

ONTARIO REGION UPDATE

Please email the ISC Ontario Communications Team with any questions about or suggestions for this newsletter: ontario-communications@sac-isc.gc.ca.

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Help is here whenever you need it

Support is available 24/7 for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Please find a list of mental health helplines below, able to provide culturally relevant support. To find more services and resources, [click here to go to the Indigenous mental health page](#).

Hope for Wellness Helpline

Phone: 1-855-242-3310

Online chat: www.hopeforwellness.ca

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Support Line

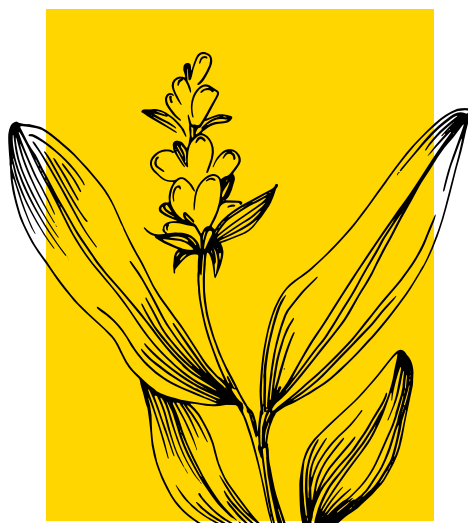
Phone: 1-844-413-6649

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

Phone: 1-866-925-4419

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Services*

Phone: 9-8-8 call or text ***COMING NOVEMBER 30, 2023**





Please Book Hotels for the Joint Gathering by October 31

The 2023 ISC Ontario Joint Gathering is taking place at the Chelsea Hotel in Toronto from November 15-16, with an opening reception in the early evening on November 14. **Please ensure you book your hotel rooms by Tuesday, October 31.** [Click here to book online](#) or call the Chelsea Hotel at 1-800-243-5732 and ask for the “ISC Joint Gathering 2023” group rate. Please also ensure you [register for the Joint Gathering](#) so we can prepare your registration package. [Visit the Joint Gathering website](#) for more information about the event, including the [*draft* agenda](#).

Indigenous Veterans Day: Soldiers to be honoured in the Netherlands



November 8 marks Indigenous Veterans Day, a time to remember and reflect on the many sacrifices of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis service members. To honour Indigenous soldiers who served during the Second World War, a group of Indigenous, Canadian and Dutch individuals created the Indigenous Legacy Project, an initiative to identify and mark the graves of Indigenous soldiers buried in cemeteries across the Netherlands.

[Click here to learn more.](#) You can also find information about influential military members like [Corporal Francis Pegahmagabow](#) from Wasauksing First Nation, [Alexander Smith Jr. and Charles Smith](#) from Six Nations, and other Indigenous service members on the websites for [Veterans Affairs Canada](#) and the [Canadian War Museum](#). **Teachers can also find age-appropriate lesson plans**, such as [this lesson for youth about remembrance dog tags for Indigenous service members](#).

Health

Open Call-Out: Immunization Partnership Fund

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has launched the Immunization Partnership Fund (IPF). The IPF provides funding to projects that aim to increase vaccine confidence and awareness. IPF is looking to support projects that aim to help improve vaccine rates in communities who experience higher barriers in receiving vaccines; higher rates of vaccine hesitancy; and/or higher risks of serious illness from diseases that can be prevented with vaccines. Any interested organizations can submit their Letter of Intent by 2:00 pm EST on Friday, November 10, 2023. [Click here to learn more about the IPF and how to apply.](#)

New Mental Health Supports



Coming in November: New 9-8-8 helpline

A new, [toll-free national crisis helpline will launch on November 30, 2023](#). Individuals in crisis will be able to call or text the three-digit number 9-8-8 from anywhere in Canada, which will direct them to mental health services in their area. Distress lines like 9-8-8 are vital to suicide prevention. Please consider promoting this upcoming line in your community.

Expanded Ontario Structured Psychotherapy Program

Individuals aged 18 years and over can now access free self-led (ex. workbooks, videos, etc.) or therapist-led mental health services through the expanded Ontario Structured Psychotherapy program. Therapist-led services provide cognitive behavioural therapy to teach clients how to change patterns of thinking and behaviour to better deal with difficult emotions and situations. All sessions are supported by trained mental health professionals to ensure clients can get the care they need. Click the following links to learn about the expanded services offered in your region: [Northwestern Ontario](#), [Northeastern Ontario](#), [Central Ontario](#), and [Western Ontario](#).

Community Care: Reducing the Spread of Respiratory Illness

Fall and winter bring respiratory illness season. Being prepared for a potential outbreak can help communities limit the spread of infections [during respiratory illness season](#).

COVID-19 and Flu Vaccines

Indigenous individuals living in Ontario are eligible to receive the influenza (flu) shot and latest COVID-19 vaccine targeting the XBB variants. For more information about the provincial vaccine programs and eligibility, please visit the Ontario [COVID-19 vaccines](#) and [the flu](#) pages.

RSV Vaccine

Ontario will offer a [respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) vaccine program to seniors 60 years and older](#) living in long-term care homes, Elder Care Lodges, and some retirement homes. [Click here](#) to stay informed about the latest RSV guidelines; updates are expected in the coming weeks.

Community Preparation

It is recommended that communities review and update their emergency plans; put local monitoring systems in place for respiratory illness; and share public health best practices with community members. When paired with recommended vaccinations, these actions help lower serious health risks among the most vulnerable.



Simplified Renewal Process for Status Cards

There is a new, simpler way to renew status cards for adults who are already registered. Eligible applicants no longer need a guarantor in order to apply by mail if they meet these four conditions:

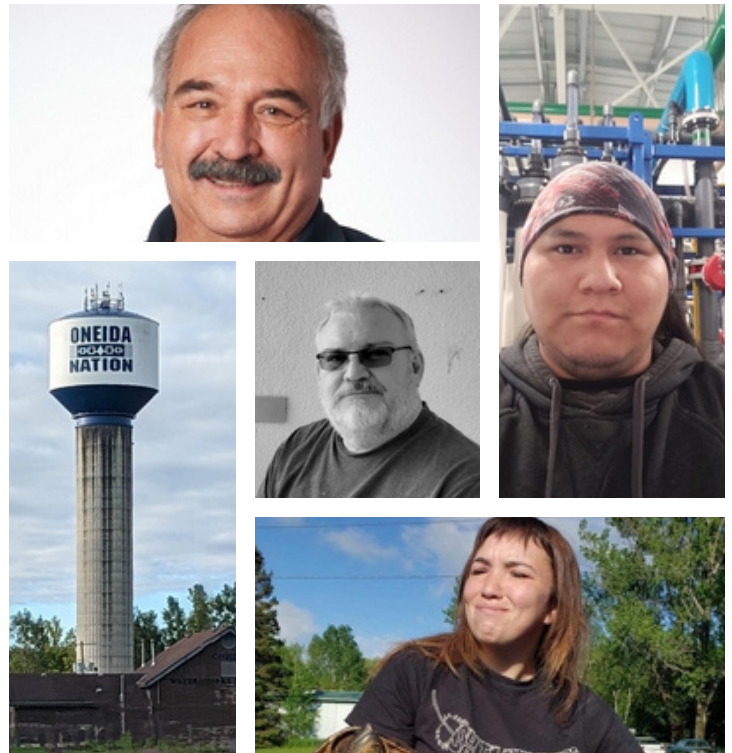
- They were 16 or older when they last applied for a secure status card.
- The following personal information has not changed since they received their last secure status card: family name, given names, date of birth, First Nation affiliation and registration number.
- Their last secure status card was not revoked or reported lost, stolen or damaged.
- They are applying no more than 1 year before and no later than the renewal date on the front of their secure status card.

For more information, visit [Get, renew or replace a status card](#).

Candidates from First Nations in Ontario Nominated for 2023 National First Nations Water Leadership Award

Ten remarkable individuals from Ontario were nominated for the 2023 National First Nations Water Leadership Award. Nominees were chosen for their outstanding leadership and dedication to clean, safe drinking water in First Nations communities, today and for future generations. [Click here to read more about this year's nominees](#) and the 2023 winner, [Warren Brown](#) of Lytton First Nation. Please consider sharing the list of nominees and their messages with your communities.

The 2024 award nomination period will run from January 1 to March 31, 2024. [Please visit the national award website](#) for eligibility information and how to nominate someone in your community.



Some of the 2023 nominees from First Nations in Ontario.

Community Story: Matawa Education and Care Centre Celebrates Grand Opening



Last month, the [Matawa Education and Care Centre](#) (MECC) celebrated its grand opening in Thunder Bay. The Centre is the first of its kind in the area. The MECC will serve as a student residence and school for Indigenous youth who leave their home communities to attend high school.

The MECC reimagines what education can be for Indigenous youth. Designed to address recommendations of the [Seven Youth Inquest](#), the school emphasizes the safety and well-being of its students, who are often far from their support networks. The MECC is fully equipped

with mental health services; a cafeteria with free daily meals; classes for up to 200 students; on-site accommodations for 100 students with support from Matawa staff; and a student favourite - a brand-new gym.

To help students keep a positive and healthy relationship with their Indigenous identity, administrators indigenized several school credits, which now include cultural, spiritual, trades, and land-based programming. This programming has played a key role in getting students excited about coming to school. It also helps ensure a greater focus on cultural relevance in the classroom by including Indigenous historical figures, authors and events as part of the curriculum.

So far, 160 students from Matawa's nine member communities have enrolled at the school. The MECC staff look forward to welcoming more students and continuing their work to foster a safe and culturally relevant space for Indigenous youth to pursue a secondary school education.

What students are saying:

"It's so exciting to have this new gym. I've been here for such a long time, I never thought Matawa would have such a gym."

- Quentin McKay - Nibinamik

"We could use the gym for a performance, maybe a PowWow, or for dances."

- Skylar Wabasse - Nibinamik

"My first impression was that i was amazed how open it is (the gym), and the wood on the walls."

- Jersey Towegieshig - Nibinamik

This article was written in collaboration with the Matawa Education and Care Centre. Thank you for sharing your story!