

Siigwan 2026

Education Directors Forum

May 20 & 21, 2026 | Winnipeg, MB

Event Program





Day 1: May 20, 2026

Breakfast
at Chopped,
Shuttles to BBI
7:30 a.m. -
8:45 p.m.

8:00 a.m.	Registration	
9:00 a.m.	Opening Prayer	Elder Victor Chapais
9:15 a.m.	Welcoming and Forum Overview	Terry Metatawabin, Emcee
	Opening Comments from NAN	DGC Achneepineskum, Braden Cawley, Oshkaatisak Council Terri Nolan, Women's Council
9:45 a.m.	Connected North	Jennifer Correrio, Executive Director
	Activity - Birch Bark Tree Etching	Helen Pelltier, Knowledge Keeper
10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m.	Ontario Teachers Pension Plan (OTPP) Fireside Chat – Joining Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan	Tyler Knowles, OTPP Advisor, Sylvia Davis, OTPP Staff, Darrin Potter, Pikangikum
11:15 p.m.	Intro to Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO)	Liz Papdopoulos, Executive Director
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	
1:00 p.m.	Education Jurisdiction Update	Bryan Achneepineskum, Education Jurisdiction Manager
1:30 p.m.	Education Jurisdiction: Community Engagement Initiatives	Jacob Osedec, Territorial Coordinator
2:00 p.m.	Education Jurisdiction: Governance Development	Skylene Metatawabin, Structural Readiness Coordinator
2:30 p.m.	Core Education: How NAN Education uses funding identified in the side-by- sides	Sherry Britton, Director of Education
2:45 p.m.	Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) Nation Building and the Native Education Counsellor	Alicia Cameron, Executive Director
3:45 p.m.	Break	
4:00 p.m.	Ogoki Language App	Darrick Baxter, CAO Ogoki Language App
4:30 p.m.	Closing Remarks	DGC Achneepineskum, Sherry Britton, Director of Education Braeden Cawley, Oshkaatisak Council Terri Nolan, Women's Council
4:45 p.m.	Prizes	Terry Metatawabin, Emcee
5:00 p.m.	Closing Prayer	Elder Victor Chapais

Day 2: May 21, 2026

7:30 a.m.	Breakfast at Chopped, Shuttles to BBI	
9:00 a.m.	Opening Prayer	Elder Jenosa
9:15 a.m.	Welcoming & Opening Comments	Polly Francis and Kristy Hankila
9:30 a.m.	Disability Affirming Presentation	Nicole Ineesh-Nash and Kathryn Underwood
10:15 a.m.	Pediatric Indigenous Rehabilitation Assistant Update	Hilairy Walters
10:30 a.m.	Autism Forum Update	Polly Francis
10:45 a.m.	Break	
11:00 a.m.	Play-Based Learning and Classroom Setup	Lydia Abanum and Ally Timlick, Sioux Lookout First Nation Health Authority (SLFNHA)
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	
1:00 p.m.	Embracing: Our Children: Our Way Draft NAN Early Learning and Child Care Framework Update	Kristy Hankila, NAN Early Learning and Child Care Manager
1:10 p.m.	First Nation Led Programs Design and Evaluation	
1:30 p.m.	Keeping Our Children Safe: First Nation Health and Safety Regulations	Shelly Franceschini, NAN Early Learning and Child Care Advisor
2:15 p.m.	Movement Break with Terry	
2:30 p.m.	Break	
2:45 p.m.	Fun and Games with NAN Early Learning	NAN ELCC Team
3:15 p.m.	Community Led Land Based Curriculum Development for Early Learning and Child Care	Laure Baxter, NAN Early Learning and Child Care Policy Analyst
4:00 p.m.	Closing Remarks & Closing Prayer	Oshkaatisak Council Women's Council Elder Stella and Elder Jenosa



Alicia Cameron

Alicia Cameron (Saugeen First Nation) is the Executive Director of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA). Her background is strongly rooted in Indigenous education and includes experience in public education, First Nations education, both secondary and post-secondary teaching, curriculum writing, and education policy. She also serves in a volunteer capacity on various education-focused boards and committees.

Alicia is committed to her role with ONECA because she believes that education can be a powerful tool for healing and strengthening communities. She also understands that everyone is gifted in different ways and that not all people are destined for the same educational journey. Learning is lifelong and everyone has their own pathway. Supporting access to tools and resources that enable First Nation people to shape their own success can contribute significantly to community wellness.

Alicia currently resides in Sturgeon Falls with her husband and four daughters, two dogs, and three cats.

This presentation will be a discussion about how Education Directors can work with their First Nations to promote and inspire the development of nation building by advocating and advancing student success and cultural resilience through life-long learning within their communities, regions and beyond while also taking a strategic approach to that objective. It will also provide an overview of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association (ONECA) and its work advancing Native education counselling through public education, student support, and resource development. It will also highlight the role of the Native Education Counsellor and the Native Counsellor Training Program (NCTP).



Bryan Achneepineskum

I live and work in Thunder Bay where I raise my 5-year-old son and my 16-year-old niece. I am passionate about education and have 20 years of experience working in First Nation Education, I've also have experience working in the Health & Social Fields as an elder care worker, long-term care and transitions worker, youth recreational worker Ontario Works Caseworker and have seen the impacts and challenges we've gone through because of an underfunded system, self-governance is our path forward, we need to be in the driver's seat when it comes to the Education of our children, this is not only about taking back control and authority, but it also about building our nation, securing a future where our language culture and identity is strong, building our future leaders, and supporting our people, and together we can do it right!

Darrick Baxter

Ogoki Language App Synopsis

"Language Learning with Apps" is an engaging presentation that explores how mobile technology is transforming Indigenous language revitalization and education. The presentation highlights how interactive apps can preserve, teach, and strengthen languages through conversational learning (with the Tolowa Conversational App), audio recordings from fluent speakers and Elders, Full Immersion Games similar to the AKRC Language Quest Game, flashcards, quizzes, storytelling, and immersive digital experiences like the Mikmaq Treaty Play. Attendees will learn how app-based learning creates accessible opportunities for younger generations to connect with their language anytime and anywhere.

Drawing from real-world success stories and the development of hundreds of language learning applications, the presentation also examines the role technology plays in cultural preservation, community engagement, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. "Language Learning with Apps" demonstrates how Indigenous communities can use modern digital tools not only to protect their languages but also to inspire future generations to speak, learn, and carry them forward.



Darrin Potter

Darrin has worked with First Nations' Education in the NAN territory for over 25 years. His recent work focus has been in capacity and education program development and expansion at the community level. He has worked in public education but most of his work has been in First Nations' Education as a teacher, principal, and Director of Education and now with the Pikangikum Education Authority as Administration Supervisor.

He passionately believes that if you want the best for students and the community in terms of programs and opportunity, you do the work to build the structures and people will show up and succeed!



Helen Pelletier

Helen is Anishinaabe from Fort William First Nation and is a valued workshop provider with Connected North, where she delivers engaging virtual programming to students in Northern and remote communities. Through her sessions, Helen shares Indigenous knowledge, land-based teachings, and hands-on cultural learning experiences designed to inspire the next generation.

Helen has reconnected to her culture and community through the humble birch bark tree. For Anishinaabe people, the birch tree is a cornerstone of the culture, and for generations birch bark has been used in many different applications. Learning about the tree, the seasons, and how all of its parts work together has deepened Helen's connection to the land and her community. She continues to share her knowledge and passion for Wiigwaasabak, the tree of life, with students across Canada.

During this experience, participants will get a taste of what it is like to be a Connected North student participant as they are guided through creating their own etched winter birch bark art piece alongside Helen (virtually).



Jacob Robert Paul Osadec

I am an indigenous person who was born and raised in Thunder Bay, ON. I am a registered member of Lac Des Mille Lac First Nation Where I hold the title of Shkaabay – a sacred fire keeper. As an indigenous youth who grew up in an urban setting, I experienced a gradual loss of identity while trying to fit into career paths that did not reflect my reality. This realization reinforced the importance of culturally grounded education systems that affirm who we are as Indigenous people. These experiences led me to my current work in Education Jurisdiction, where I support the development of a First Nations education system. I strongly believe in this work, and I am truly passionate about it.

Jennifer Corriero

Jennifer is a renowned Canadian social innovator and leading advocate for education and digital inclusion. Over the past decade Jennifer has led the management of the Connected North program that has grown to service over 80 schools in Ontario across 44 First Nations communities. The program offers access to a network of 500 educational content providers who can be booked by teachers as virtual field trips and guest speakers. Jennifer is passionate about increasing access to dynamic learning experiences to support student engagement and excitement across subject areas that support future pathways.



She has travelled extensively across First Nations communities with a focus on relationship building, strengthening school partnerships, understanding the needs and context of learners while also supporting educator capacity building. Jennifer holds a Masters in Environmental Studies and serves the Faculty of Health at York University as a Community Fellow with the Wellness Impact Lab (WIL), Dahdaleh Institute.

For over 26 years, she has mobilized resources and technology to improve K-12 education in her role as co-founder and Executive Director of the Toronto-based charity TakingITGlobal. Corriero is dedicated to advancing the importance of supporting upcoming generations of youth in gaining access to resources and opportunities that support wellbeing and vibrant futures



Liz Papadopoulos

A former elementary teacher with the Toronto District School Board, Liz taught students in Junior Kindergarten up to Grade 8. While teaching, Liz Papadopoulos participated in many committees and task forces including New Teacher and the Early Years. Ms Papadopoulos was involved in her union, both locally and provincially. She spent more than 12 years as a council member of the Ontario College of Teachers and was Chair of the Council from 2009 to 2015.

Liz Papadopoulos is committed to listening and bringing partners together to share the common goal of improving publicly funded public education for all. Liz Papadopoulos has been working as Executive Director of the Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO) since September 2017.



Skylene Metatawabin

Skylene is a member of Fort Albany First Nation. Married for 18 years, together for 26 years, she is a proud mother of four and a "glammie" to nine grandchildren she adores. In 2017, Skylene moved from Fort Albany to Thunder Bay and has since continued her work as an education and community engagement professional, bringing more than 27 years of experience in early learning (Head Start), K-12 education, and community education programs. She currently serves as Strategic Advancement Capacity Coordinator for Education Jurisdiction at Nishnawbe Aski Nation, supporting First Nations as they build community-driven education systems rooted in culture and self-determination. Skylene is dedicated to strengthening education for future generations.



Tyler Knowles

Tyler is an Advisor, Indigenous Partnerships & Account Management at Ontario Teachers Pension Plan, where he has been working for 14 years. I am responsible for building and maintaining relationships with Indigenous employers across the province of Ontario, ensuring that they have access to pertinent information about the pension plan and its benefits. I am passionate about working with Indigenous communities and learning about their cultures, histories, and aspirations.



