLP Innu Nation of Matimekush-Lac John, QC



**J**

**Hilda Letemplier**  
President, Pressure Pipe Procurement & Management Services and Northern Oxygen Ltd. Nunatsiavut, Labrador



Learn more about the IAC



# Three Pillars to Boldly Grow the Good

BMO continues its commitment to a society with Zero Barriers to Inclusion. Guided by the pillars of Education, Employment, and Economic Empowerment, our work supports reconciliation and responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action. Progress is measured through tangible outcomes as reflected in the indicators reported for the past year.



## EDUCATION

BMO delivered 17 internal training events, reaching 1,376 employees. Sessions

focused on Indigenous cultural competency, history, and inclusion; advancing education as part of a foundation for Zero Barriers to Inclusion.

In addition, more than 32,000 BMO employees have participated in Nisitohamowin, an Indigenous-informed eLearning course, developed with First Nations University of Canada, that introduces Indigenous history and lived experience to support understanding and reconciliation.

BMO hosted 19 external financial education sessions, engaging 692 youth and adult participants, supporting access to practical financial knowledge through community-based education.

Indigenous BMO SmartProgress™ is a free, customized digital education program, that builds financial knowledge through short, self-paced learning modules aligned to Indigenous priorities and pathways to economic empowerment. The program facilitated 1,718 program users.

\$21.1 million in ongoing pledges has been committed by BMO in support of Indigenous causes across Canada which span up to 2028. This includes \$10.6 million for education, including scholarships and bursaries, \$3.6 million for culture and community initiatives, and \$6.9 million for hospital, health and wellness priorities. During fiscal 2025, \$3.8 million of these commitments was funded.



## EMPLOYMENT

Indigenous employees enrolled in BMO's Miikana Career Pathways

Program are retained at 4.45 times the rate of those who do not participate in the program.

Over the past five years, trends indicate positive career progression outcomes for Indigenous employees. Since the introduction of the dedicated Indigenous Inclusion team and the Miikana Career Pathways Program, representation has shifted toward higher job grades, with notable increases in middle and senior roles, while maintaining a strong early-career pipeline through continued hiring and development.

In 2025, the Indigenous Speaker Series delivered workshops on topics identified by Indigenous employees, supporting connection, learning and belonging.

BMO's Indigenous talent acquisition efforts were grounded in meaningful partnerships with Indigenous organizations and expanded awareness of potential career pathways. By engaging Indigenous youth early, before major academic decisions were made, BMO increased the visibility of opportunities across all career stages.

BMO Sharing Circle Employee Resource Group is a community of Indigenous employees and allies that advocates for Indigenous inclusion while fostering learning, understanding and celebration of Indigenous cultures and histories.



## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

\$281 million in authorized loans has been provided

through BMO's On-Reserve Housing Loan Program, supporting housing across 113 Indigenous communities.

More than 300 Indigenous communities across Canada trust BMO with their banking relationships, reflecting the breadth of BMO's engagement with Indigenous governments and organizations nationwide.

\$18 billion in Indigenous banking services has been extended to clients, supporting economic self-determination through partnerships with Indigenous communities across Canada and maintaining momentum achieved in previous years.

\$45.5 million was spent in fiscal 2025 directly with certified Indigenous-owned businesses, reflecting continued focus on Indigenous supplier engagement.

As of December 31, 2025, the BMO Indigenous Entrepreneurs Program supported more than 200 participants, by providing access to tailored banking solutions for Indigenous-owned businesses.

In 2025, the Indigenous Banking Unit marked 33 years of providing dedicated financial programs, services and strategic leadership to support the economic prosperity of Indigenous communities, governments, individuals and businesses across Canada.

All statistics noted on this page are as at October 31, 2025, unless otherwise stated.



# Leading with Purpose in Indigenous Banking

## Gidi li bank Otoktonne kank sa sé divou ksa san vâ

MICHIF FRENCH

Danny Menard's story begins in Dauphin, MB, a prairie town rich in culture and heritage. Growing up among First Nations and Métis peoples gave Danny an early understanding and appreciation for the vital role Indigenous economies play in shaping vibrant communities. It was more than geography; it was a foundation for a life dedicated to connection, empowerment and reconciliation.

After high school, Danny moved to Winnipeg to play Junior A hockey for a team owned by several First Nations communities. This special experience allowed him to participate in cultural events and deepen his connection to Indigenous traditions.

When he returned home, Danny traded his hockey stick for a calculator, launching his career as a junior accountant. He worked with local firms specializing in auditing First Nations governments. For four years, Danny traveled across the province, building trust and relationships. During this time, he met his wife, a teacher in one of the communities he served, cementing a personal connection to the work that had become his calling.

Danny's journey took a profound turn in his mid-20s when, following the passing of his grandfather, he reclaimed his Métis heritage. Recognized as a Métis citizen by the Northwest Métis Council, he embraced his identity and accepted a leadership role within the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). There, he developed expertise in strategic planning, budget management, and team leadership - expertise that prepared him for the next chapter of his career.

**"Building trust and creating opportunities for Indigenous communities isn't just part of my job - it's my purpose."**

- Danny Menard

In 2005, Danny joined BMO as a Commercial Account Manager. His talent for delivering exceptional client experiences and growing his portfolio led to progressive leadership roles across Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Leading the Prairies Region, he guided his team from the bottom quartile to one of the top-performing groups nationally, demonstrating his vision and leadership.

"In my role as Head of BMO's Indigenous Banking Unit, my journey has come full circle," Danny says. "I'm proud of the work our team is doing to support Indigenous clients and communities as they pursue their goals and opportunities."

**"We are always happy to celebrate the accomplishments of our Citizens, and Danny's remarkable journey is clearly worth celebration. The Red River Métis have always been business-minded people, and Danny's career path, driven by his work ethic, is proof that our Ancestors' values live on in our people today. On behalf of the Nation, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Danny on his successes, past, present and future."**

- David Chartrand, President of the Manitoba Métis Federation, the National Government of the Red River Métis

One of Danny's most meaningful career milestones was leading the sale of BMO's historic Winnipeg Main Branch building at Portage and Main to the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF). More than a real estate transaction, it symbolized reconciliation and economic empowerment, creating a space for Métis heritage to thrive in the heart of Winnipeg.

# Reflections

Reflections invites us to pause, look back with gratitude, and to respect the relationships, stories, and commitments that continue to shape our shared path forward. In revisiting the voices and experiences featured in past reports, we recognize that these stories did not end on the page. They represent living partnerships rooted in trust, reciprocity, and the understanding that meaningful progress unfolds over time, with care, intention, and humility. Let's paddle back and explore the work that is continuing today...



## Membertou

### Egtotem oasogetesimot MI'KMAW

*Update to story from 2021 wíchitowin*

For more than three decades, Membertou has been building an economic model grounded in ownership, long-term planning, and community benefit. What began as an effort to reduce dependency has grown into a diverse portfolio of businesses, real estate developments, and housing initiatives that continue to shape the community's future.

Since the 2021 report, that work has continued to expand. "We're diversifying in three main areas," says Mike McIntyre, Membertou's Chief Financial Officer. "Investment income, real estate development, and housing. Those are all happening at the same time."

One of the largest recent projects is the development of new port infrastructure. "By dollar value, the New Dock is probably the biggest project," he says. Alongside that, Membertou has completed several real estate developments that have attracted

businesses from outside the community, increasing local economic activity and employment.

"At this point, we're seeing something really important," Mike says. "We have engineers, accountants, pharmacists working right here in the community. Kids are seeing those careers as possibilities." He notes that young community members are gaining experience through summer jobs and professional roles tied to businesses operating on reserve. "That exposure matters. It changes how young people think about their future."

"Housing on reserve has been one of our biggest focus areas," Mike says. "It's not just about building homes. It's about stability, pride, and giving people a reason to stay and invest in the community."

Throughout this journey, access to long-term, flexible financing has been critical. "What we've always appreciated is working with partners like BMO, who understand the substance of what we're doing," Mike says. "As we've taken on larger, more complex projects, that support has stayed consistent."

"This isn't about one deal or one project," he adds. "It's about changing what's possible, not just for us, but for the next generation."



Photo: Eden Photography

## The Canadian Canoe Museum

### Canadian Chiimaan gawabindeigaigk ANISHINAABEMOWIN

*Update to story from 2022 wicshitowin*

Since opening its new home on the shores of Little Lake in 2024, The Canadian Canoe Museum has welcomed more than 116,000 visitors. “Our goal is to create a warm, welcoming, really accessible place,” says Executive Director Carolyn Hyslop, “where people feel comfortable coming in and having conversations.”

That approach is shaping how the BMO Financial Group Research and Knowledge Centre at the museum is used today. This key space supports visiting Indigenous knowledge-holders, researchers, and makers who spend time with the collection, the archives, and with one another. During a recent ‘Builders in Residence’ program, canoe and kayak builders used the centre to explore historic publications, photographs, and records connected to their own families and regions, bringing that knowledge back into their work.

The museum is home to the world’s largest collection of canoes, kayaks, and paddled watercraft, which it describes as being held in trust. Its work is grounded in collaboration with Indigenous Nations and communities connected to these vessels, with the museum continuing to support dialogue, exhibit development, and care practices that reflect those relationships. This approach remains central as the museum welcomes the public into its new space.

The museum sees this work as ongoing. “Come in,” Carolyn says. “Come and meet us. Come and visit with these canoes and kayaks. Let’s get to know one another.”



Photo: Lisa Stimmer-Kun

## Winnipeg Art Gallery

### ᑭᓇᐃᓕᐃᓕᐃᓕᐃᓕᐃᓕ INUKTITUT

*Update to story from 2022 wicshitowin*

Since the opening of Qaumajuq, the Inuit art centre at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the museum has continued to shape how Indigenous art is experienced, shared, and cared for in this public space. Home to the world’s largest public collection of contemporary Inuit art, Qaumajuq was conceived as a place of connection, dialogue, and learning, made possible through the support of partners, including a significant contribution from BMO.

For Julia Lafreniere, Head of Indigenous Ways and Partnerships, that purpose remains clear. “It’s a community space, essentially,” she says. “The artwork doesn’t belong to us. We’re here to uplift it and highlight it for the community.” Alongside the artworks in the Gallery’s renowned collection, Qaumajuq currently cares for a significant number of pieces on long-term loan from the Government of Nunavut. Those loaned works will eventually return home. “We’ll take care of it while it’s here,” Julia adds, emphasizing that stewardship is temporary and rooted in responsibility, not ownership.

Programming at Qaumajuq continues to reflect that approach, with school tours, community gatherings, and language-based experiences that invite visitors to engage with art as a way of understanding the world today. “It’s not about us explaining or educating,” Julia says. “It’s about coming together, starting a discussion, collaborating, and learning from each other.”

That invitation remains central as Qaumajuq continues to welcome communities into the space.

# Building the Future Together

Netsah hoonzoo  
ti ts'aholhtsilh

DEKELH (CARRIER)

The Ulkatcho First Nation strengthens long-term prosperity through meaningful Public-Private-Community Partnerships (PPCP). These alliances are marked by several firsts, including what is described as Canada's largest 100% community-owned off-grid solar project, and the first ever Community Electricity Purchase Agreement with BC Hydro.



Photo: Wildstone Construction Group

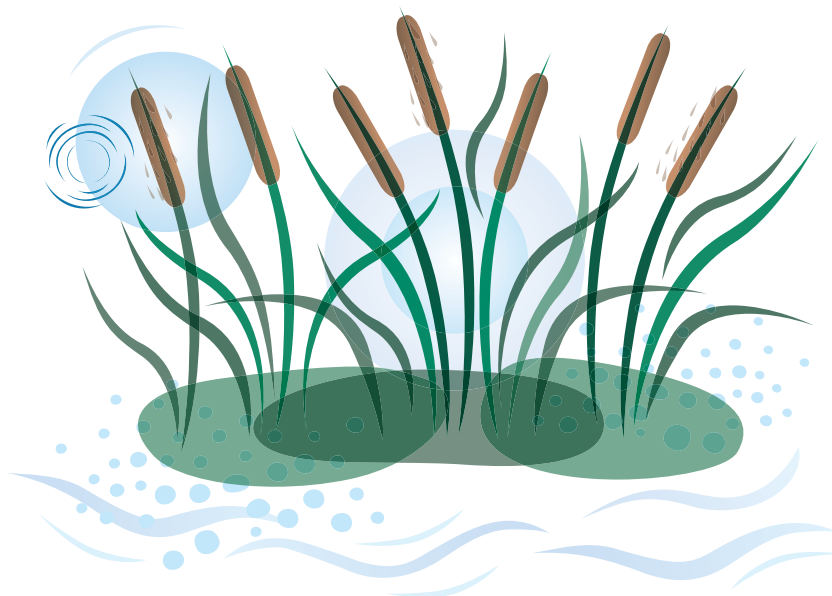
On the former sawmill grounds in Anahim Lake, in British Columbia's interior, on land that once supported the Ulkatcho First Nation's (UFN) forestry mill, new infrastructure is rising with purpose. Where stacks of timber once stood, solar panels now line the open field. The shift is more than operational; it reflects the UFN Leadership's strategic decision to diversify the economic base for long-term financial stability.

This move began as the forestry sector in BC faced prolonged challenges. The Nation's leadership recognized that relying on a single sector would not support sustainable growth. "Anahim Lake is remote, and opportunities are limited," says Stephen James, CEO of the Ulkatcho Group of Companies (UGoC). "We needed to explore alternatives that aligned with the UFN's long-term interests."

Early discussions with BC Hydro in 2019 led to a deliberate, relationship-driven development process – one shaped by several significant firsts. Operationally, the Anahim Lake Solar Project required customized engineering to integrate solar generation, battery storage, and backup diesel within a remote microgrid. Economically, the solar project introduces a new revenue model, creating a long-term revenue source for the Ulkatcho Energy Corporation (UEC), one of the subsidiaries of the UGoC, which is 100 per cent owned by the UFN. Relationally, the project reflects the Nation's commitment to transparency, collaboration and doing the work with care and integrity. "We had the right partners, and the result stayed true to the original vision," says Stephen.

The importance of the project to the Community was underscored on June 11, 2025, when a large number of the Nation's members attended the Groundbreaking celebrations, demonstrating strong pride and support.

Throughout the project, new and innovative relationships supported the work of the PPCP. Reflecting on the long-standing banking relationship between the UGoC and BMO, Stephen says that the UGoC takes great pride in considering BMO as a "trusted Alliance Partner in the UFN's economic



**"Anahim Lake is remote, and opportunities are limited. We needed to explore alternatives that aligned with the UFN's long-term interests."**

– Stephen James  
CEO of the Ulkatcho  
Group of Companies  
(UGoC).

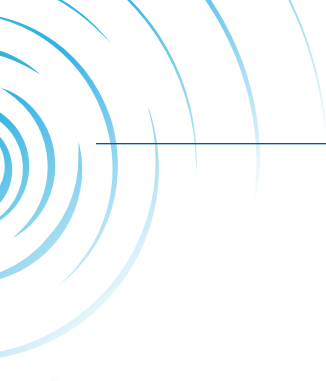
development ... and places significant value in that relationship." His comment points to years of steady relationship-building between the UGoC and BMO that enabled the organization to position the Nation to pursue new opportunities with confidence.

One of the project's most valuable legacies will be in the lessons learned. Working with the University of Victoria, the UEC is documenting how the solar project was built: with trusted partners, collaboration, and a willingness to learn together. The Nation is ensuring that the whole experience, including what worked well, what was difficult, and what mattered most, is documented so it can assist other First Nations.

The Anahim Lake Solar Project shows what is possible when vision, patience, and strong relationships move in the same direction. It reflects years of careful decision-making, ensuring partners with aligned values, and a clear commitment to creating opportunity for future generations.

The project is becoming more than a local achievement – it is being nationally recognized as a model that can help other First Nations create similar pathways in exploring their own clean-energy futures.





After decades operating a vessel built in 1987, Qikiqtaaluk Corporation (QC) is preparing for a carefully planned transition. A new offshore trawler, *Saputi II*, will soon replace the aging vessel, bringing advanced processing systems, expanded on-board capacity and new opportunities for the people who depend on the fishery for their livelihoods.

“I think the crew are anxious to step on a fresh new fishing vessel in the coming months,” says Peter Keenainak, QC Vice-President, “It will be a refreshing change.”

The shift, however, is not simply about new equipment. It reflects years of work to ensure that fishing access, processing capacity and crew readiness move forward together.

Achieving this alignment required navigating significant financial and operational complexity, particularly as QC invested in a new vessel built overseas and pursued the acquisition of additional fishing quotas. BMO was pleased to support QC through this transition, working alongside the organization as it aligned capital, capacity and long-term goals rooted in Inuit ownership and community benefit.

QC has recently expanded the fishing areas available to its offshore operations through the acquisition of additional quotas. These licences complement harvesting rights already held and allow the fishery to operate at a scale that better matches on-board capability.

For Peter, alignment is essential: not extending time at sea but making each trip more effective by processing more catch within established trip lengths. *Saputi II*, combined with the additional quotas, makes this possible.

Compared with the vessel it replaces, *Saputi II* increases processing and storage capacity by roughly 20 per cent to 30 per cent. Coldwater shrimp (*Pandalus borealis* and *Pandalus montagui*), as well as Greenland halibut (turbot), are fully processed on board.

**“There are two ways people benefit. One is directly, through the work on the vessel. The other is through the company, and what it returns to the Inuit of the region.”**

– Peter Keenainak  
Vice-President,  
Qikiqtaaluk Corporation

**The Qikiqtaaluk Corporation**  
As the Inuit birthright development corporation for the Qikiqtani Region, QC has a responsibility to strengthen the social and economic well-being of Nunavut and the more than 16,000 Inuit it represents. Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) created QC in 1983 as its for-profit development arm.

Alongside increased capacity, *Saputi II* introduces updated technologies that change how work is carried out at sea. Automated systems and advanced equipment support a larger and more specialized crew, expanding the complement by 15 per cent.

New technical and engineering roles are being added, supported by training plans that focus on continuity – building new skills while retaining experienced crew members.

As the operation evolves, the benefits extend well beyond the vessel. Income from the fishery returns to Inuit beneficiaries in two primary ways: through wages and crew shares earned on board, and through dividends paid to the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), which reinvests those funds across the Qikiqtani Region.

That income supports more than individual households. It helps families invest in equipment such as snowmobiles and hunting and harvesting gear that support food security, cultural practices and greater independence for extended families.

Protecting the resources that sustain the fishery remains central to QC’s approach. The company participates in fisheries monitoring and catch-reduction initiatives, including ongoing work related to Greenland shark extruders, which is a device that allows large non-target animals to escape fishing gear. Conservation is not separate from operations; it is essential to ensuring sustainability of the fishery.

Looking ahead, regulatory decisions and fishing conditions will continue to influence each season. Even so, with quotas secured, a new vessel nearing readiness, and training in place, QC is entering its next phase with confidence, focused on continuity, responsibility and returning long-term value to Inuit-led communities grounded in culture and connection to the water.

# A Journey of Growth and Belonging

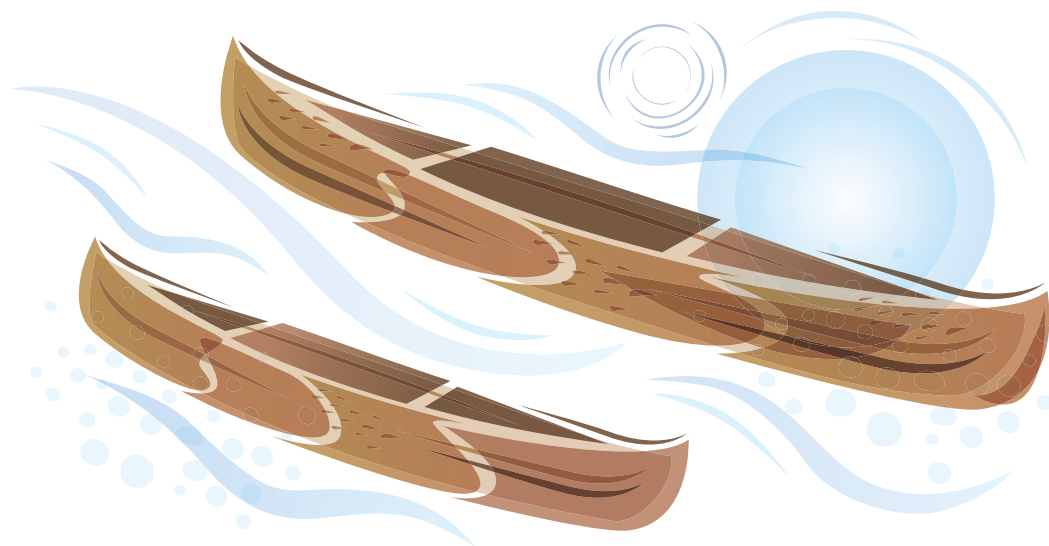
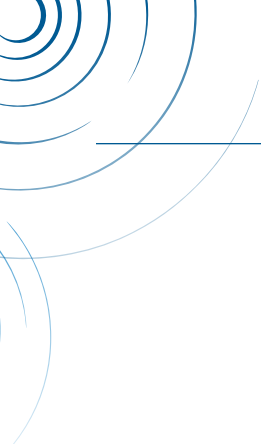
Ma'saad'ming Maa'jiig'win  
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ANISHINAABEMOWIN

Matt Neveu's story is about more than a career. It's about belonging, cultural balance, and the relationships that make work meaningful.



Photo: Kandyce Porter (Matt's Mom)



“When I take part in cultural days, like going hunting, it reminds me who I am,” Matt says. “It’s grounding – three generations hunting together.” For Matt, those moments aren’t separate from his work; they’re part of a life where community and career walk together.

Matt joined BMO more than a decade ago as a Commercial Account Manager and progressed to Vice President, Indigenous Banking Ontario, a journey shaped by mentorship, leadership support, and self-drive. BMO’s Indigenous career development program, Miikana, aligns Indigenous employees with mentors to guide their careers. “My time with my mentor started within my first year at BMO,” Matt recalls. “When I think about pivotal moments, one constant stands out: the guidance and support of a mentor who shaped not only my professional journey but also how I approach teamwork, leadership and community. Their influence has helped me grow into a leader who values collaboration, integrity, and creating meaningful impact beyond the workplace.”

Matt’s story is rooted in relationships. “I find myself to be very good at connecting people,” he shares. “The bank’s a big place. I’m good at dissecting it and speaking to the right people and ensuring others are talking to the right people.” His ability to connect isn’t just professional, it’s personal. “My team knows they can reach out to me anytime,” he says. “That’s important to me.”

**“Advocating for one another and celebrating our wins isn’t just pride, it’s progress, and it’s how we build a legacy of empowerment.”**

– Matt Neveu  
Vice President,  
BMO Indigenous  
Banking Ontario

Matt’s BMO Commercial Bank office is located in the Rankin Reserve of Batchewana First Nation in Ontario – a vibrant Anishinaabe community deeply connected to Lake Superior, known locally in Ojibwe as Gichigami, meaning “Great Sea” or “Big Water.” Batchewana First Nation consists of several communities: Rankin, Goulais Bay, Obadjiwan, and Whitefish Island. Matt’s family is from Goulais Bay, and he emphasizes the importance of BMO supporting Indigenous employees in staying connected to their communities. Working within his community and honouring cultural traditions through flexible work programs like paid cultural days has strengthened his identity and motivation.

Matt has grown into a leadership role where he helps others navigate opportunities, supported by BMO’s Miikana Career Pathways Program and inclusion initiatives. His daily work champions economic empowerment and education, contributing to a workplace that values reciprocity. These programs have helped many Indigenous job seekers and employees at BMO, creating space for stories like Matt’s to flourish.

Matt sees the future as an open path, one where mentorship and cultural respect deepen. “Advocating for one another and celebrating our wins isn’t just pride, it’s progress, and it’s how we build a legacy of empowerment.” His focus remains on building bridges that honour community, foster collaboration, and celebrate shared success.

# Reconciliation at BMO

In 2025, BMO created the Office of Reconciliation to support reconciliation efforts across the organization. The Office advances reconciliation across BMO by strengthening respectful relationships and enabling meaningful, consultative change. Working alongside the Head, Indigenous Strategy, the Office leads the development and execution of BMO's Indigenous Strategy and provides organization-wide leadership and coordination to support its delivery. Working across teams to align efforts, provide guidance and shared tools, and support informed decision-making, the Office helps embed reconciliation into governance, operations, and day-to-day business practices. This work reinforces BMO's long-term focus on accountability, learning, and sustainable value creation.

## Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

BMO's Reconciliation Action Plan brings together our longstanding work with Indigenous clients, employees, communities and businesses into a refined framework that shows how we advance reconciliation across the organization. The plan reflects a commitment to continuous learning, transparency, and accountable action.

Designed as a living document, the Reconciliation Action Plan will evolve over time. Our work will continue to be shaped by Indigenous knowledge and experience, alongside ongoing reflections and emerging needs, helping ensure efforts remain intentional, responsive, coordinated, and focused on meaningful impact. The plan supports thoughtful progress that is grounded in relationships and aligned with consideration for consultative change.

"Accountability and commitment to Indigenous communities, clients and colleagues matters. The RAP gives us shared governance for reconciliation work across the enterprise – clear priorities, clear ownership, and a commitment to track progress and share what we're learning. That's how trust is built."

- Dan Adams, Head, Office of Reconciliation

"This plan is meant to be used – and revisited. We will keep building upon our learning, we will keep listening, and we will adjust our approaches when what we hear and what we learn tells us we should. That's why the RAP is designed to evolve, not sit on a shelf."

- Mike Bonner, Head, Personal & Business Banking Canada;  
Co-Chair BMO Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC),  
Executive Sponsor, BMO Sharing Circle

# Reconciliation Action Plan Overview

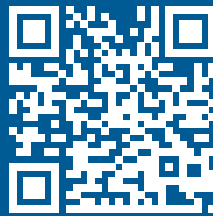
This provides a high-level overview of the plan's core commitments and principles. The full Reconciliation Action Plan is available through the QR code below, offering greater detail on how BMO is coordinating actions, and supporting meaningful reconciliation work across the organization.

## Building Trust

Increase the number of Indigenous communities, individuals, and businesses that trust us through demonstrating reliable and respectful actions.

## Inclusion, Culture, and Community

Strengthen how Indigenous perspectives guide our inclusion practices, workforce development and community giving.



Details on BMO's Reconciliation Action Plan.

## Consistent Learning

Deepen our understanding of Indigenous Peoples across past, present, and future, and support continuous learning in our work.

## Accountable Leadership

Maintain accountable leadership, taking ownership of our actions, embracing humility, and remaining open to change.

# People of the Lake

## Ts'uubaa asatx

DITIDAHT

Ts'uubaa asatx (translation: People of the Lake), situated on Vancouver Island, BC, approached economic development with a long-term vision. The focus was on economic security, succession, and ensuring future generations would have meaningful opportunities within the community. Leadership recognized that this would require intentional decisions and a collective commitment to economic development as the basis for enduring prosperity.



Photo: Ts'uubaa-asatx

These decisions were not taken lightly by past leadership as they required reimagining how the Nation's waterfront, a central part of community life, could also support economic development. The focus was not on exclusivity, but on shared use that respected the community and the lake's cultural and social importance, while remaining welcoming and accessible.

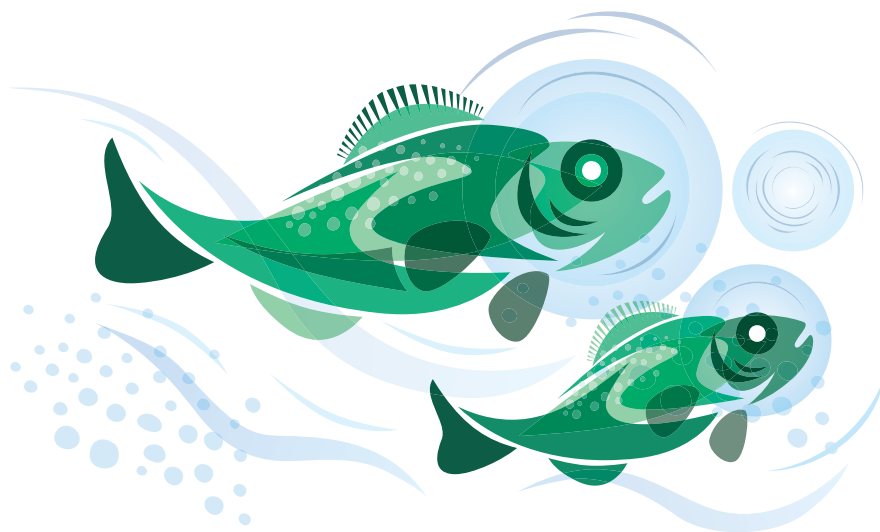
"The Nation sets the parameters, and those are the foundational guideposts we operate within," says Ts'uubaa asatx's Operations Manager, Aaron Hamilton. That clarity enabled the Nation to assemble the right partners and build the internal capacity needed to move forward. Over time, projects were pursued sequentially, each building on the last, with a focus on sustainability and long-term impact.

Lake-based activity became an early focus. The 113-berth marina was identified as a foundational element of the Nation's long-term water development strategy. This approach led to tourism and recreation ventures such as Kaatza Adventures and Watersports, relaunched in 2025 with new powered sports equipment. Together, these initiatives generate economic activity while maintaining public access and reflecting community values.

Residential development moved forward with North Shore Estates, a Nation-led residential development at Cowichan Lake. In this project, Ts'uubaa asatx acts as both landholder and developer, retaining long-term stewardship and control of its lands. The 87 plus residential development delivers market-based housing through a long-term, prepaid head lease model that generates sustainable revenue and taxation to support community priorities. Construction has already begun on phase 3 of the development and home sales are ongoing.

Alongside these initiatives, the Nation expanded into construction and aggregates, strengthened governance through land code adoption and treaty-enabled land control, and invested in projects that support both economic growth and community priorities.

Strong partnerships were essential and trusted financial relationships played an important role, particularly in the early stages, when projects carried higher levels of risk.



**"The Nation sets the parameters—those are the guideposts we operate within."**

— Aaron Hamilton  
Ts'uubaa asatx's  
Operations Manager

"With BMO, it wasn't just a banking relationship; it was an actual relationship that gave us the confidence to move forward, built on trust," Aaron says.

As the economic base grew, so did community infrastructure, investments in public works, including water and sewer upgrades, construction of community buildings and housing. These investments strengthened daily life while supporting broader community priorities, including culture, health and wellbeing.

Economic development has also created pathways to meaningful careers, allowing members to build skills, plan for succession, and remain connected to their community.

The Nation prides itself on not just creating jobs but rather creating careers. This approach supports long-term skills development, succession, and investment in future generations.

Today, Ts'uubaa asatx's economy reflects years of resilience, discipline, and shared purpose. While the projects are diverse, the goal remains the same: long-term economic empowerment rooted in community values.

Ts'uubaa asatx's experience demonstrates that when a community is aligned around a shared vision and committed to working toward common goals, economic opportunity and a strong future are attainable.

# Celebrating 30 Years

In 1995, a pilot project between BMO and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne emerged in response to a long-standing barrier to homeownership on reserve lands. Families faced challenges building or buying homes because land held collectively could not be pledged in the same way as is done with conventional mortgages off-reserve. Together, the partners set a clear goal: to develop financing solutions that respect Indigenous governance and land tenure systems, without federal guarantees or a one-size-fits-all approach.





The program was untested by any Nation or bank at the outset, explains Ron Jamieson, retired Senior Vice-President and founder of the BMO Indigenous Banking Unit 33 years ago. There were questions on both sides. Through dialogue, persistence, and a willingness to build trust over time, a new path took shape – one grounded in mutual respect, cultural understanding, and long-term relationships.

Today, the On-Reserve Housing Loan Program (ORHLP) enables home construction, purchase, refinancing, and renovations, including energy-efficiency upgrades and smaller projects. Each solution is developed in partnership with individual Nations, reflecting local priorities and the distinct needs of each community.

More than a financial tool, the program reflects the resilience of Indigenous Peoples and the trust built through long-term relationships between participating Nations and the bank. For more than 30 years, families have built, purchased, and renovated homes – creating spaces where children can grow, Elders can rest, and traditions can be carried forward.

Over time, access to improved housing has contributed to broader community impacts. Homes designed to meet family needs can support learning, health, and overall wellbeing, offering space for study, rest, and daily routines that strengthen long-term education and health outcomes.

The impact is deeply personal. As Mark Shadeded, Vice President, Indigenous Banking Quebec and Atlantic, recalls:

“In Wemindji, a Cree community on James Bay, a customer became quite emotional, telling me, ‘You don’t understand, this is the first time my children will have their own bedrooms.’ In that moment, I realized it’s not just about business, but making a positive difference in people’s lives.”

As of October 31, 2025, the program supports more than \$281 million in housing loans, reaching

**“If there were no mortgage funds available in Toronto, Vancouver or Halifax, what would you have?” asks retired Senior Vice-President Ron Jamieson. “You certainly wouldn’t have the housing you’ve got right now.”**



Learn more about BMO's Indigenous Banking Services

families in 113 communities. Its ripple effects extend beyond bricks and mortar – strengthening trust, expanding access to financing, and supporting community-driven housing goals.

“We’ve seen meaningful progress in the relationship between banks and on-reserve First Nation communities,” Ron Jamieson says. “It’s much stronger today, and the effect of the program has been significant.”

While the program demonstrates what is possible when trust and community-designed solutions align, significant housing challenges remain for many Nations. Addressing those realities will continue to require sustained partnership, investment, and respect for Indigenous-led approaches to housing.

Grounded in the resilience of Indigenous Peoples and guided by community-designed approaches, BMO will continue partnering with Nations to expand housing solutions. The ongoing goal is to support safe and welcoming homes for qualified families in participating communities, while continuing to build futures rooted in respect and collaboration.



**Interviewed for this story Ron Jamieson (Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River), a recipient of the Order of Canada, was a central figure in the ORHLP development. He**

**became the first Indigenous person appointed to an executive position in a major chartered bank when he joined BMO in 1992 to lead its newly created Indigenous Banking Unit (formerly Aboriginal Banking Unit) which he led for 13 years. Ron and his team’s efforts were considered transformative and innovative.**

# Built with Care

## Kakin-kuc e stswells

SECWEPEMCTSIN, SPLATSIN DIALECT

Rooted in Sustainability and Resilience: Developed over nearly a decade, Splatsin Homes grew through careful decision-making focused on sustainability, long-term performance, and approaches to housing that reflect the priorities of the communities it serves.

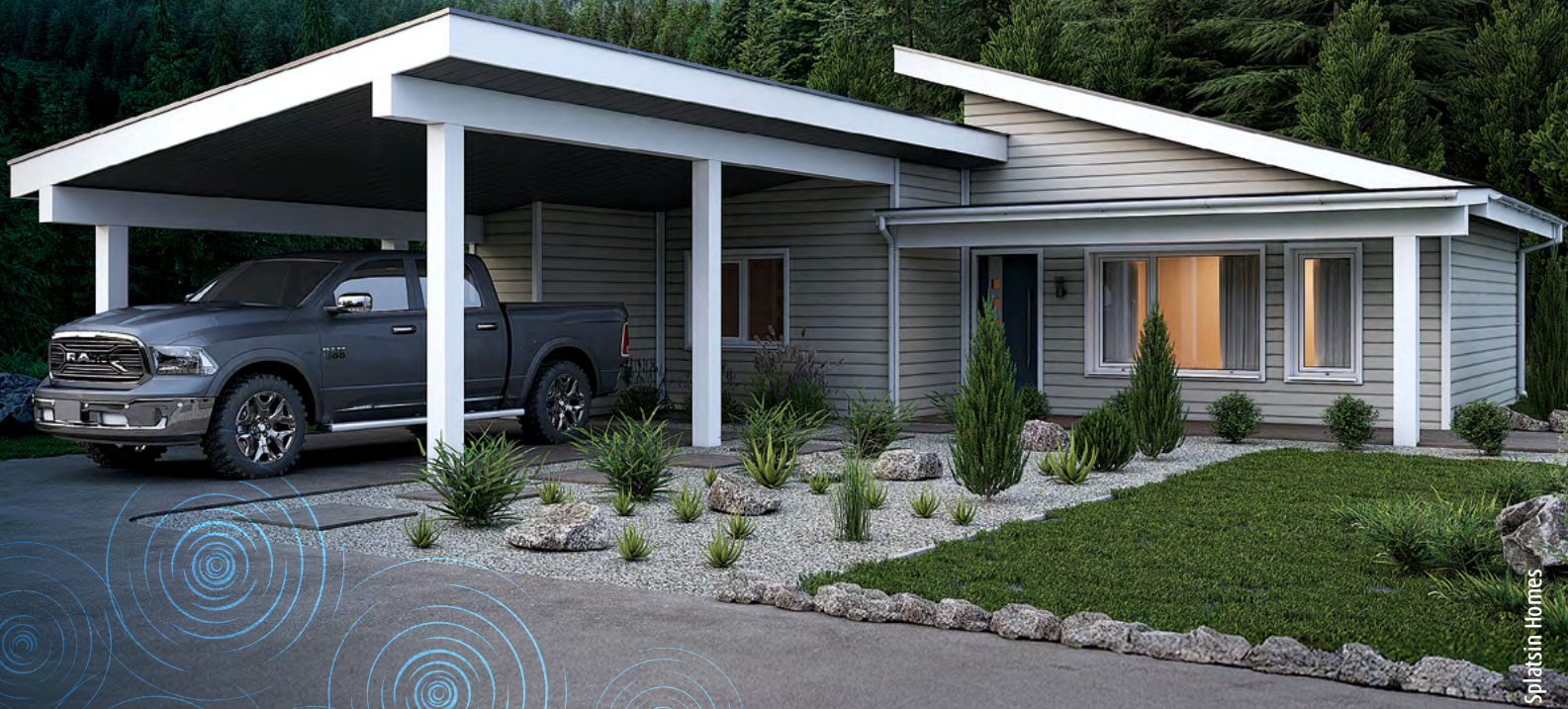


Photo: Splatsin Homes

From the beginning, sustainability guided decisions about materials and construction, reflecting a longstanding responsibility the Splat-sinac (Splat-sin People) carry as caretakers of land and resources for future generations. That understanding informs decisions across Splat-sin Development Corporation (SDC) and extends directly to its housing subsidiary, Splat-sin Homes.

In the Southern Interior of BC, Splat-sin Homes constructs new housing using prefabricated insulated panels built with Quad-Lock and Airfoam technology. The panels arrive flat-packed and are quick to assemble on site. This approach reduces waste and shortens construction timelines, offering an option that works well for communities with limited building seasons or ongoing housing pressures.

“Splat-sin Homes has been in the works for almost ten years,” says Ken Barnes, Marketing & Communications, Splat-sin Development Corporation, describing a process shaped by setbacks, supplier changes, and a determination to get it right. Time was spent finding materials and partners that put sustainability first, while ensuring the homes would be durable and efficient to assemble. Throughout this evolution, SDC has worked with BMO for its banking needs, allowing the focus to remain on long-term planning and delivery.

Splat-sin Homes’ insulated panel system creates well-sealed, energy-efficient building envelopes. The technology offers mold resistance and reduced shipping weight, making transportation more feasible across a wide range of locations. Fire resistance emerged as an added benefit. With the community having experienced wildfires firsthand, Splat-sin Homes understands why their homes must perform under environmental stress. Together, these characteristics contribute to homes that are sustainable, durable, and responsive to their surroundings.

Once materials arrive on site, homes can often be completed in six to eight weeks, depending on the model. For communities facing short construction windows or remote conditions, that timeline can make a meaningful difference. Several models



**Using prefabricated insulated panels that arrive flat-packed, Splat-sin Homes can shorten construction timelines and reduce waste – an approach that works well where building seasons are limited or housing pressures are urgent.**

are available, ranging from one-to three-bedroom designs, with fixtures and finishes that allow communities to choose configurations that meet their needs.

Splat-sin Homes is designed for communities seeking practical, resilient housing solutions rooted in sustainability. Its market includes both Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities that need durable, efficient homes, as well as anyone seeking affordable, well-insulated designs that are fire-, insect-, and mold-resistant, plus quick to assemble.

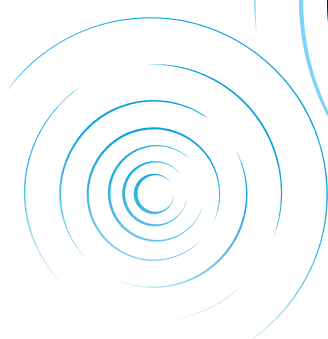
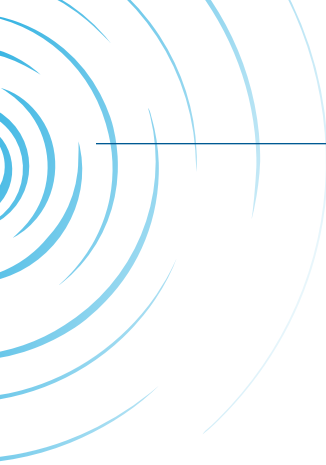
For Splat-sin Homes, knowledge sharing is as important to producing a quality product. Communities may choose to have homes built for them, or they may choose training that allows community members to learn how to build the homes themselves, either at the manufacturing facility or directly on site. This approach gives participants hands-on construction experience and skills that remain within the community after the initial builds.

Trust, Ken says, grows through experience. People may be cautious about new building approaches, but confidence builds when communities can see homes in place, lived in, and performing as expected over time. Over the next three to five years, the goal is to see 200 to 500 homes built – enough that communities across the region can point to completed homes as lived examples of what Splat-sin Homes can deliver.

# Weaving a Basket of Belonging

How an Abenaki-named fund is strengthening connection and opportunity at Bishop's University – gathering space for Indigenous student success.





Bishop’s University in Sherbrooke, QC, has invested for years in creating a welcoming, culturally aligned environment for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students. The new Abaznoda BMO Fund strengthens this work by enabling the university to do more of what Indigenous students identify as essential for their success. It helps reduce financial pressures, expands culturally grounded initiatives, and strengthens environments where students feel safe and able to succeed.

The \$200,000 fund, spread over four years, will assist with a focus on strengthening initiatives that foster belonging, empowerment, and academic success for Indigenous students. Most of the funds will be directed toward land-based programming rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, awareness-raising activities that promote understanding across the university community, and personal and professional development opportunities. Together, these initiatives create inclusive spaces, strengthen cultural identity, and empower Indigenous students throughout their academic journey.

The word Abaznoda emerges from careful consultation with Abenaki-speaking community members and language advisors. Because the Abenaki language is endangered, selecting a term requires time, respect, and collaboration. When Elders and language keepers confirmed that Abaznoda translates literally to tree basket, the meaning resonated. “It is fantastic,” says Vicky Boldo, Director, Indigenous Initiatives & Intercultural Resources at Bishop’s University, “because the black ash basket is such a big part of Abenaki culture –

**“It is fantastic, because the black ash basket is such a big part of Abenaki culture – and baskets carry what needs to be carried.”**

– Vicky Boldo  
Director, Indigenous Initiatives & Intercultural Resources, Bishop’s University

**Language Note:**  
In keeping with the nature of the work described and the breadth of Indigenous languages it supports, the title of this story has not been translated into a single Indigenous language.

and baskets carry what needs to be carried.” The name reflects the essence of the fund, created to support First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in ways that allow them to thrive, and aligns with Bishop’s commitment to honouring the Abenaki people on whose territory the university stands.

For Vicky, the fund already makes long-standing hopes possible. “This is a dream that is like a seed planted when I got here,” she says, “that we would be able to do proper land-based retreats with the students – get out on the land, away from the cerebral academics, and go out to the real university.” With additional funds now available through Abaznoda, that vision took shape during a recent three-day winter retreat where students lived in yurts and reconnected with land, responsibility, and one another. “A big part of the experience was the experience,” she adds.

These reflections highlight the core purpose of Bishop’s programming: Land-based activities enable cultural resurgence and community building; awareness-raising events foster understanding; and financial resources help relieve pressures that can interrupt academic pathways. Guided by Indigenous staff and local knowledge keepers, these initiatives deepen belonging, identity, and academic success.

The Abaznoda Fund builds on efforts already underway at Bishop’s, helping Indigenous students feel seen and connected as they pursue their studies and shape their futures. It is one more step toward ensuring Indigenous learners can thrive on their own terms, in a place that respects who they are and who they are becoming.

# Where Words Flow

For many Indigenous Peoples, the disruption of language across generations has had lasting impacts on identity, culture, pride, and connection.



University  
of Regina

Photo: Regina University

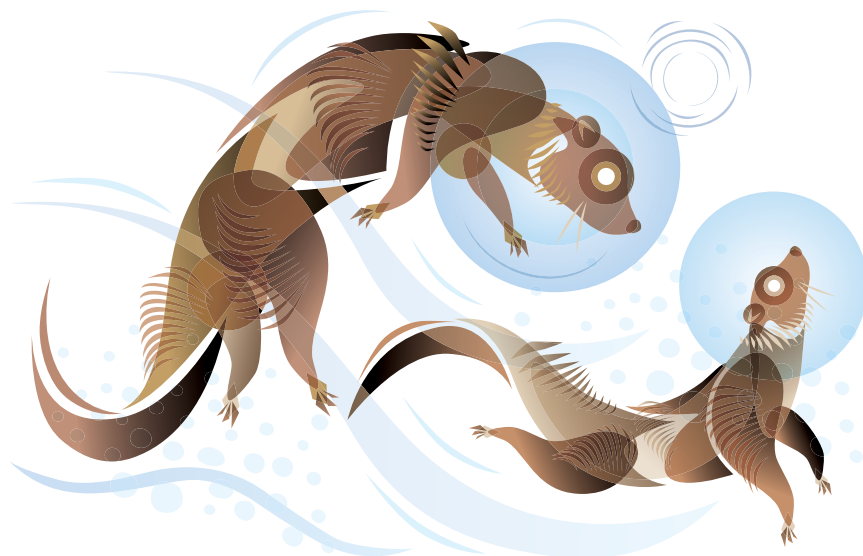
With support from BMO, the University of Regina Press (URP) is undertaking a multi-year initiative to strengthen Indigenous language learning resources and improve access to materials that support language learning and reclamation.

Across the country, many Indigenous Peoples are seeking ways to reconnect with their languages, an important source of identity, belonging, and connection. In Saskatchewan, the University of Regina Press is supporting this work by expanding and updating learning materials for several Indigenous languages, including Cree, Swampy Cree, Blackfoot, Nakota, Ojibwe, and Dene.

According to those involved with the work, many communities are navigating language learning and reclamation with limited or outdated resources. In response, the work focuses on practical, learner-centred tools that are easier to use and more widely available. The goal is to support people at different stages of learning and help language move beyond classrooms into everyday life.

A significant component of the work includes strengthening and expanding Indigenous language learning resources, with a focus on making materials clearer, more consistent, and easier for learners to use. Alongside print publications, the initiative also recognizes that written materials alone are not always enough. Supporting tools that allow learners to hear and experience language in use can play an important role in building understanding, confidence, and connection.

The resources being developed are intended to be used beyond formal learning settings. By creating materials that are relevant, approachable, and adaptable, the work aims to support language learning in homes, schools, and communities alike. Over time, these resources are meant to grow with learners and help ensure Indigenous languages remain present, used, and passed on across generations.



**“The initiative focuses on practical, learner-centred resources designed to support Indigenous language learning in everyday life – in homes, schools, and communities.”**

**– Claudia Whitehawk**  
Former Language Teacher,  
Current Development Officer  
with the University of  
Regina Advancement Unit

**Language Note:**

In keeping with the nature of the work described and the breadth of Indigenous languages it supports, the title of this story has not been translated into a single Indigenous language.

A \$150,000 contribution from BMO, provided over three years, is supporting the development, printing, and distribution of these resources. For Claudia Whitehawk, a former Language Teacher, current Development Officer with the University Advancement Unit, and a member of the Cote First Nation, this support reflects more than financial investment.

“When large corporations support this work, it brings more faith from learners and educators,” she says. “It shows there is real meaning behind the commitment.”

At the heart of the initiative is its impact on learners themselves, particularly those seeking to reconnect with languages that were interrupted in their families. By improving access to relevant, practical learning materials, the work aims to support people as they rebuild confidence and connection through language.

By strengthening the tools available to learners, the University of Regina Press is supporting the continued use of Indigenous languages in everyday life, helping language flow naturally through learning, conversation, and community.

# Opening the Door

Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society: Born from decades of work alongside women at risk, Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society is preparing to open Ontario's first Indigenous-led healing lodge for women in Toronto. Its story is one of persistence, community, and the steady work of building safety where none existed.



Photo: Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society



For years, Patti Pettigrew, a member of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, and Founder and Executive Director at Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society, carried a question she couldn't shake: Where do Indigenous women go when the systems around them cannot meet their needs? Long before Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society existed, Patti worked directly with women facing homelessness, trauma, the justice system, and disconnection from culture. She saw patterns that were impossible to ignore. "There was a gap – a real big gap for women," she says.

"Right now, in the federal institutions, there is an over-representation [of women who are Indigenous]," Patti points out. Indigenous women are more likely to be prosecuted and imprisoned than non-Indigenous people. According to the Office of the Correctional Investigator (2023), Indigenous women make up approximately 50% of the federally incarcerated female population in Canada, despite representing less than 5% of the national population.

The idea of a healing lodge for women exiting the justice system followed Patti for decades. She brought it forward whenever she could, gathering volunteers, raising donations in tin cans at Toronto's Union Station, and talking about it long before it seemed possible. "I was like this squeaky wheel... I know people thought I was nuts," she says. "But I didn't shut up."

When it came time to secure land on which she could realize her dream, she approached more than one financier. Some didn't grasp the vision. But with BMO, she felt understood. "I found BMO was really receptive and understood what I was doing," she says. "Not only did they understand me; they were really encouraging."

With that support, a land purchase at Kingston Road in Scarborough, ON, became real. The long-held vision of Thunder Woman Healing Lodge, carried through countless conversations and years of persistence, finally had a home.

**"There was a gap – a really big gap for women."**

**–Patti Pettigrew  
Founder and Executive Director, Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society, reflecting on years of working alongside Indigenous women navigating homelessness, trauma, and the justice system.**

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The new six-storey lodge at 2217 Kingston Road brings together a Section 81 Healing Lodge, transitional housing, affordable units, and programming under one roof. It is Section 81 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* that provides the authority for women to transition out of the correctional system at Indigenous Healing Lodges. Women with lived experience were invited to review and take part in the design of the Kingston Road facility. Cultural elements were shaped by an Indigenous architect, including a ceremonial room and a front door carved so that entering the building feels like stepping into a tipi.

Programming reflects a balance at Thunder Woman: ceremonies, full moon gatherings, Elders, ribbon skirt making, beading, and cultural teachings alongside counselling, addictions support, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, and mental health supports.

For Patti, this is the core of the work. "When you're traumatized, or commit trauma to someone else, you're pushed out of alignment with your spirit. Culture, through ceremony and healing, brings you back into alignment, so your spirit can come through you and connect to the earth." Patti feels this is the most important component of the journey that participants are on.

As construction of the lodge nears completion and occupancy approaches, succession planning has begun. Patti is straightforward about the last piece she hopes to complete before she steps back.

"We need land outside of the city. We really do because we need a place to take the women for land-based teachings," Patti says. "Once I get that land, I will have done it all."

She hopes Thunder Woman's example will inspire more Healing Lodges across Ontario and beyond so women can access culturally grounded support wherever they live. As of now, Patti continues searching for that special piece of land as Thunder Woman's journey evolves.



Wake the Giant brings together major performers and hands-on mentors – including Taboo of the Black Eyed Peas, Prozzäk, Neon Dreams, Crystal Shawanda, Wyatt C. Louis, G DUBZ, Walking Bear, and The Poets. Visual artists have also collaborated directly with DFCHS students, including Blake Angeconeb, Christian Chapman, and Michah Dowbak (Mad Dog Jones), whose workshop-based student artwork has been used for festival banners and related materials.

Wake the Giant began in 2019 as an initiative of Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School (DFCHS), operated by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council. It was created by teachers, volunteers, and community members in response to challenges students faced as they relocated to the city for school. For many students from remote Northern First Nations, attending high school means leaving home. Each year, students arrive from 23 remote First Nation communities, often leaving behind family, language, culture and familiar supports as they adjust to life in a much larger urban environment.

“They’re leaving everything they know to get an education,” Sean Spenrath, First Nations Student Success Program Coordinator at DFCHS says. “When they get here, rightfully so, they often feel out of place. They don’t feel like this is home.”

There is no professional production company behind Wake the Giant. Instead, it is built year after year through the collective effort of school staff, students, volunteers, artists, and community partners.

The first two days are dedicated to helping students orient themselves to the city through workshops and practical challenges that build confidence, such as using public transit, navigating neighbourhoods, and connecting with organizations and businesses they may rely on during the school year. Peer support is central to this approach.

“We have older students support those who are coming in,” Sean says. “That way, they’re learning with community members they already know.”

During the two-day orientation at the Marina Park, on the Thunder Bay waterfront, students are introduced to the scale of what lies ahead. “That first entrance into the Marina is important,” Sean says. “It’s when students really start to understand what Wake the Giant is.”

**“They’re leaving everything they know to get an education. When they get here, rightfully so, they often feel out of place. They don’t feel like this is home.”**

– Sean Spenrath  
First Nations Student  
Success Program  
Coordinator



On the third day, during the Wake the Giant music festival, BMO volunteers take on a practical role at the front gate and welcome areas, helping manage entry and flow throughout the site as part of a broader volunteer effort supporting a smooth, welcoming experience.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians and visual artists participate not only as performers, but as collaborators and mentors. Many work directly with students throughout the year – writing songs, creating visual art, and contributing artwork that is shared during the festival and used to welcome new students during orientation.

“A lot of the kids end up on stage,” Sean says. “They’re dancing, singing, or joining in during the performances.”

Learning is also woven into the centre of the festival grounds. Between performances, a dedicated area shares educational content that addresses common stereotypes and builds understanding of Indigenous histories and experiences, including residential schools and the Sixties Scoop. The goal, Sean explains, is to help the broader community understand where students are coming from, so that support continues beyond the weekend.

The impact of Wake the Giant extends beyond the festival. One reflection has stayed with Sean since the early years. After the first Wake the Giant, a student shared that it was “just nice to be finally seen as a person.” For organizers, that moment affirmed the purpose of the work.

At its core, Wake the Giant is about creating a place to land – not just for a weekend, but for the years that follow.

# Sharing Tea, Sharing Stories

Siksikimi Ki Atsini'ksin BLACKFOOT

Barhé warhpé yaktâbi Barhé  
Wogichihnagabi STONEY NAKODA

It'ààsítùwà ùwa gúniìzh  
átłoghàts'ilà-hi DENE

At the Calgary Stampede, a Tea Ceremony at Elbow River Camp creates space to honour kinship, foster open dialogue and nurture intentional partnerships. Through sharing tea and stories, relationships are built that extend well beyond the tipi walls.

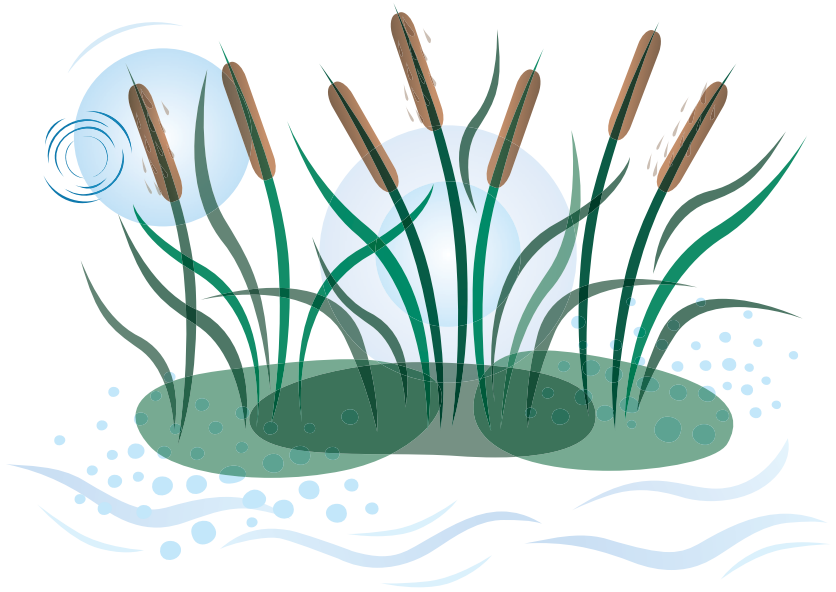


Steam rises as laughter mingles with the spirit of learning and welcome. Inside the tipi, hands pass cups of tea – a gesture carrying generations of meaning. For those gathered, this is a moment of connection and pause, honouring traditions that have endured for centuries.

Amber Big Plume, proud member of the Tsuut'ina Nation, and Interpretive Program Manager at the Elbow River Camp, is the host, and guides the group of BMO employees and guests through stories of welcome, teachings from the Treaty 7 Nations and protocols such as how to enter and leave the tipi. "Respect, kindness, patience and balance are at the heart of the ceremony," Amber shares with us. "Every aspect of the ceremony is deliberate and mindful, allowing space for reflection and connection."

Amber's roots in the Stampede run deep. As Interpretive Program Manager, she creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for visitors from across Canada and the world. Her family tipi has been part of the Elbow River Camp since 1976, marking nearly 50 years of continuous involvement. "Offering tea, especially in our culture, is a way of acknowledging one another as relatives," she explains. "It creates a safe space where everyone can speak openly, honestly and listen with intention." Every gathering is unique, she points out: "There will be no two Tea Ceremonies that will have the same dialogue."

Amber Big Plume and Austin Lang, Manager Indigenous Engagement at the Calgary Stampede, highlight the growth of the vendor area at Elbow River Camp – 33 vendors last year – a significant turnout made possible in part by vendor sponsorship from BMO, which removed financial barriers. "The vendors did not have to put any of their personal funds forward in order to have a dedicated space at the Elbow River Camp to sell their crafts and artwork," Amber notes.



**"Respect, kindness, patience and balance are at the heart of the ceremony."**

**– Amber Big Plume  
Interpretive Program  
Manager, Elbow River  
Camp at the Calgary  
Stampede and member  
of the Tsuut'ina Nation.**

"It comes down to the reciprocal relationship," Austin says. "That's how BMO has shown up – not just financially, but by participating and building relationships. They're showing up. They're participating. They want to build relationships. They want to see people thrive. BMO's support is subtle – not 'look at us' – and that's meaningful. The focus stays on supporting the vendors."

For many artists and craftspeople, Elbow River Camp is a place where their work is recognized, valued and shared. "This is the culmination of their year-long preparation, a space where their creativity and skills are truly showcased," Amber says. The vendor market at Elbow River Camp offers a broad platform to expand and grow their businesses, gaining meaningful exposure.

Over the years, the Tea Ceremony has become a touchstone for connection. In the quiet of the tipi, with tea in hand, it offers a reminder that this work is not a single act or policy, it is an ongoing commitment of respect, trust and accountability carried through shared stories and experience. Each brings new opportunities to listen, learn and deepen understanding.

# Rooted in Relationship



In late 2025, BMO Global Asset Management (BMO GAM) was honoured to be recognized with the Institutional Connect Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples Award. While the recognition was presented to BMO GAM, it reflects work and relationships built over many decades across BMO Financial Group.

The award recognizes investment firms taking concrete, measurable and accountable steps to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. It was received with humility and a clear understanding that the work is not done. As Michelle Gallant, BMO's Director of Stewardship, Sustainable Investment, notes, "It's humbling to be recognized, and it also reinforces that reconciliation is ongoing work. The recognition brings a responsibility to stay accountable and keep learning."

Importantly, the recognition speaks not only to the work within BMO GAM, but to BMO's long-standing history of learning from and working alongside Indigenous Nations and Community members. The roots of this work extend across the organization and are grounded in decades of listening, partnership and action. This broader foundation shaped the approach taken within GAM and is reflected in the practices and perspectives recognized through the award.

**"It's humbling to be recognized, and it also reinforces that reconciliation is ongoing work. The recognition brings a responsibility to stay accountable and keep learning"**

**- Michelle Gallant**  
BMO's Director of Stewardship, Sustainable Investment



Learn more about our commitments to Indigenous clients, colleagues and communities

The recognition also reflects the influence of Indigenous voices across the enterprise. Indigenous colleagues, Nations and Community partners and advisory bodies such as the Indigenous Advisory Council continue to provide guidance that shapes how decisions are approached, how language is used and how priorities are defined. This shared responsibility reinforces that the work does not rest with any one team or individual.

The work reflected in this recognition spans education and engagement, through sustained dialogue with investee companies on topics such as Indigenous rights and Free Prior and Informed Consent, and long term impacts on communities. BMO GAM's objectives and approach are publicly communicated through policies and reports and advanced through stewardship activities and education. This work also relies on ongoing collaboration, reflection and learning behind the scenes.

While appreciated, this recognition does not signal completion. It reinforces the responsibility to remain attentive, accountable and open to learning - and to continue this work with care, recognizing that meaningful progress is built through sustained commitment rather than recognition alone.

# About BMO

Our Purpose, to **Boldly Grow the Good in business and life**, informs our strategy, drives our ambition, and reinforces our commitments to progress: for a thriving economy, a sustainable future and stronger communities. For more than 30 years, we've provided dedicated banking services to Indigenous clients across Canada. Through trusted relationships built on mutual respect, we work to advance reconciliation and the economic self-determination and prosperity of Indigenous clients, colleagues and communities.

## Serving Indigenous Communities

### BMO Indigenous branches and business banking locations

#### Newfoundland and Labrador

##### Happy Valley Goose Bay (In Community, Off-Reserve)

Goose Bay  
709-896-4411

#### Quebec

##### Wemindji Branch (On-Reserve)

Cree Nation of Wemindji (Wemindji)  
819-978-3588

##### Pessamit Branch (On-Reserve)

Pessamit (La réserve indienne de Pessamit)  
418-567-9543

##### Waskaganish Branch (On-Reserve)

The Crees of Waskaganish First Nation (Waskaganish)  
819-895-2177

#### Ontario

##### Ohsweken Branch (On-Reserve)

Six Nations of the Grand River (Ohsweken)  
519-445-4733

##### Peace Tree Trade Centre Branch (On-Reserve)

Akwesasne Mohawk Territory (Cornwall Island)  
613-938-5634

##### Commercial Banking Office (On-Reserve)

500 Gran Street, 2nd Floor  
Batchewana First Nation  
705-949-5230

#### Northwest Territories

##### Fort Smith Branch (In Community, Off-Reserve)

Fort Smith, NWT  
867-872-2001

#### Alberta

##### Buffalo Run Branch (On-Reserve)

Tsuut'ina Nation (Tsuut'ina)  
403-234-1869

##### Siksika Branch (On-Reserve)

Siksika Nation (Siksika)  
403-734-3600

#### British Columbia

##### Tsahaheh Branch (On-Reserve)

Tseshah First Nation (Port Alberni)  
250-724-7100

##### Park Royal Branch (On-Reserve)

Squamish Nation (West Vancouver)  
604-668-1277

##### Eagle Landing Branch (On-Reserve)

Squiala First Nation (Chilliwack)  
604-792-1971

##### Westbank Branch (On-Reserve)

Westbank First Nation (Kelowna)  
250-861-1670

##### Commercial Banking Office (On-Reserve)

2561 Quigli Drive, Williams Lake  
First Nation  
250-872-2001



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Visit BMO  
for Indigenous  
Entrepreneurs



Get in touch  
with a BMO  
Virtual Banker



Photo: Odysseus Photography and Video Production

Left to right: D. K. (Doug) Bourque, Mark Shadeed, Cloyd Bathan, Danny Menard, Matt Neveu, Jeffery M. McAulay, Joel Neustaeter, Roddy Nardeo  
 Photo taken at the Downie Wenjack Legacy Space at BMO Place in Toronto.

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We are dedicated to working toward the economic self-sufficiency of Indigenous communities across Canada.

We are in your communities. A business partnership with us creates better options and outcomes.



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