



Win Awenen Nisitotung

March 19, 2025
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Bahweting Bidajimowin • Official newspaper of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Cyberattack restoration nearly complete, members urged to protect their identities

On Feb. 9, Sault Tribe was the victim of a damaging cyberattack that took down critical computer networks and disrupted governmental and business operations across the tribe's seven-county service area, including all five Kewadin casinos. This criminal ransomware attack negatively affected tribal members by impacting Sault Tribe health centers and pharmacies, forcing the cancellation of events, and complicating day-to-day operations in every tribal division and department.

"Whether you have had to cancel a healthcare visit, had difficulty reaching another government service or were unable to visit a casino or other tribal business, I want you to know we are deeply sorry for the stress and frustration this has caused," Sault Tribe Chairman Austin Lowes said in a video message (<https://bit.ly/ChairmanVideoFeb21>) about the attack posted to the Sault Tribe Facebook page.

Lowes described in that video, how tribal leadership acted immediately to shut down its IT systems to prevent any further attacks. Outside cybersecurity and legal experts were engaged to conduct a forensic review and determine what information might have been accessed.

ATTACKERS DEMANDED RANSOM PAYMENT

Shortly after the incident, it was determined the attack came from criminals who sought to extort a ransom in exchange for the tribe's stolen data. During that time, leadership worked with law enforcement groups, external cybersecurity experts and others to evaluate whether or not to pay the ransom.

After much deliberation, tribal leadership determined there was



Sault Tribe Chairman Austin Lowes recently posted a video message to the tribal community on Facebook.

no benefit for the tribe or its members in paying the ransom demand. Two key reasons played into this decision. First, the tribe's "internal IT team worked closely with external cyber experts to restore our systems and recover virtually all of our data," and second, based on how these criminals operate, there was "no guarantee [the tribe] would have received what was promised," Lowes told members in a follow up Facebook post (<https://bit.ly/ChairmanPostFeb28>). Lowes further elaborated in that post that even if the tribe paid the ransom, the attackers still could have shared the data anyway.

Lowes said the tribe is working with cybersecurity experts to review the stolen information to determine whose information was compromised in the attack. Those who have been impacted will receive a letter from the tribe with information detailing how to sign up for credit monitoring services

provided free of cost by the tribe. This review will take time, he noted, since the team must manually review hundreds of thousands of documents to determine what information may have been stolen and who that information belongs to.

THOUSANDS OF ATTACKS EACH YEAR

Sault Tribe is not alone in being a target for cyberattacks. In just the past year, major organizations across Michigan have been hit with ransomware attacks and data breaches, including Michigan Medicine, Ascension and McLaren hospital systems, Wayne and Wexford counties, the city of Flint and several local school districts.

Cybersecurity researchers at Comparitech identified more than 5,400 successful ransomware attacks in 2024, mostly in North America and Europe, that resulted in the compromise and ransom of

at least 195 million data records. The researchers noted that the average ransom demand in 2024 was more than \$3.5 million, with \$133.5 million in confirmed payments to ransomware groups. The average ransom payment was more than \$9 million (<https://bit.ly/2024RansomwareReport>).

RESTORATION NEARLY COMPLETE

Sault Tribe has now restored and strengthened its IT systems, and employees will be provided additional cybersecurity training to help prevent future attacks from happening again.

Most of the tribe's organizations have resumed regular operations. The Sault Ste. Marie Kewadin Casino reopened on Feb. 26, followed by St. Ignace on Feb. 28 and the casinos in Christmas, Manistique and Hessel on March 3. MidJim convenience stores have also resumed normal business hours, and it is safe to use

credit cards at both the casinos and stores. The Sault Tribe Health Division was impacted more than other operations, however, and continues to operate in a limited capacity using the temporary phone numbers posted to the tribe's Facebook pages (<https://bit.ly/SaultTribeTempNumbers>).

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY

Tribal leadership urges all members to take action right now to protect their identity. This includes contacting credit card providers, changing financial account passwords and placing fraud alerts and credit freezes on your accounts.

To place a free fraud alert on your personal accounts, contact one of the credit reporting agencies websites listed below. To place a credit freeze on your account, you must submit an online request or call each of the three agencies:

EQUIFAX

<https://www.equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services/credit-fraud-alerts>

Phone: 800-525-6285

EXPERIAN

<https://www.experian.com/fraud/center.html>

Phone: 888 397 3742

TRANS UNION

<https://www.transunion.com/fraud-alerts>

Phone: (800) 680-7289

"We take the confidentiality of our members' information very seriously and, again, are truly sorry for the disruption, stress and inconvenience this is causing," Lowes said. "Miigwech and please continue to bear with us as we work through this difficult situation."

Vice chair appointed to HHS Tribal Advisory Committee

BY BRENDA AUSTIN

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has appointed Sault Tribe Vice-Chairman Tyler LaPlaunt as the Bemidji Area Primary Delegate to the HHS Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC).

This selection places LaPlaunt in a key advisory role, where he will collaborate with federal officials and elected tribal leaders to exchange views, provide recommendations, and advocate for tribal interests in health and human services policy.

As a STAC Primary Delegate, Vice-Chairman LaPlaunt will participate in forums, meetings, and discussions that shape the

policies and initiatives affecting tribal communities.

In addition, LaPlaunt has been invited to attend the 27th HHS Annual Tribal Budget Consultation (ATBC), scheduled for April 22-23. This annual event allows tribal leaders to share funding priorities and policy recommendations for the Department's FY 2027 budget.

The consultation will also feature one-on-one meetings between tribal representatives and HHS divisions to discuss specific concerns and initiatives.

HHS hosted two virtual planning sessions ahead of the ATBC on March 5 and March 19 to help ensure productive discussions. Written comments from tribes are

welcome until April 21.

As a symbol of the Nation-to-Nation relationship, HHS has requested that LaPlaunt provide a flag representing the Sault Tribe for display in the HHS Hall of Tribal Nations. This display honors the contributions of STAC delegates and reinforces the partnerships between tribal governments and federal agencies.

LaPlaunt's appointment marks a significant step in advancing tribal advocacy within the federal government. His participation in STAC and the upcoming budget consultation ensures that the needs and priorities of the Bemidji Area tribes are effectively represented at the national level.

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Barred owl finds fine dining at local birdfeeder



*Photos by
Scott Brand*

Barred owls have a distinctive call that to some people sounds like they are saying, “who cooks for you, who cooks for you all.”

Barred owls are not the same as barn owls. Barred owls are 15-24 inches long with a wingspan of 50-60 inches.

They eat a variety of small mammals according to the Smithsonian Handbook, Birds of North America, but will also consume birds, frogs, salamanders, lizards, snakes, fish, large insects, crabs and crayfish.

This particular owl haunted a Brimley birdfeeding station for a number of weeks in February. It ignored all of the song birds and even the red squirrels only leaving its perch to periodically dive bomb into the snow, extracting shrew or vole-like mammals before flying off with its catch.

The barred owl's range extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and all the way south down to Florida and Texas where it prefers deep woods inhabiting conifer, riparian and swampy habitats.

They primarily hunt in the early morning or late evening hours and throughout the night, but are often active during daylight.



There are enough things out there going viral.



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Michigan.gov/COVIDFluRSV



Committee vacancies — volunteers needed!

The following Sault Tribe committees have vacant seats. Sault Tribe members interested in filling these vacancies should submit one letter of intent and three letters of recommendation (forms available online or contact Lona or Ashlee) from other tribal members to Lona Stewart at 523 Ashmun Street, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783, or call (906) 635-6050 with any questions.

Anishinaabe Cultural Committee – Five vacancies:

Three males (two with 4-year terms, one term expires July 2028), two females (4-year term)

Child Welfare Committee – Four vacancies: two vacancies (4-year terms); one vacancy, term expires November 2026; one vacancy, term expires January 2027

Higher Education Committee – Two vacancies (4-year term)

Housing Commission / Utility Authority — Two pending vacancies: One for Unit 1,

one for Unit 5 (4-year terms)

Special Needs/Enrollment Committee – Six vacancies (all 2-year terms)

Unit I: One vacancy
Unit II: Two vacancies
Unit III: Two vacancies
Unit IV: One vacancy

Elder Advisory Committee
Unit I; Sault, one alternate vacancy (4-year term)
Unit II: Naubinway, one regular vacancy (4-year term)
Unit II: Newberry, one regular vacancy (4-year term), one alter-

nate vacancy (4-year term)
Unit III: St. Ignace, one regular vacancy (4-year term), two alternate vacancies (4-year term)
Unit IV: Escanaba – One regular vacancy, term set to expire August, 2026
Unit V: Marquette - One alternate vacancy (4-year term)

Elder Subcommittees
Unit II: Naubinway – Three regular vacancies, two with terms expiring May 2027, one with term expiring October 2026
Unit III: St. Ignace – One reg-

ular vacancy, term expiring April 2027
Unit IV: Manistique – One regular vacancy, term expiring November 2026
Unit IV: Escanaba – One regular vacancy (4-year term); two regular vacancies, terms expiring May 2026; one alternate vacancy (4-year term)
Unit V: Munising, two alternate vacancies (4-year term)
Unit V: Marquette, two alternate vacancies, one 4-year term, one term expiring March 2028.

Tribal gas and cigarette discount locations

The following gas stations are offering discounts to Sault Tribe members.

Tribal owned gas stations offering gas and cigarette discounts:

- MidJim Convenience Store, 2205 Shunk Road, Sault Ste.

Marie, MI 49783

- MidJim Convenience Store, 3045 Mackinac Trail, St. Ignace, MI 49781
- White Pine Lodge and Convenience Store, 7889 E. W. M-28, Christmas, MI 49862

Tribal owned gas stations

offering gas discount only:

- University BP, 301 W. Fair Ave., Marquette, MI 49855

Not tribal owned stations offering gas discounts only:

- Kinross BP, 4440 Tone Road, Kincheloe, MI 49788
- Cedar Pantry, 159 W. M-134,

Cedarville, MI 49719

- Sunoco, 13975 M-28, Newberry, MI 49868
- Manistique Oil Company, 216 Deer Street, Manistique, MI 49854
- Carnes Eco Fuels, 2300 Ludington St., Escanaba, MI 49837

WIOA funding is available

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Program has funding available for on-the-job training and short-term occupational training opportunities.

Apply at WIOA at Big Bear Community Recreation Center in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., or call Brenda Cadreau at (906) 635-4767 for more information.

Sault Tribe News offering digital edition

Tribal members and subscriber's receiving the print edition of the newspaper can switch to digital to receive the “early” digital edition. A link will be sent to digital subscribers the same day the print edition goes to press. Read your paper at least 6 days early!

Write to slucas@saulttribe.net to switch or get details.

Avery Square Craft Show

May 2 & 3
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Vendors wanted – Free to participate
Items can be left overnight
Call Sharon to register at:
(906) 253-1399
510 Ashmun St. in the Sault

Win Awenen Nisitotung


The official newspaper of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

**March 19, 2025
Sugar-Making Moon
Zisbaakdoke Giizis**

Jennifer Dale-Burton.....Editor
Sherrie Lucas.....Secretary
Brenda Austin.....Staff Writer
Scott Brand.....Staff Writer
Win Awenen Nisitotung welcomes

Advocacy Resource Center is seeking information about Missing and Murdered Sault Tribe Members:


In an effort to maintain the Sault Tribe MMIP database for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP), the Advocacy Resource Center is seeking information regarding missing and murdered individuals who are members of the **Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians**. Please message or call the ARC at 906-632-1808 with information that can be entered into the database. The information provided does not have to be current information. The ARC is seeking information for ALL missing or murdered tribal members including the seven county service areas and tribal members across the world. Please ask for Community Educator Jess Gillotte-King (extension 73104) when calling the ARC. If messaging the ARC Facebook page, please leave the following information:



First/Middle/Last Name
Date of Birth
Date of Death
Murdered/When/Where
Perpetrator Name if known:

If Missing:
Nickname/Alias
Date Last Seen/Went Missing
Physical Description
Distinctive Physical Features
Vehicle Information

Any information would be appreciated.
Thank you for your participation in this matter. Please feel free to share this information. Miigwech!



Sault Tribe Member Newspaper Subscription Form

To receive a FREE tribal newspaper subscription in the mail, tribal members under 60 are asked to complete the form below and send it to: Win Awenen Nisitotung, 531 Ashmun St., Sault Ste. Marie MI 49783, or email it to slucas@saulttribe.net. Those 60 and over do not have to fill out this form. Those who prefer to get their newspaper online do not have to complete this form.

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submissions of news articles, feature stories, photographs, columns and announcements of American Indian or non-profit events. All submissions are printed at the discretion of the editor, subject to editing and are not to exceed 400 words. Unsigned submissions are not accepted.

Please note the distribution date when submitting event information for our community calendar. Submissions can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed. The distribution date is the earliest the newspaper can arrive in the seven-county service area.

Win Awenen Nisitotung is funded by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and is published 12 times a year. Its mission is to inform tribal members and the public about the activities of the tribal government, membership programs and services and cultural, social and spiritual activities of Sault Tribe members.

Win Awenen Nisitotung, in Anishinaabemowin, means, “One who understands,” and is pronounced “Win Oh-weh-nin Nis-toe-tuhng.”

See our full, online edition at www.saulttribe.com.

Subscriptions: The regular rate is \$18 per year, \$11 for senior citizens and \$30 to Canada. Please call for other foreign countries.

Subscribe by sending your name and mailing address to the address below with your check or money order made out to the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Or, call (906) 632-6398 to pay by credit card.

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saulttribethrive.com/business-directory/

Membership liaisons help answer your questions

BY MICHELLE MOORE, CLARENCE HUDAK, MARY JENEROU, MEMBERSHIP LIAISONS

Q – I live in southwest Michigan, outside of the Sault Tribe’s USDA Food Distribution Program counties. Can I get the food from a local tribe that is near where I live?

A – *Yes, as long as you are within the USDA household income guidelines, you can receive food from another federally recognized tribe. Contact the tribe near you and explain you are a Sault Tribe member and would like to apply for their program.*

Q – Does the tribe provide health insurance to its members?

A – *The Sault Tribe does not offer independent health insurance to its members. All Sault Tribe members are able to utilize our health centers, located throughout the 7-county service area, regardless of where they reside. As a member of a federally recognized Native American tribe, Sault Tribe members are also able to utilize any Indian Health Services (IHS) Center located throughout the United States. To find a center close to you, visit www.ihs.gov and click on “Find Health Care,” then search the state you reside in. It is recommended that you contact the IHS center prior to your visit to ensure what, if any, services may be available to you.*

Q – “What housing resources are available to tribal members who reside outside the 7-county service area?”

A – *Unfortunately, Sault Tribe is not able to offer housing resources to members who reside outside of the service area at this time. The liaisons are available to assist members residing outside the service area who may be struggling with housing or rental issues in finding programs in their areas that may be available to them.*

Membership Liaisons
Michelle Moore (mmoore@saulttribe.net), Clarence Hudak (chudak@saulttribe.net), and Mary Jenerou (mjenerou@saulttribe.net).

Solomon named Region 1 Teacher of the Year

By Scott Brand

Susan Solomon, an elementary teacher at JKL Bahweting Anishnabe Public School Academy in Sault Ste. Marie has been named 2025-26 Region I Teacher of the Year encompassing the entire Upper Peninsula, by the Michigan Department of Education (MDOE).

“The Regional Teachers of the Year are selected from among Michigan’s many outstanding educators who play such an important role in student learning,” said State Superintendent

Dr. Michael Rice in a press release announcing this year’s top 10 nominees. “Regional Teachers of the Year also elevate the voices of teachers by sharing their experiences and valuable insight with our department and the State Board of Education.”

Solomon brings a strong educational background



Susan Solomon

Degree in middle level education

to her role. She earned a degree from Bay Mills Community College in Native American studies and communications before moving on to Ferris State University where she picked up her Elementary Education

Certificate. She continued her studies earning a Master’s

from Walden University and an advanced certificate in gifted education from the University of Connecticut.

She is also National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT), joining a dozen other teachers at JKL Bahweting with this honor noting that the Anishnabe Public School Academy has the highest percentage of NBCT recipients in the State of Michigan.

“Our school really does have a culture of excellence,” said Solomon. “There are a lot of really great teachers that I work with,

all of us just hold ourselves to a really high standard. We do whatever it takes to do the right things for our kids and I’m a product of my environment.”

In Solomon’s case, that often means working long weekends and traveling outside of regular school hours. Those trips include the annual two weeks at Purdue University taking students in the summer and statewide competitions. Her travel itinerary was expanded in 2024 when the Bahweting Team took first place

See “Soloman,” page 5

Tribal court bench warrant amnesty program

The Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa Tribal Court has announced a waiver program for individuals to comply with court orders by settling their debts without further penalty or incarceration.

Specifically, the program addresses outstanding warrants for non-compliance with a court

order of fines, fees, court costs and any outstanding civil tickets that have gone into default. The waiver program will be effective March 1 through March 31, 2025. “This is an opportunity for people to settle past due fines with the court without further penalty,” said Court Administrator, Traci Swan. “Eligible applicants will

be given partial fee waivers and have the ability to set up payment plans to resolve matters without the worry of additional penalties or incarceration. We all know the last few years have impacted our people in many ways and as a court, we are pleased to offer this program during the month of March.”

Individuals seeking to make payment can use our online payment system www.citepayusa.com., mail in a check/money order for a contact-free experience or come in person and speak with a clerk during business hours. Individuals must contact the court in advance of making their payment to allow for removal

of their bench warrant. If an individual is unable to pay in full, but makes a significant payment, the court will work with the individual to set-up a new payment plan regarding any outstanding balance. Please contact the Tribal Court, at (906) 635.4963 for further information.

Kewadin Casinos reopened after cyber incident

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians announced it began welcoming guests back to Kewadin Casinos Feb. 26 after falling victim to a cyber incident on Feb. 9.

Kewadin Casinos has restored its systems and has reopened operations at Kewadin Casino Sault Ste Marie, St. Ignace, Manistique, Christmas and

Hessel. All casino hotels, restaurants, and entertainment have resumed their normal business hours. “Some tribal organizations were impacted more severely than others and are still recovering, but we’re fortunate to be able to reopen Kewadin’s doors and continue serving as a prime entertainment destination for the east-

ern U.P.,” Sault Tribe Chairman Austin Lowes said. “To our guests who were unable to visit us during this time, I am very sorry for the inconvenience this has caused. Our team worked with outside cybersecurity experts around the clock to make the necessary steps to strengthen and enhance our IT systems, and we are open and

ready for business.” Located in one of the most scenic regions of North America, Kewadin Casinos currently offers over 2,000 slot machines, 26 table games, hotels, dining and other amenities at five properties in Michigan’s eastern and central Upper Peninsula. Owned and operated by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians,

Kewadin Casinos are the premier gaming destinations for people who live in and visit the Upper Peninsula, which is bordered on the south by Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, on the west by Wisconsin, and on the north by Lake Superior and Canada. For more information about Kewadin Casinos, please visit www.Kewadin.com.

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Win Your Share of Over \$60,000 CASH and Credits

DOUBLE DICE & DOLLARS
Christmas | Thursdays in March
Win Your Share of \$7,000 CASH and Credits

LUCKY CASH
All Sites | March 17
Win Your Share of \$5,000 CASH and Credits

YOOPER TOURNAMENT
Christmas & Hessel - Mondays & Tuesdays | Manistique - Wednesdays & Thursdays
March 31 - September 4
Daily Prize Pool \$100 CASH & 35,000 Bonus Points

SPIN TO WIN
St. Ignace | April 4-5
Win Up to \$15,000 CASH/Bonus Points

TGIF TOURNAMENTS
Manistique, Christmas & Hessel | April 4 - August 1 | First Friday Monthly
Daily Prize Pool \$800 CASH & 110,000 Bonus Points

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Sault Ste. Marie | May 10
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Point requirements for all promotions. See Northern Rewards Club to register and for more details.

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BMCC announces 2024-2025 Students of the Year

BAY MILLS — Bay Mills Community College has named Oscar Reo (Gabe Giniw) and Erin Brady as the two Students of the Year for the 2024-25 school year.

Both Sault Ste. Marie residents will be honored at commencement ceremonies in May.

Reo was recognized as the American Indian College Fund (AICF) Student of the Year and Brady as BMCC’s Student to the Year.

“I am excited for Oscar and Erin on their well-deserved nomination as Students of the Year. They have earned this distinction through a highly competitive selection process, and I am incredibly proud of their dedication and achievements. I look forward to watching them continue to excel and achieve their goals,” BMCC President Dr. Duane Bedell said.

Reo, a Sault Tribe member originally from Lansing, is working to preserve

Anishinaabemowin. He is preparing to become a teacher and committed to honoring his culture. According to Reo, his deep connection to singing at powwows, round dances, and ceremonies infuses his life with the spirit of his ancestors. He received several nominations for his commitment to his studies as well.

“It means a lot to be picked

for this award, and to have the opportunity to represent my community. My educational journey has had a lot of ups and downs, so it is an honor to be chosen for this award,” said Reo. “I will do my best to represent Gnoozhekaaning and Baawating in a good way.”

BMCC has been awarding this honor to students for more than a decade. Students

are nominated by faculty and department chairs. To be eligible they must be in their second year of studies with 30 or more credits, and have a 3.0 or higher GPA.

Brady is currently studying to earn her bachelor’s degree in business administration, and an associate’s degree in computer information systems. She also works full time in the biotech field and is raising a family. Brady received numerous nominations for the honor.

“This incredible honor reaffirms for me that going back to school to pursue my dreams was the right path and that means so much to me. I want others know it is never too late to want to set and achieve goals, your hard work will pay off,” Brady said. “I am also so grateful for the support that I receive from my classmates, instructors, and family. I would not be as successful without them, and I hope they know how much I appreciate them.”



Nick Reo



Erin Brady

Change brings both challenges and opportunities to tribe

FROM STI

Sault Tribe Incorporated (STI), the independent business arm of the tribe, has brought new economic activity to the tribe by establishing the STI Federal brand in federal government contracting, with multiple new government contract awards announced in the November 2024 newspaper issue. As STI

Federal navigates the reforms initiated under the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), it recognizes that change brings both challenges and opportunities.

While one recent federal contract award was cancelled, this only reinforces STI Federal’s commitment to innovation and strategic growth in federal con-

tracting.

STI Federal is sharpening its focus on IT services—an area of increasing government investment. A testament to this shift is a newly awarded \$24.8 million contract supporting the CDC’s Vaccine Tracking System. This secure, web-based platform plays a critical role in the

See “CHANGE,” page 10

Solomon is Region 1 Teacher of the Year

From “Solomon,” page 4 in Michigan’s Future City competition winning the right to represent The Wolverine State at the National Competition in Washington, D.C. where they scored a seventh-place finish. Bahwting’s Futue City Team repeated as State Champion this year and scored another Top Ten finish for 2025 at the National Competition.

Solomon has spent her entire teaching career at JKL Bahweting hiring on in 2006. She has enjoyed a lengthy tenure in charge of the Gifted and Talented Program catering to students from second through eighth grades with an emphasis on STEAM incorporating science, technology, art and engineering and math into the curriculum.

“It’s the best part of my job,” said Solomon of the strong bonds she develops with her students as they navigate their six years in the Gifted and Talented Program. “Just being able to help kids figure out what they want to do and what they love. It allows me

to form a great relationship with both my students and their parents. I miss them a lot when they leave.”

The 10 2025-26 honorees were chosen for their dedication to the teaching profession, as evidenced by their commitment to their students and record of service in the teaching profession. Together, the Regional Teachers of the Year make up the Michigan Teacher Leadership Advisory

Council. The Council’s mission, as explained by MDOE, is to bring teacher voices to a wider audience, including direct work with MDOE to provide input on proposed policies and initiatives, and help to share valuable information and resources with their colleagues.

The MDOE will select the 2025-26 Teacher of the Year from the ten regional candidates announcing the winner in May.



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Anishinaabemowin 2025

“Be brave enough to suck at something new.” Our grandfather teachings speak of bravery and courage — **aakode’ewin** — having a fearless heart, knowing you are on an honorable path. Such is the path of our language. Welcome home, **ogichidaa** (warrior).

Mino-dbaajmowin maanda. Debwemagad ge.
This is a good story. And it is true.

Ziisbaakdoke Giizis (March) is a time of changing the seasons. **Gii bboon.** (It was winter) and now **Minookami.** (It is spring.) We people of the planet have recognized the time of this change as a *single moment* when **Giizis** (the sun, our nearest star) is exactly above Earth’s equator (**aabtawona Shka-kimakwe**, around the middle of Mother Earth). In Michigan, this year, that moment in time is 5:01 a.m. but the Equinox (**Aapta-aapta**, half and half) is the same all over the planet. **Minookami** happens in the northern hemisphere (**giiwednong apta**, northern half).

When it is **Aapta-aapta**, it is half-way between the day when daylight lasts the longest (Summer Solstice) and the day when the darkness of night lasts longest (Winter Solstice). At **Aapta-aapta**, **giizhigad dibaganan** (daytime hours) **naasaap** (are the same as) **dibikad dibaganan** (night-time hours).

Mikwendan maanda. (Keep this in mind.)
Gaawiin gegoo miiyaa-sii. (Nothing is perfect.)
Zanagad ji dibizhiged. (It is difficult to measure things.)
Gaawiin pane g’debwetaadi-siimi. (We don’t always agree with each other.)
Waabndan gchi-mazinchigan. (Look at the big picture.)
Gchi bimaadizin (Live in a big, expansive way),
naasaap Gaagigekamig (like the Universe).

Pronunciation??

You'll find the Anishi naabemowin words used here as well as those in the calendar, pronounced at our FaceBook link:
www.facebook.com/SaultTribeLanguageAndCulture.
You can also use the guide shown below!

Making our Sounds

Most letters sound like they do in English. Here are the exceptions.

aa sounds like the a in <i>awesome</i>	a sounds like the a in <i>about</i>
ii sounds like the e in <i>be</i>	i sounds like the i in <i>dip</i>
oo sounds like the o in <i>go</i>	o sounds like the oo's in <i>book</i>
e sounds like the e in <i>Ed</i>	g sounds only like it does in <i>go</i>

We underlined the syllables that get the emphasis.

Pronounce all the letters. Big deal: ‘nh’ in a word has no sound! It’s only a sign to say the previous vowel nasally - as if you have a stuffed-up nose!

Ziisbaakdoke Giizis
Sugar-making Moon
by Susan Askwith



Naasaap . . .the same as

Mikwendan. Think about it.
Dazhindan maamwi g’wiiykiwemag gegiin. Talk about it with your friends.



Ninaatig ziiwaagmide naasaap ziisbak-wad na?
Is maple syrup the same as sugar?

Aankodan naasaap wan na?
Are clouds the same as fog?

Naanmiziwin naasaap bbaanendamwin na?
Is being nervous the same as being worried?

Yekoziwin naasaap giikiimigoshiwin na?
Is being tired the same as being sleepy?

Doopwiniigan naasaap waaboowan na?
Is a tablecloth the same as a blanket?

G’zidenhs-shkaazhiik naasaap g’ninjiinhs-shkaazhiik?
Are your toenails the same as your fingernails?



Aambe, baapin! (Come on, laugh!)

How do you make a tissue dance with its identical twin? Put a little boogie in each!
Why does a moon rock taste better than an Earth rock? It’s a little meteor.
Why does it take pirates so long to learn the alphabet? They can spend years at “C”.
Why can’t a nose be 12 inches long?
Because then it would be a foot.
What’s the difference between bird flu and swine flu? One requires tweetment and the other an oinkment.

Spring Fasting Camp May 7–11, Women’s Fast for Mother Earth on May 10

Sault Tribe Traditional Medicine’s Spring Fasting Camp 2025 is scheduled for Wednesday, May 7, through Sunday, May 11, this year at the Mary Murray Culture Camp, 266 Homestead

Rd. on Sugar Island, Mich. As part of the camp, the Women’s Fast for Mother Earth is Saturday, May 10. Fasting begins at sunrise and ends at sunset, followed by a sweat lodge and feast.

Anyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Please remember moon time teachings. To register or for more information, please call (906) 632-0236, or (906) 379-8230.

Sault Tribe Traditional Medicine Program

Spring Fasting camp
2025

Wednesday, May 7th - Sunday, May 11th @MARY MURRAY CULTURE CAMP, 266 HOMESTEAD RD. SUGAR ISLAND, MI

Gerard Sagassige

2025 April Healer Clinic Hours

April 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29
Sault Ste. Marie Health Center
906-632-0236 or 906-379-8230

Wednesday, April 2nd
St. Ignace Health Center
906-643-8689 or 906-643-0273

Wednesday, April 9th
Manistique Health Center
906-341-8469 or 906-440-6751

Wednesday, April 16th
Munising Health Center
906-387-4721 or 906-387-6101

Wednesday, April 23rd
Hessel Health Center
906-484-2727

Wednesday, April 30th
Newberry Health Center
906-293-8181 or 906-440-0296

*Now is the time to schedule for Spring fasting camp -Miigwech

Any Questions, or to Book an Appointment Please Call Traditional Medicine Program at 906-632-0236 or 906-379-8230

SAULT TRIBE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PROGRAM

WOMEN'S FAST FOR MOTHER EARTH

SATURDAY, MAY 10TH

FASTING BEGINS AT SUNRISE AND ENDS AT SUNSET, FOLLOWED BY A SWEAT LODGE AND FEAST.

@ MARY MURRAY CULTURE CAMP, 266 HOMESTEAD RD. SUGAR ISLAND, MI

MUST BE 18 YEARS OR OLDER, ANYONE UNDER 18 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT. PLEASE REMEMBER MOONTIME TEACHINGS.

TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL 906-632-0236 or 906-379-8230

- MUST BE 18 YEARS OR OLDER, ANYONE UNDER 18 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.
- PLEASE REMEMBER MOONTIME TEACHINGS.
- TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL 906-632-0236, or 906-379-8230

Save the Date!

So far, three Sault Tribe powwows have been scheduled for 2025. Further details to be announced.

3rd annual Niiwin Noodin Powwow Saturday, June 7, Manistique Tribal Community Center, 5698W US Highway 2, Manistique, Mich.

43rd Annual Baaweting Summer Powwow July 4-6, at the tribe’s powwow grounds off of Shunk Road on Ice Circle in Sault Ste. Marie.

Sault Tribe Grand Island Powwow Aug. 9, 2025, Bay Furnace Campground, E7900 W. M-28, Munising, Mich.

NAMEBINI GIIZIS - SUCKERFISH MOON - APRIL 2025

NIIZHWAASO GIIZHIGAT	NTAM GIIZHIGAT	NIIZHO GIIZHIGAT	NSWO GIIZHIGAT	NIIWO GIIZHIGAT	NAANO GIIZHIGAT	NGODWAASWO GIIZHIGAT
		1 Maadagiza. (It is the beginning of the month.)	2 aki (land/earth.)	3 Nimkiikaa. (There are lots of thunders.)	4 Goon igizi. (The snow is melting.)	5 Giigoonhke. (S/he is fishing.)
6 Gimjwan. (It is raining.)	7 pichi (robin)	8 Minookimik. (It is Spring.)	9 Giibaastaagazin! (Say something silly!)	10 waabanang (in the East)	11 shki bimaadiziwin (new life)	12 namebini (suckerfish)
13 Mooshkaneshin Dibiki Giizis (It is a full moon.)	14 Gchi noodin. (It is very windy.)	15 Biikaa. (There are mud puddles.)	16 name (sturgeon)	17 waawaanoon (eggs)	18 Tisige. (S/he is coloring/dyeing.)	19 Shkaakamakwe (mother earth)
20 waaboozoonh (rabbit)	21 kookibinaagan (basket)	22 Shkaakamakwe Giizhigad	23 waawaaskone (flower)	24 bgoji zhigaangwizhiik (wild leek)	25 baakaakwenh (chicken)	26 zhiishiibenhsag (ducklings)
27 oziisigobimizh or ziisgomizh (pussywillow)	28 kibi (spring water)	29 Biidaaban. (It is the light before sunrise.)	30 kwe maangzinan (lady slippers)		gokolii mkizan (the lady slipper flower)	

Calendar created by Sault Tribe Language & Culture Division

Sault Tribe Law Enforcement and Conservation: Reminders and new code for captains

BY ROBERT MARCHAND, CHIEF OF POLICE

Sault Tribe Law Enforcement (STLE) issues treaty hunting and fishing licenses to Sault Tribe members to be utilized within the boundaries of the 1836 Treaty Area. If members have any questions regarding these licenses, the criteria for obtaining them, or the regulations governing their use, please contact our office at (906) 635-6065.

Inland Hunting and Fishing
STLE would like to remind any members who held a 2024 Inland license that harvest reports were due back Feb. 1, 2025.

These reports are required regardless of whether you caught any fish or game, or whether you



engaged in any activity. Members will not be able to obtain a 2025 license until this report is received. If you are requesting this license for the first time, you are required to provide a copy of your tribal card along with proof of hunter safety if you want to

engage in treaty hunting rights. Our office started issuing 2025 Inland licenses as of March 1, 2025. The cost to get your license is \$10. If you plan to engage in any treaty activity with your 2024 license through March 31, please be sure to keep your 2024 license until then. 2024 licenses expire March 31, 2025, as noted on your license; therefore, the 2025 license does not go into effect until April 1, 2025. Chapter 21 of the Tribal Code regulates Inland licenses. Please remember that if you are using this license for fishing purposes, you are only authorized to fish inland lakes and streams within the boundaries of the 1836 Treaty Area.

Inland Walleye lake closures: March 15 – April 25, 2025, for the LOWER peninsula, April 1 – May 15, 2025, for the UPPER peninsula. Contact our office for permitting questions regarding walleye lake closures. There are some restrictions on specific bodies of water that you can find more information about in Chapter 21 of the Tribal Code. **Upcoming seasons:** Spring Turkey begins April 15 and goes through June 15.

Great Lakes – Subsistence/ Netting and Commercial
All 2024 subsistence and commercial licenses expired Dec. 31, 2024. If you have not yet renewed either license for 2025, please make sure you are not engaging in any of the authorized activities for each license.

Commercial licenses – captains and helpers – require an appointment be made with STLE in order to renew each year. It is important that helpers and captains call to schedule their OWN appointments. STLE has to obtain specific personal information each year that only the member themselves can provide. **Per the new CORA code, Captains are now required to report BI-WEEKLY. Harvest reports are due every second and fourth Wednesday of each month and no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern time regardless of where you are commercial fishing. The report needs to be submitted online with the new CORA site CORAfish.org.**

The dates in which you are

required to report for are available on the new CORA reporting system. The new CORA code is available at www.saulttribe.com (Government-Tribal Code).

If you hold a subsistence license or subsistence netting licenses, please remember that you are required to turn in a monthly catch report by the 10th of each month, regardless of effort or no harvest. **If you are fishing in Little Bay de Noc grid 306 from March 1 to May 14**, you are required to obtain a permit through our office (you may hold up to three at a time), and reports are due back within 24 hours. All reports are required whether you catch any fish or get out to fish. Please remember that these licenses are valid only on the Great Lakes within the boundaries of Sault Tribe's 1836 Treaty Area. Chapter 20 of the Tribal Code and CORA code regulate both subsistence licenses.

As a reminder, you are authorized to recreationally fish in the Great Lakes within the boundaries of our 1836 Treaty Area with just your up-to-date tribal membership card as long as you follow state of Michigan rules and regulations for the activity.

It is expected that members will educate themselves on the various rules governing our treaty rights; however, STLE is here to help members wade through the sometimes complex rules. If you cannot find the information you are looking for in Tribal or CORA Code, please contact our office and ask to speak with a conservation officer.

Salt watch — be a smart salter

BY MOLLY ENGELMAN, NRD WATER QUALITY SCIENTIST

In Sault Ste. Marie, road salt is necessary to keep our roadways, sidewalks, and parking lots safe during the winter – but did you know it only takes one teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute five gallons of freshwater? A 50-pound bag of salt, such as the ones sold at the store, is enough to permanently pollute 10,000 gallons of water, which is enough to fill a backyard swimming pool.

When too much salt is applied to deice roads and sidewalks, the excess runs into lakes, rivers, and streams when the snow melts. Some salt bags may be labeled “eco-friendly” or “pet safe,” but there is no regulation on these labels and they likely still contain some sort of salt such as sodium chloride, potassium chloride, magnesium chloride, or calcium chloride. Road salt is the largest contributor to chloride pollution in our environment. Excess chloride in waterways creates unsuitable habitats for aquatic insects, fish, plants, and other animals. Amphibian species like frogs and salamanders breed in temporary wetlands formed by snowmelt and are particularly sensitive to chloride pollution.

Additionally, too much salt on the road can encourage large mammals to approach roadways, leading to more accidents.

What can you do to help?
— Shovel walkways and drive-



ways early and often before snow turns to ice to reduce the amount of salt needed.

— Scatter salt when you apply. Salt works best when each granule is spaced about three inches apart. A typical coffee mug holds enough salt to treat a 20-foot driveway or ten sidewalk squares.

— Sweep up excess salt to use again or store for next winter.

— Switch to sand or an alternative deicer when pavement temperatures are below 15 degrees.

For more information on road salt and how you can be a Smart Salter, visit <https://www.iwla.org/water/stream-monitoring/salt-watch>.

Tips for bringing baby chicks home

BY KATIE OCKERT, MSU EXTENSION

Bringing home new chicks can be exciting—here are some tips to make sure your chicks get off to the best start!

This spring, many people will be adding to their homesteads by purchasing baby chicks from their local farm store or another source. Some will even order chicks directly from a hatchery and they will be delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. Chicks are delicate and require extra care during the first few weeks of life.

Here are some tips from Michigan State University Extension to help you be prepared to provide the best start you can to your new additions.

Brooders are the chicks first home! The purpose of a brooder is to keep chicks warm because they are not able to regulate their own body temperature until they are 12- to 14-days old and they can be easily stressed by temperature fluctuations.

There is no right or wrong way

to set up a brooder; you can use a large cardboard box, a plastic tub, section off floor space, or whatever works for your space. The essential elements of a brooder are that they are draft free, can be kept at a consistent temperature, and that there is adequate space

See “Chicks,” page 10

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2025 Sault Tribe Inland Application

Licensing cost is \$10 per member. Allowable payment methods are check or money order, **made payable to Sault Tribe**, or credit/debit card **at the window only. CASH WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.** Youth (16 and under) and Elders (60 and over) are not required to pay fees. New members must provide a copy of their **current Enrollment card and proof of hunter safety if born after 1960.** There will be a \$36 NSF charge applied to all returned checks.

Application must be filled out accurately and completely. Please print legibly. It is your responsibility to know and abide by the rules and regulations pertaining to this license under Ch. 21 & 23.

Name: _____
Last First Middle

Mailing Address: _____
Street
City State ZIP

Physical Address (if different than above): _____
Street City State ZIP
☐ Male
☐ Female Date of Birth: _____

Phone Number: _____ Tribal File #: _____ STS#: _____

Email Address: _____

Please select one of the following licenses:

- ☐ **Hunting Harvest Card** (allows Inland fishing, general gathering, small game, waterfowl, migratory birds and general furbearer) Choose the tags you would like below:
- ☐ **Deer** *Season dates - 09/02/2025 to 01/04/2026
 - ☐ **Spring Turkey** *Season dates - 04/15/2025 to 06/15/2025
 - ☐ **Fall Turkey** *Season dates - 09/15/2025 to 11/14/2025
 - ☐ **Trapping** (Pine Marten, Bobcat, Fisher, River Otter) *See Ch. 21 for Season dates*

- ☐ **Non Hunting Harvest Card** (allows general gathering and Inland fishing ONLY)

Bear and Elk applications will be available in the Tribal newspaper in April 2025. For all other permits pursuant to Ch. 21 and 23 of the Tribal Code, you must contact the Conservation Department at 906-635-6065 (i.e. State/Federal Firewood Permits, Maple Sap permits, Birch Bark Permit, Conifer Bough Permit etc....)

Mail completed applications to: **Sault Tribe Law Enforcement. P.O. Box 925 Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783**

For STLE office use only
Method of Pymt: _____ Date issued: _____
☐ Elder
☐ Youth

Greenhouse growers face labor shortages

By JEREMY JUBENVILLE, MSU EXTENSION

Michigan greenhouse growers are facing significant labor challenges, according to a newly published report by the MSU Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics (AFRE). The study, conducted through survey responses from 45 greenhouse floriculture producers across 11 Michigan counties, provides crucial insights into labor shortages, H-2A visa employment and the adoption of labor-saving technologies.

A key finding of the report is that 45% of greenhouse operators could not meet the labor demands necessary to run their operations at full capacity. On average, these businesses faced a 31% labor shortfall, limiting productivity and profitability. This deficit underscores the need for innovative solutions to address workforce constraints in the industry.

H-2A Visa use remains limited but holds potential. Despite the increasing national reliance on the H-2A visa program for agricultural labor, only 33% of surveyed Michigan greenhouse growers reported employing H-2A workers in 2023. While some farmers expressed interest in using the program, barriers such as high wage and housing costs deterred participation. Others prioritized hiring local workers first but acknowledged that H-2A could be a viable option if domestic labor shortages

persisted. To mitigate workforce shortages, 39% of respondents reported integrating labor-saving technology into their operations. Most of these investments cost under \$100,000, and 60% of those who implemented such technologies found that they effectively reduced labor needs—by an average of 5%. Additionally, 40% of growers modified their product mix to lower labor costs, further demonstrating adaptive strategies to overcome workforce constraints.

H-2A Labor: Higher costs, higher productivity The study also examined the productivity and cost differences between H-2A and non-H-2A employees. While H-2A labor was reported to be more expensive—averaging 41% higher costs—growers noted that these workers were also more productive. In fact, 60% of respondents employing H-2A workers stated that they were more efficient than their domestic counterparts. This productivity premium suggests that, despite higher costs, H-2A labor can offer substantial operational benefits.

As labor shortages persist, Michigan greenhouse growers are exploring a variety of strategies to sustain their businesses. More detailed insights can be found in the full report, for free download at the AFRE AgEcon Search repository site. For information, visit <https://extension.msu.edu>.

Winter is a good time for pruning oak trees

FROM THE MICHIGAN DNR Winter is one of the best times to trim your oak trees. The winter season is low risk for oak wilt and is easier to prune with the leaves fallen off. Pruning and trimming trees before July 15 can lead to more trees getting

infected by accident. Pruning, trimming and even mowing can leave wounds on the tree that can invite an oak wilt infection. This can also be a good time to check your trees for signs of oak wilt before the high-risk season begins in the spring.

Tips for bringing baby chicks home, continued...

From “Chicks,” page 8 for the chicks. If supplemental heat must be used, it is important to ensure that the heat source can be used safely.

Setting up your brooder at least 24 hours before you plan to introduce chicks is essential to ensure that the environmental temperature is stabilized and that any moisture from bedding can dissipate.

- Here are some quick tips for a successful brooder:
- The brooder is large enough to have about 0.5 to 1 square foot of space per chick.
 - Prepare your brooder with 3-4 inches of bedding that is absorbent and odor-free. Pinewood shavings or chopped straw work best.
 - Use a heat lamp to keep temperatures between 92-95 degrees Fahrenheit. Keep heat lamps securely fastened to prevent them from falling and catching the bedding on fire.
 - Keep a portable thermometer at chick level so that the brooder temperature can be monitored.

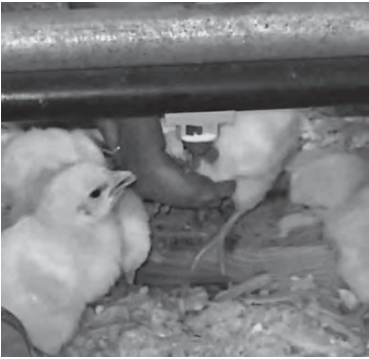


Photo by Katie Ockert Showing a chick where water is using a nipple water system.

Feed and water Chicks should have unlimited access to a fresh chick starter feed. There are several different brands at various price points. You may want to consider a medicated feed that protects against coccidiosis. As chicks grow and develop, their nutritional needs change; ensuring that the chicks are on the appropriate feed at the appropriate age is important. Learn more about this in an article by Jacquie Jacob, “Feeding chickens for egg production in small and backyard flocks.” During the first day of brood-



Image courtesy MSUE **Chicks require a warm brood, fresh water and starter feed.** ing, you may have to “show” the chicks where to eat and drink. You can do this by gently placing the chick at the food or water source and touching their beak to the food or water. **Daily observation** Once your brooder is set up and your chicks have been introduced to the environment, feed and water, employing good management practices will help your chicks grow and thrive. Observe your chicks and their environment daily, if not several times per day, to make sure they are healthy and comfortable.

Observe behavior such as how close the chicks are to the heat lamp. If they are too cold, the chicks will be huddled together under the heat lamp, or if it is too warm, they will be as far away from the lamp as possible. If chicks are evenly spread out, engaging in their environment and with one another, they are likely comfortable, and the temperature is adequate. The temperature in the brooder should be decreased by 5 degrees Fahrenheit each week until the space is either 55 degrees or the same temperature as it is in the natural environment. Also, make sure that they always have feed and water, as this is the single most important thing that you can do while chicks are growing. Always provide clean and fresh water and always place feeders and waterers away from the heat lamp. Be sure to clean the waterer daily and use a shallow waterer to make access easier for small chicks and prevent potential drownings. Providing enough feeder and

water space for chicks is also important. It is recommended that 1-2 linear inches of feeder space per chick during the first six weeks be provided. At week 7, space should increase to 4 linear inches of feeder space. Giving adequate feeder and waterer space reduces competition and allows all the chicks to have access to feed and water. **Follow good management practices** Poultry owners should always practice good management and biosecurity by washing their hands before and after handling chicks, not eating and drinking around birds, limiting visitors, and regularly cleaning and disinfecting feeders and waterers. By following these simple tips your chicks will be off to an excellent start and should make a good addition to your homestead. If you are interested in learning more about poultry farming, consider registering for the MSU Extension online course “Small Scale Poultry Farming.”

Drop by the Sault Health Clinic during March

FROM ACFS

March is Parenting Awareness Month, a time to recognize and appreciate the vital role parents and caregivers play in children’s lives. Anishnaabek Community and Family Services (ACFS) honors the dedication and love parents provide to ensure their children’s well-being and success.

Drop by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribal Health Center and the Manistique Tribal Health Center to explore the Parenting Awareness Month bulletin board, where you can find informative materials, complimentary promotional items, and valuable parenting resources!

Parenting is both rewarding and challenging. Parents are a child’s first teachers, shaping their future with love, guidance, and support. A strong parent-child relationship has lifelong effects on emotional, social, and cognitive development.

Recognizing the challenges of parenting, ACFS offers a comprehensive parenting program to support families in its seven-county service area. This program covers essential topics such as child development, family routines, effective communication, discipline strategies, empathy,



Parenting Awareness informational table inside the Sault Health Center.

and fostering self-worth—especially for those parenting teens. Facilitators provide hands-on guidance, demonstrating techniques and offering coaching to help parents manage their children’s behaviors. Spanning approximately 14 sessions, the program accommodates both voluntary participants and those mandated by court orders.

ACFS also offers a range of other vital family support programs within the seven-county service area, all aimed at ensuring the safety, protection, and well-being of Native children.

These programs are designed to assist parents by providing an array of resources and support. Child Protective Services (CPS): Dedicated to the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and their families. ACFS delivers child protective services to children and their families residing on trust land, who are either eligible or enrolled with a federally recognized tribe. CPS aims to ensure the well-being of children by preventing abuse and neglect, promoting family stability, and upholding the integrity of the family structure.

Prevention Programs: A voluntary program that supports the family in addressing needs identified by client and family such as school issues, legal issues, housing issues, medical issues or anything identified as a need by the family. Clients have the ability to refer themselves.

In-Home Care Services: In cases following the substantiated investigation of child abuse or neglect where the decision is made that children can be maintained safely in the home, ACFS will provide In Home Care services that focus on the safety and risk issues identified during the CPS investigation. Services are targeted to individual child and family needs.

Family Continuity Support: A voluntary intensive home-based program designed to prevent the removal of children from the parental home or to help facilitate reunification. Referrals come from DHHS or ACFS CPS. The program assists with various issues facing the family including employment, housing, house-keeping, budgeting, transportation, etc.

Adolescent In-Home Assistance: The AIHA program is designed to identify and provide services to adolescents who

are engaging in at-risk behaviors. The program is voluntary or court ordered and provides culturally appropriate advocacy, support, and connections with community-based services that enables families to remain together or reunites the family with the adolescent that is in an out of home placement due to delinquency issues. Clients have the ability to refer themselves.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Monitoring: ACFS provides monitoring of child welfare cases throughout the United States involving children either enrolled in or eligible for membership in the tribe to ensure that the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is followed.

For more information or assistance, call ACFS at 1-800-726-0093 or (906) 632-5250. To learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent, contact us by phone or email at acfs-foster-homes@saulttribe.net.

By celebrating parents, we emphasize the importance of strong families and their lasting impact on future generations. Let’s take this month to appreciate those who provide love, stability, and encouragement to children every day.

Recognizing the effects of family violence on children

FROM ACFS

Family violence is a behavior pattern that demonstrates maintaining power and control over a partner in an intimate relationship. According to The Center Against Family and Sexual Violence, family violence can happen to anyone of any race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic background, and education level.

The lasting impacts of family violence on children are multifaceted. Children exposed to family violence may experience behavioral issues, delayed brain development, difficulty in current and future relationships, and dysregulated emotions; it may also affect their physical health. Children may lose sleep, pay less attention in school, struggle with grades, make poor decisions regarding friends, and use drugs and alcohol. The lasting impacts of family violence on children may be experienced long into adulthood in their relationships with spouses, children, and even in their work environment.

Children who live in a home with family violence experience the same fears and threats to their safety that the adult victim may experience. Children are resilient, but continued exposure to family

violence may result in trauma they will never forget.

There are many ways children experience family violence.

Children may witness, be directly involved or overhear the violence within the home. Too often, children are believed to be unaffected if they are in another room or sleeping during the violence. Children know what is happening within their homes, and when exposed to violence, children soon learn to adapt and adjust to the abuser’s violence.

Children may try to align their moods and behavior, such as “walking on eggshells” whenever they are around the abuser to prevent outbursts. Children may feel it is their responsibility to comfort the adult victim, to clean up messes, or may take on the responsibility of having to protect their siblings or family pets during or after the violence.

Adult victims of violence may have to develop survival strategies to keep themselves and their children safe.

It is important not to judge the adult victim’s survival strategies even if they appear unreasonable to outsiders.

As difficult as it may be for others to understand, the adult victim is the expert on the vio-

lence they have experienced. The adult victim knows what will enhance safety and what will escalate it.

It is essential to talk with children about violence and let them know that expressing their feelings of discomfort, fear, and worry is okay.

It is critical to a child’s healing process to allow them to express their feelings and ask questions in a safe space. Talking with children helps them feel safer and may reassure them that the violence is NOT their fault. Try to find ways to build emotional resilience with the children.

Talk with children, create an emotional-support connection, boost their self-esteem, be non-judgmental regarding the child’s thoughts and feelings, and work on implementing healthy ways to manage stress.

Parents can also be victims of violence in their homes. Child-to-parent violence (CPV) is the abuse of parents by their child or children. It is an often-underreported form of domestic or family violence. CPV consists of higher levels of aggression than regular childhood/adolescent outbursts. It can include verbal and physical abuse.

Child-to-parent abuse is defined as any harmful act of an adolescent ages 10-19 intended to gain power and control over a parent. The abuse can be physical, psychological, verbal, or financial.

Parents, grandparents and guardians do not report CPV due to the following:

- Shame/embarrassment-feeling they should be able to handle the issue on their own

- Fear of enraging the child even more if reported or attempted to control the child/adolescent

- Not wanting the child to be in trouble with the law or court system

Some of the causes Child-to-Parent Violence can be attributed to the following:

- Broken family unit
- Poor or nonexistent relationship with an absent parent
- Debt or money issues
- Unemployment
- Parental drug or alcohol abuse

- Abuse and neglect from a parent

- No coping skills
- Disabled, elder, or mentally ill parent

- Escalated arguments
- Aggressive behaviors or tendencies

- Unable to manage feelings
- Witnessing abuse in the home

- Lack of respect for parents-perceiving them as weak

- Lack of consequences for behaviors

- Mental illness

- Child seeking revenge upon parent

Child-to-parent violence has no specific programs or agencies that protect parents from abusive children. There are intervention strategies that can be helpful to prevent the abuse from escalating if remedied early on:

- Involve school therapists or behavior specialist

- Family Therapist

- Family violence or DV organization

- Law enforcement

- Judicial system and juvenile justice programs

- Adult protective services

- Creating a safety plan

If you find yourself in an intimate partner or family violence relationship, the Advocacy Resource Center can offer assistance.

Please don’t hesitate to contact an advocate at (906) 632-1808 or visit www.arcsaulttribe.com to learn more about family violence.

Change brings challenges and opportunity

From “Change,” page 5

vaccine supply chain, ensuring efficient purchasing, ordering, and distribution of publicly funded vaccines nationwide, including tribal communities. It exemplifies the growing demand for technology-driven solutions that enhance efficiency, security, and public health.

By expanding expertise in data management, cybersecurity, and cloud-based infrastructure, STI Federal is aligning with the

government’s evolving priorities. This major award reinforces the strength of STI Federal’s growth potential and its ability to adapt to industry shifts. The team remains committed to securing impactful projects and delivering exceptional value.

Ms. Rachel Heckel, CEO of STI, shared that “I hope that the Sault Ste. Marie community can take great pride in STI Federal’s accomplishments and impact on the national level.”

Through the profits generated by this and other contract awards, STI Federal will continue to invest in the business infrastructure needed to perform a growing number of increasingly complex federal contracts. As STI Federal becomes more established, these profits will also generate dividends within the next several years to support the tribe’s educational, health, social and cultural initiatives, as well as economic and community development.”

ELDER INTERVIEWS

Are you a Sault Tribe elder? Are you interested in participating in a video series? Interviews will be shared on the Sault Tribe TV YouTube page, as well as on video displays throughout the service area.

Topics may include growing up as a Sault Tribe member, how things have changed with the tribe over the years, or what it’s like being a tribal elder.

If interested call Elder Services at (906) 635-4971 to set up a time.

JKL Bahweting hosts annual snowsnake event



Tan-A Hoffman demonstrates the proper technique for launching a snowsnake down the track. Students were instructed to get low and use one hand with their index finger at the base. Some listened closely and had success, while others utilized their own methods and saw their snowsnakes repeatedly careen out-of bounds.



Fifth-graders from all three classes held their own competition waiting in line to launch their hand-crafted snowsnakes on March 6.



Middle schoolers came out to observe the fifth-grade championship round and tossed their larger snowsnakes to end the 2025 competition.



A snowsnake at rest on the track. Students wood burned and decoarated their own snowsnakes before taking them outdoors to have some winter fun and participate in friendly competition.



A careful eye and a steady hand.



Mrs. Hoffman lengthens the track as participants were consistently hitting the end due to the recent snow.

Clockwise, the cold temperatures and blustery winds provided challenging conditions. Some wore hoods, some wore hats, there were bare-handed throws and those sporting gloves and mittens, but the most hearty competitors, like the one on the top right were undeterred removing their jack-ets and donning only a T-shirt.



The 2025 Snowsnake Champion Sylas Roberts with Jase Hansen, second place and Maci Gordon, third.

Sault Tribe operations returning to normal after Feb. 9 ransomware attack



MidJim Convenience Stores officially reopened on Feb. 19 allowing customers to return to buy fuel, snacks and cigarettes.



Cashier Gina Kravis fielding a call at MidJim.



Gene McKechnie getting a discount on a carton of cigarettes.



Dale Hanchera fueling up on discount gasoline.



Cashier Catie Beckner makes change for another customer.



Dealer John Synett manned the roulette wheel as Kewadin Casino returned to action on Feb. 25.



Roberta Syrette (above) plays a machine, while below, Eli Moran of the Sault hopes to hit a jackpot.



Heather and Gary Wenstrom of Sault, Ont. pick up their order from Deli Operators Stephen Payment and Shana Tadgerson.



Noah McDonald and Connie Rolston were manning the gift shop.



A casino patron was one of the first players to try her luck.



Bradley Salwasser of Bellaire, Mich. watches as Cage Cashier Janice Shannon counts out his money



Linda Davis and Kris Beaubien visit the casino as business returns to normal.



Above, Front Desk Clerk Kayla King greeted incoming hotel guests. Below, Guitarist Frank Hannon of Tesla delighted fans on Feb. 28 as performances and crowds returned.



Box Office Ticket Vendor Eugene Gravelle dispensed concert tickets for an upcoming show. Kewadin Casinos Entertainment will host country music artists Sawyer Brown on Friday, May 23, in St. Ignace followed by the hard-rockin' band, Clutch, on June 19 at the DreamMakers Theater. Tickets are also available for the Last Summer on Earth Tour featuring the band, Barenaked Ladies, Sugar Ray and Fastball on July 19 in St. Ignace. This show will be held at the outdoor venue.

Dean Sayers shares winter stories at Big Bear

SUBMITTED BY JACQULYN ROBINSON, NRD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST
Dean Sayers, former long-time Chief of Batchewana

First Nation, recently came to Niigaanaagizhik in Sault Ste. Marie for Adizookaan, to share our winter stories. Despite a snowstorm, 50 community mem-

bers of all ages attended, from 5 to 84.
This event was a collaboration hosted by the Natural Resources Division, Language and Culture,

and Community Health.
The evening began with a traditional feast of various soups, salad, berries, wild rice, smoked fish, galette, cornbread and more.

Sayers told several stories and discussed Ishkode (fire) and the importance of cultural burns, which aligns with the current NRD Ishkode project.



Dean Sayers (center) shared winter stories at the tribe's cultural center in the Sault. Over 50 participants partook in a traditional feast of wild rice, smoked fish, berries and more.

Sault Elder Center February birthdays



Happy birthday to Sue Pavlat (left) and LouAnn Bush.

Local youth dance for NBA game



Sault Tribe member and horse dancer Arrow Hatch (above left), his father Mike Hatch (above on right), mother Jamie VerWiebe, and Bay Mills Indian Community members Sydney (above right) and Kenny Teeple attended the Milwaukee Bucks game against the Miami Heat on Feb. 23, where they were invited to dance. Hatch attended the fifth annual Bear Moon powwow in Franklin, Wisc., three weeks prior to the game where he met a representative from the Bucks who was at the powwow recruiting dancers for the game. The drum Little Priest played prior to tip-off, with the women doing the Swan dance, followed by the men and boys doing the crow hop.

Soo JV Lakers win state championship on home ice

BY JOE ESSON
On the weekend of March 7-9, the Soo JV Lakers Hockey Team played at the Big Bear Arena for the State Championship. The Lakers are a Division 2 Prep Team, meaning all the players are from surrounding area schools. There are 19 players in grades 9-12 and four local coaches.
The Lakers played their opening round of three games against Big Boy Prep (Fraiser, Mich.), The Metro Jets (Mount Clemons, Mich.) and Trenton Unified (Trenton, Mich.), winning all three with scores 5-1, 10-2 and 7-0. This earned them a trip to the State Semi Finals where they would meet their season rival the Muskegon JR Lumberjacks. The semifinal game was a close battle with the Lakers ultimately pulling ahead and winning 4-2. This win secured the Lakers a chance to play for a State Championship on their home ice at Big Bear Arena, taking on the undefeated Lansing Spartans.
The Lakers entered the third period with a 2-0 lead only to find the Spartans were not finished. The Spartans capitalized on two third

period goals to tie the game late in the final period.
In a packed building of local fans cheering on the Lakers it was suddenly silent. Until a couple heroes emerged for the Lakers with some incredible late game saves, goaltender and Sault Tribe member Maysn Esson gave the Lakers a chance to finish off a once in a life time incredible hockey game. With 58 seconds left in the game Laker defenseman and Sault Tribe member Trey Topash would skate the puck end to end and around the opposing goal. He put the puck to the front of the net and it bounced on the stick of fellow Sault Tribe member Caleb Host, who fired the puck into the empty net.
Now up 3-2, the Lakers would hang on and play team defense as the clock ticked down and expired. The clock hit zero and the Lakers piled off their bench with a sea of gloves and helmets flying through the air. Laker Captain and Sault Tribe member Dylan Bouschor collected the state championship trophy and banner. Game star and winning goal went to Caleb Host. Tournament MVP went to



star goaltender Maysn Esson. The Lakers were coached by Head Coach Joe Esson and Coaches Dan Klever, Andy Heyboer and Jason Payment. The Lakers want to thank Big Bear Arena staff for everything all year and the fans in attendance.

Above: On the weekend of March 7-9 the Soo JV Lakers played at Big Bear Arena for the State Championship - and won! Right: (L-R) Ed Bowers, Maysn Esson, Samantha Esson, Leo Esson, Ian Bowers and Nathan Rioux.



Walking on...

BARRY ALLEN BROOKS

With hearts full of love and gratitude, we celebrate the life of Barry Allen Brooks, who passed away on Feb. 15, 2025, at the age of 62. Barry was born on Nov. 10, 1962, in Cheboygan, Mich., the son of Clarence and Winifred (Graham) Brooks. He was a graduate of Inverness School and a proud member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

Barry had a way of making everyone feel like his best friend—and he didn’t just make you feel that way, he told you. If you knew Barry, you were his best friend. His laughter was contagious, his hugs unmatched, and his spirit something truly magical.

Barry lived life with enthusiasm, embracing every moment with joy. He was a proud participant in the Special Olympics and loved bowling, watching movies, wrestling, singing and dancing, and enjoying trips to the casino. He had a knack for making lists, and above all, he was the life of every party.

Barry was welcomed into heaven by his parents, Clarence and Winifred (Graham) Brooks, his beloved sister Bonnie Jewell, brother, Tom Brooks, nephew, John Brooks, and great-nephews, Timothy Jewell and Jarret Bellant.

He is survived by his loving sister Judy (Dick) Bellant, brothers, Terry Brooks and Lawrence Plaunt, and his special brother-in-law, George Jewell, along with many nieces, nephews, and friends who were blessed to know him.

Barry was the embodiment of true, unconditional love. His presence was a gift and a reminder of life’s simple joys. Though he will be deeply missed, his spirit will continue to shine in the hearts of all who knew him.

More details will be shared at a later date regarding a burial and celebration of life this spring.

In honor of Barry, let us share a laugh, give a hug, and tell someone just how special they are—just as he always did.

Donations can be made to the Special Olympics in his memory.

SHIRLEY MARIE LaJOICE

Shirley Marie LaJoyce, 74, of Jacksonville, Fla., passed away March 1, 2025. She was born on Aug. 24, 1950 in Sugar Island, Mich., to the late Joseph and Josephine Andrews.

Shirley enjoyed making dream catchers and origamis, as well as going to the market and pow-wows. She treasured the time spent having family gatherings and swimming with her grand-

children. Shirley was a cherished mother, sister, grandmother and friend who will forever be remembered for her wonderful kindness, positive spirit and thoughtful and giving nature.

She is preceded by her parents and husband of nearly 50 years, Mark Andrew LaJoyce. Shirley is survived by her children, Linda Davis and John LaJoyce (Tracie); adopted family, A.J. Wooten (Gayle), Ruby Jones and Marvin Williams, Jr.; sisters, Bee Leighton, Corky Kavo, and Michelle Andrews; brother, Harry Andrews; grandchildren, Joseph Fisher (Catherine), Astoria Davis, Karie LaJoyce, Korey LaJoyce, Hunter LaJoyce, John LaJoyce II and Charlie LaJoyce; great-grandchildren, Lilith Fisher and Amara-Mae Fisher with numerous extended family and friends.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m., Monday, March 17, 2025 in the Jacksonville Memory Gardens Chapel. The family will receive friends from 10 a.m. until service time.

LAWRENCE “ED” EDWARD McKERCHIE

Lawrence “Ed” Edward McKerchie, 50, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., passed away peacefully on Feb. 20, 2025, at MyMichigan Medical Center in Sault Ste. Marie, with family by his side. He fought a tough battle with cancer. He was born May 4, 1974, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

Ed was the father of five children, two girls; Katie and Stacy Walker; three boys, and grandchildren; Kohen, Vivian, and his special little buddy Zander. He had three cats who gave him much comfort, Bugs, Peanut, and Buddy.

He worked at Bay Mills Wild Bluff Golf Course with the lawn maintenance crew.

He is survived by his girlfriend of 20 years, Michelle Smolinski; brother, Shane McKerchie of Riverton, Wyom.; his adoptive parents, Lawrence and Ursula McKerchie of Brimley, Mich.; adoptive siblings, Nicky (Andy) Morrison of Brimley, Nathan (Kim) McKerchie of Traverse City, Mich., Jacob (Tahra) McKerchie of Gaylord, Mich., Jeanette (Jason) Arbogast of Riverton, Wyom., Allen McKerchie of Riverton, Ian McKerchie of Brimley, Christina (Peyton) Blakely of Brimley, and Caleb (Mariah) McKerchie of Sault Ste. Marie; as well as many uncles, aunts, nieces, and nephews.

Ed was preceded in death by his biological mother, Doris McKerchie; grandmother, Henrietta (Roy) McKerchie; and grandpa, Lawrence L. McKerchie.

A memorial mass was held Friday, March 7, 2025, at Holy Name of Mary Proto-Cathedral Catholic Church, 377 Maple St, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., with Rev. Al Mott officiating.

An interment will be held at a later date in the spring/summer at Hillcrest Cemetery in Racó,

Mich.

Family Life Funeral Homes assisted the family with arrangements.

MARILYN KAY “CHOO” YON

Marilyn Kay “Choo Choo” Yon, passed away on Friday, Feb. 14, 2025, surrounded by her family in Brimley, Mich. Marilyn was born on May 12, 1951, to the late James and Audrey (LeBlanc) Lyons.

Marilyn was raised in Bay Mills, Mich., as the oldest of 11 children. On Oct. 9, 1976, she married the love of her life, the late Larry Yon, at the Blessed Kateri Church in Bay Mills. She had great love for her family and enjoyed bonfires, family cook outs, visiting with her loved ones, and her beloved pets. Marilyn was a great lover of all kinds of animals and often rescued those in need. In recent years, she became a great fan of the Detroit Lions, even coloring her hair blue to show her team spirit. Marilyn met everyone with warmth and a smile.

Marilyn is survived by her children, her greatest joy, Chris, Shauna, and Billy Yon of Bay Mills; grandchildren, Josephine, Kaylee, Mikael, Kyeanna, Carmen, Elijah, Jay, Xyler, Serenity, and Evie; sisters, Kathi Carrick, Dawn (David) Terrell, Anita (Don) Charles, Melanie Lyons, and Michele LeBlanc; brother, Walter (Bobbi) Lyons; and many nieces and nephews, who greatly loved their Aunt Choo Choo.

Marilyn was preceded in death by her husband, Larry; parents, James and Audrey; siblings, James Lyons Jr., Lawrence Lyons, Denise LeBlanc, and Gerri LeBlanc; parents-in-law, Marvin and Lora Yon; brothers-in-law, Marvin Yon and Mike Carrick; and sisters-in-law, BreezAnn, and Beverly.

Visitation and Mass were held Feb. 24, 2025, at the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Mission in Bay Mills.

The family would like to say a special thank you to Hospice (Amanda and Shauna) of Sault Ste. Marie. Family Life Funeral Homes assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

RODNEY “ROD” DENNIS ROY

Rodney “Rod” Dennis Roy, 82, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., died peacefully at home on Feb. 17, 2025. Two of his greatest loves were with him, Marcella (Gervais) Roy, his wife of 62 years, and his best friend Maggie, his golden retriever.

Outside of his first love “Marce,” he loved motors, hunting, fishing, a campfire, cooking, and being outdoors, especially

near the water.

Rodney was born May 1, 1942, in Saginaw, Mich., to Dennis and Marion (Henderson) Roy. He was one of seven children who grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. He spent many summers on Sugar Island with his Grandpa Tom and Grandma Jane, who taught him to hunt and fish, which shaped his love for the outdoors. He was amazed by nature and could spot a deer, a great fishing spot, or a bald eagle with incredible precision.

Rodney graduated from Loretto High School in 1960 and had an opportunity to play hockey at Ohio State University on a partial scholarship. His family could not afford University, so he went to work on the freighters to save up enough money to put himself through electrical school and to buy Marce an engagement ring. They married on June 30, 1962, and began a family.

Rod built their first house on Lizzie Street in Sault Ste. Marie and began school to become an electrician. He worked for Swan Electric for many years flying back and forth to Wisconsin before eventually opening his own business: Roy Electric. He was known as a talented businessman with incredible ethics, knowledge, and skills. He was respected by so many in the community that worked with him.

He was cherished by his children and grandchildren, whom he proudly supported. He attended every cheerleading event, ball game, dance recital, awards program, graduation, and Christmas program. His life was rich with family, friends, projects, coffee gatherings, and occasional trips to play the slots at Kewadin Casino, where he worked as a foreman for the Sault Tribe during its construction.

He woke every morning, delivered a cup of coffee to Marcella and then settled onto the couch with his dog, Maggie, to watch CNN and the sunrise over Sugar Island. He marked the passing of time as the sun moved from the South end of the Island and back. He loved to look out at the river, talk about fishing, spot an occasional eagle, and watch for the geese, which he considered his nemesis.

Rod’s favorite time of year was hunting season when he went to his camp, which was his happy place. The annual wild game feast was one of his favorite days of the year where his friends, brother, son, sons-in-law, and grandsons gathered for a night of feasting, playing cards and telling hunting stories.

He freely offered advice and opinions, confident in his claims of being right. A skilled debater and generous person, he often helped neighbors, family, and strangers with tasks like plowing their driveway, changing a tire, lending out tools, renovating homes and fixing anything with a motor. Rod could fix anything. Rod loved cars and bought his first one even before he had a license. He enjoyed working on engines. Before he passed, he bought a red Jeep Rubicon and spent his last year perfecting it. He did everything to perfection, he ensured everything was done

flawlessly, so Marce wouldn’t have to worry after he was gone.

Rod had a life well-loved and he was so proud of his kids and grandkids. He always welcomed his grandkids with a light up moment when they walked in the door, calling out their names with joy “Em!” “Nat!” “Mern!” “Lyds!” and if you were a male friend or family member, you knew you were important if he called you “Lad.” He would regularly stop in at his children’s houses for coffee, checking in, giving advice and enjoying a cup of coffee.

He instilled a remarkable work ethic in his children, always emphasizing the motto: “If you are going to do a job, do it right.” Despite being unable to afford college himself, he ensured that each of his children received opportunities he did not have.

He left an enduring legacy as a great husband, dad, and Papa. His passing has created an empty space in our hearts, and heaven has gained an exceptional man.

Rodney is survived by his wife, Marcella; their five children, Jeff (Patti) Roy, Jennifer (Chuck) Hatfield, Jodi (Matt) Sepkowski, Jackie (Mike) McLean, and Jocelyn (Chuck) Fabry; 11 grandchildren, Jorey Verette, Jarrett Roy, Marissa (Adam) Skinner, Cody Gonyeau, Ally Apostol, Natalie Dale, Annie McLean, Merryn McLean, Lydia Sepkowski, Drew Fabry, and Emeree Fabry; nine great-grandchildren, Levi Roy, Emma Roy, Regan Verrette, John Verrette, Haven Skinner, River Apostol, Mallorie McKerchie, and Morgan McKerchie; sister, Doreen Nelson; brothers, Billy Roy, and Rick Roy.

Rodney was preceded in death by his parents, Dennis and Marion; son, Michael Roy; brothers, Carl Roy, Wilbur Roy, Tommy Roy; and sister, Denny Atkins.

Rodney will live on in our best family memories and there will always be an empty spot at the dinner table. May heaven welcome you home.

Rodney’s beautiful life was celebrated at St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church in Sault Ste. Marie on Feb. 21, 2025, with visitation followed by a mass.

In lieu of donations, please do acts of kindness in Rodney’s memory, fostering a ripple effect of kindness and inspiring others to live a life of purpose and generosity.

Family Life Funeral Homes assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left to the family at flfh@familylifefh.com.

ELDEN WAYNE WHALEN, JR.

Elden Wayne Whalen Jr., 68, a lifelong resident of Newberry, Mich., peacefully passed away in the early hours on Sunday morning, Feb. 16, 2025.

Wayne was born in Newberry, on Nov. 11, 1956, to Elden
See “Walking On,” Page 16



Food pantry thanks tribe for generous donation

SUBMITTED BY KIM SWANBERG
Alger Community Food Pantry board members and volunteers want to thank Unit 5 Representative Tyler LaPlaunt and the Sault Tribe Board for their generous donation.

A \$25,000 2 percent grant from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians to the Alger Community Food Pantry gave much needed funding to keep pantry shelves filled with food. The Alger Community Food Pantry has historically operated on less than 1% operating costs, which means that for every dollar donated, 99 cents is used to purchase distributable goods to families in need (food, hygiene and cleaning supplies). It has virtually eliminated our 2024 ending deficit and allowed us to end the year with a positive yearly balance and allowed us to continue sustainability. During the last three years



Kim Swanberg thanks Sault Tribe Board Representative Tyler LaPlaunt for a \$25,000 2 percent grant from the Sault Tribe for the Alger Community Food Pantry.

(2022-24), the average cost for distributed goods was over \$32,000 compared to the 3 years prior to that (2019-21) when that average was \$18,000. This amounts to a 78% increase in our yearly cost of distributable goods in the past 3 years compared to the 3 years prior to that. The price of these goods as well as the increased number of requests have both contributed to the increase. The Alger Community Food

Pantry, unlike mobile food pantries, is readily available throughout the month for any families in need of food assistance. We are there when a family’s funds run short and there is an immediate need, more on their schedule than ours, and we are here if they need us more often due to an especially hard month (they know their circumstances better than us). When winter months come, many families face hardships with higher heating and utility bills and budgets get especially strained so the support, we can offer will lessen the risk of food shortage or deepening food insecurity. We are an all-volunteer staff and entirely dependent upon donations and in-kind support from the community to operate. Our ability to continue is based upon our faith in the community’s generosity and concern for their neighbors in need. Munising City Administration

offered a building to house the food pantry and covers the cost of utilities. City personnel keep the pantry road cleared of snow and assist with upkeep. Community members are extremely generous with their money and time. Community members volunteer to distribute food and help to collect food during many times of the year. Keeping the pantry going truly “takes a village.” So many organizations and community members donate funding needed to keep the pantry going year after year. Each year Can Food Drives from Christmas Kewadin Casino and “Fill the Fire Truck” provided by Munising Fire Department help fill the shelves with non-perishable food items and monetary donations. The Alger Community Food Pantry serves anyone who is experiencing food insecurity.

The future of dental care in tribal communities

FROM SAULT TRIBE DENTAL
Dana Marie Obey, a proud Sault Tribe member, has returned to her roots in northern Michigan to complete a four-month preceptorship with Dr. Dave Drockton and his team at Sault Tribe Dental. Her journey to becoming a dental therapist is a testament to dedication, resilience, and a passion for improving access to oral health care in underserved communities. Obey’s educational journey began in Washington State, where she attended Skagit Valley College as part of one of the nation’s first CODA-accredited Dental Therapy programs. She later honed her skills at Swinomish Dental, providing



clinical care to patients within her specialized scope of practice. Dental therapy, an emerging field in oral health, enables prac-

tioners to perform minimally invasive treatments, prevention, and emergency services under the supervision of a licensed dentist. Dental therapy is an evidence-based way to improve access to oral health care. “It frees up dentists and hygienists to focus on more complex treatments while ensuring more patients receive timely care,” Obey said. Her work is particularly impactful in tribal facilities, community health centers, and other settings where dental access has historically been limited. Obey recalled her own childhood struggles with accessing dental care, which inspired her to make a difference. “As a child, I feared

going to the dentist and didn’t have routine care. When my first son, Miles, was born, I participated in a government program for pregnant woman and learned how oral health affects a person’s overall health which fueled my desire to work in the dental field.” With over 14 years of experience as a certified dental assistant, Obey’s passion for dentistry only grew stronger. She saw the need for dental therapists to bridge gaps in care and improve patient experiences. Now, as she completes her residency in Sault Ste. Marie, Obey is focused on creating a positive dental experience for families, regardless

of whether they’re visiting for routine care or pain relief. Her goal is to reduce the anxiety and fear often associated with dental visits, while also decreasing wait times for care. “I want families to feel comfortable visiting the dental office. By providing patients the option to see a dental therapist, we can improve outcomes and help more people get the care they need,” Obey said. Obey’s work represents the future of dental care in tribal and underserved communities. She is committed to making oral health care accessible, equitable, and patient-focused, one smile at a time.

Mitten Kids Dental Exhibit at Grand Rapids Children’s Museum

The Grand Rapids Children’s Museum (GRCM) is excited to announce its popular dental exhibit, with new interactive elements and a large-scale gallery wall showcasing influential dentists throughout history, including Dr. Jessica A. Rickert, the first Native American female dentist. The Mitten Kids Dental Exhibit allows children to role-play as dentists and patients, to act out dental procedures, to explore dental tools and X-Rays, and to clean the teeth of a puppet patient. The latest additions include an immersive giant mouth for brushing and flossing away sugar bugs. The creative displays make learning about oral health engaging and will ease fears about dental visits and will inspire future careers in dentistry. When kids experience the dentist’s office in a low-stress environment, future dental vis-



The Grand Rapids Children’s Museum is excited to announce its popular dental exhibit, enhanced with new interactive elements and a large-scale gallery wall showcasing influential dentists throughout history, including Dr. Jessica A. Rickert, the first Native American female dentist.

its will be comfortable and fun. Research supports that dramatic play fosters cognitive, social, and emotional development by helping children build confidence. Additionally, early exposure to STEM-related careers—like dentistry—can expand possibilities

for children who may not otherwise consider the field. “We know that play is a powerful tool for learning,” said Maggie Lancaster, CEO of GRCM. “This exhibit not only helps children become comfortable with the dentist but also introduces them to the possibilities of a career in dentistry. As a child, I wish I had been able to play through the experience first—just like kids can now do at GRCM. This exhibit helps make dental care approachable, fun, and exciting.” Representation is a key focus of the new gallery wall, highlighting diverse dental figures, including Dr. Rickert, who has dedicated her career to breaking barriers and advocating for underserved communities. “Whenever I ask, ‘Have you ever seen an American Indian dentist,’” said Dr. Rickert.

“The answer is always ‘No.’ The GRCM’s dental exhibit can change that.” “Our mission at Mitten Kids Dentistry is to provide the highest level of pediatric dental care, and to foster health, wellness, and a sense of adventure in every child who comes through our doors,” Dr. Brett Kingma, co-owner and co-founder of Mitten Kids Dentistry states. “We are thrilled to partner with the GRCM!” The Mitten Kids Dental Exhibit is included with museum admission and will be available through May 31, 2025. It is sponsored by Mitten Kids Dentistry & Orthodontics, with support from the Michigan Dental Association Foundation and the West Michigan Dental Foundation. For accurate information, go to grcm.org before any visits.

Walking on continued...

From “Walking On” Page 15
Wayne Sr. and Bethel (Belcher) Whalen. After graduating from Newberry High School in 1975, Wayne enlisted into the United States Marine Corps and served honorably until his discharge in December 1977. Upon his return to the local area, Wayne worked many professions including a pulp cutter, sawyer,

mill worker with Louisiana-Pacific, fisherman with King’s Fisheries, and a cook with local restaurants. Wayne was a tribal member with the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and served as a member of the Tribal Elder Board. Wayne was also an active member of the American Legion Post #74. Wayne was married to Tammy (Fisher) and together they shared

one son and one daughter. Wayne was preceded in death by his mother, Bethel Jane. He is survived by his father, Elden Wayne Sr. of Newberry; former spouse, Tammy Whalen (Keith Kempamy) of Newberry; son Elden Wayne III of Newberry; daughter Aleta, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.; brothers Jim (Jennifer) of Newberry; John (Elizabeth

of Coden, Ala.; and Joe (Jackie) of Newberry; personal friend and soulmate, Debbie Johnson of Newberry. Wayne also leaves behind grandsons Aiden and Carson; and many cousins, nephews and nieces. In keeping with Wayne’s wishes, he will be cremated, and services will be a simple gathering of friends and family members

this coming spring. Date, time, and location will be announced at a later time. Interment with full military honors conducted by the United States Marine Corps Honor Guard and the American Legion Post #74 will take place at Forest Home Cemetery. Condolences may be expressed at beaulieufuneralhome.com who assisted the family.

You may be eligible for SSI, Social Security benefits

BY HILLARY HATCH, SOCIAL SECURITY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

You may be able to get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) even if you already receive Social Security benefits. About 2.5 million adults and children get SSI and Social Security at the same time.

We pay Social Security benefits to workers and their eligible family members based on the

worker’s earnings. SSI is a needs-based program that provides payments to people with little or no income and few resources.

People younger than 65 must be blind or have a disability and meet SSI income and resource limits, while people 65 and older do not have to have a disability. About 1.4 million people 65 and older receive both SSI and Social Security.

What do we mean by “little or

no income”?

In 2025, you may be eligible for SSI if your total income – including your Social Security benefit – is less than \$987 per month (the 2025 SSI monthly federal benefit rate plus \$20).

We consider income from all non-work sources, including pensions, veterans’ benefits, unemployment, and Social Security disability, retirement, and survivor benefits. We also count some

– but not all – earnings from work, including self-employment.

What do we mean by “few resources”?

Resources are things that you own that you could change to cash and use to support yourself. They include vehicles (if you own more than one) and money in bank accounts, stocks, and bonds. We do not count your home and the land it’s on, as

long as you live there. To be eligible for SSI, your resources cannot be worth more than: \$2,000 for a single person. \$3,000 for a married couple living together.

For more information visit our blog article, You May Be Eligible for SSI and Social Security Benefits at [blog.ssa.gov/you-may-be-eligible-for-ssi-and-social-security-benefits](https://www.ssa.gov/you-may-be-eligible-for-ssi-and-social-security-benefits).

Social Security answers to frequently asked questions

Question:
How can I become a representative payee?

Answer:
If you know someone who receives Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and who needs assistance managing their payments, contact your local Social Security office about becoming their representative payee. Go to www.ssa.gov/payee for more information.

Question:
I run a bed and breakfast. By this time every year, I am tired of all the paperwork involved with filing taxes. Is there an easier way for small businesses to file W-2s for their employees?

Answer:
Absolutely. If you are a small business owner or entrepreneur, you should check out Social Security’s Business Services Online (BSO) webpage. There, you can file your employees’ W-2s and W-2cs electronically and print out the W-2s to provide paper copies to your employees. You also can verify the Social Security numbers of your employees. Our online services are easy to use, fast, and secure. Visit our BSO page at www.ssa.gov/bso/bsowelcome.htm.

Question:
My grandparent receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI). They may have to enter a nursing home to get the long-term care needed. How

does this affect their SSI payments?

Answer:
Moving to a nursing home could affect your grandparent’s SSI payments, depending on the type of facility. In many cases, we must reduce or stop SSI payments to nursing home residents when Medicaid covers the cost of the nursing home care. When your grandparent enters or leaves a nursing home, assisted living facility, hospital, skilled nursing facility, or any other kind of institution, you must notify Social Security right away. Learn more about SSI reporting responsibilities at www.ssa.gov/ssi. Call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) to report a change.

Question:
I am receiving Social Security retirement benefits, and I recently went back to work. Do I have to pay Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes on my income?

Answer:
Yes. By law, your employer must withhold FICA taxes from your paycheck. Although you are retired, you do receive credit for those new earnings. Each year Social Security automatically credits the new earnings. If your new earnings are higher than in any earlier year used to calculate your current benefit, your monthly benefit could increase. For more information, visit www.ssa.gov or call us at

1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).

Question:
Do Members of Congress have to pay into Social Security?

Answer:
Yes. Members of Congress, the President, Vice President, federal judges, and most political appointees, have paid taxes into the Social Security program since January 1984. They pay into the system just like everyone else, no matter how long they have been in office. Learn more about Social Security benefits at www.ssa.gov.

Question:
I worked for the last 10 years, and I now have my 40 credits. Does this mean that I can get the maximum Social Security retirement benefit?

Answer:
The 40 credits are the min-

imum number you need to be eligible for retirement benefits. However, we do not base your benefit amount on those credits, but on your earnings over a lifetime of work. To learn

more about how you earn Social Security credits and how they work, read, or listen to our publication How You Earn Credits, available at www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10072.pdf.



You are invited to a

COMMUNITY SEED EXCHANGE + ONE SEED, ONE STATE GATHERING

Spring is coming! Join us to share seeds and prepare for the coming growing season. All are welcome. This is a free event.

Two options to participate:

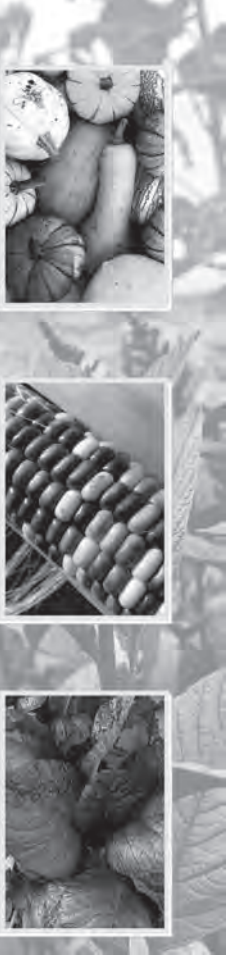
Pickford Community Library:
March 22nd, 11 am – 1 pm

Bayliss Public Library (SSM):
March 29th, 1 pm – 3 pm

Planning to bring seeds to share or swap? Please bring untreated, labeled seeds. Food, flowers, herbs, native plants, etc... are welcome!

You do not need to bring seeds to participate! We will have plenty to share.

Questions?
Pickford Community Library: 906-647-1288
Bayliss Public Library: 906-632-9331



2025 GITIGAAN (GARDEN) SEED REGISTRY



Eligibility:

- Sault Tribe members and employees
- Limit one kit per household
- Must be able to pick up at one of the distribution locations listed below

Available Kits:

Salsa: Jalapeños, Tomatoes, Cilantro, Bell Pepper, Onion

4 Sisters: Corn, Beans, Squash, Sunflowers

Kids Choice: Carrots, Cherry Tomatoes, Snap Peas, Nasturtium

Option for 2 add ons from above

Distribution Locations and Dates:

St. Ignace Tribal Health Center: April 21, 10-2

Manistique Tribal Community Center: April 21, 10-2

Sault Ste. Marie Health Center: April 22, 10-2

Newberry Community Health Center: April 22, 10-12 & 1-3

Munising Grand Island Community Center: April 23, 10-2

Marquette Sault Tribe Community Center: April 24, 5-8

Gladstone Tribal Health Center: April 25, 10-12 & 1-3

Kits can also be picked up at the Kinross Rec Center, and Defour and Hessel Health Centers if requested

Request your seeds by following the link:
<https://forms.gle/hZaiaWG2KniPux1w6>
or scan QR Code.

Requests must be submitted by March 25, 2025. Requests may close earlier if we reach capacity due to strong community interest. For more information, please contact Julia Jarvis at jjarvis@saulttribe.net or at (906) 203-6343.



Supported by the Tribal Practices for Wellness in Indian Country Project
Made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension

Keeping the tribal community up to date



AUSTIN LOWES
TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

RANSOMWARE UPDATE

The Sault Tribe continues to make enormous progress in the aftermath of the ransomware attack. As many know, the Sault Tribe decided not to give in to the criminals’ ransom demands. We made this decision after consulting with cybersecurity experts, law enforcement, and legal counsel, based on two key factors. The first is that our cybersecurity experts were able to not only restore but enhance our IT systems. As a result, our government and business operations are now open, and our Health Division is very close to resuming normal operating hours. The second reason for not giving in to the criminals’ demands was that we did not trust them to keep their word. After all, they are criminals, and we could have paid the ransom and they could have still leaked our data.

I again want to say how deeply sorry we are for the frustration and inconvenience this attack has caused, but I want to assure you that we have taken steps to enhance our systems and will be conducting further training with our entire staff to do everything we can to ensure something like this never happens again. Our tribe has now begun the process of working with cyber experts to analyze the hundreds of thousands of documents to determine what information may have been stolen and who that information belongs to. This is a time-consuming process, and it must be done thoroughly, so we ask for your patience.

If we find that your data was compromised, you will receive a letter detailing how to sign up for a credit monitoring service provided to you free of charge. However, I strongly encourage everyone to take these steps right now to protect yourselves. Change your email and bank account passwords. Contact your credit card providers and inform them of this attack so that they can monitor your account for suspicious activity. Consideration should also be taken to place free fraud alert and credit freeze on your accounts.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

I have been contacted by many concerned Sault Tribe citizens wondering how the Trump Administration’s cuts have impacted the Sault Tribe thus far. Although it is early in the administration, the Sault Tribe has felt an impact. The Trump Administration’s DOGE website lists the Sault Ste. Marie BIA office and IHS Sanitation Offices as properties with pending lease terminations. It’s unclear at this time whether that means the offices will be permanently closed, if they will relocate to a different location, or if the leases will be renegotiated. Tribes don’t know because we weren’t consulted by this administration prior to the closure announcement, which is an obvious problem. The Sault Tribe is analyzing how these closures will impact services within our community.

With that said, I want to be clear that the Sault Tribe Health Division IS NOT directly impacted by these closures. I’ve seen confusion online mixing the BIA and IHS Sanitation Offices with our Heath Centers, and they’re not the same thing. Our Health Centers will remain open to provide the services our tribal community depends on.

I encourage anyone who is concerned with these pending closures, along with the other cuts, to reach out to the federal representatives in Congress.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

I recently had the privilege of testifying before Congress. My testimony focused on the preservation and enhancement of our Great Lakes fisheries and how they relate to treaty rights. Our lakes are not just a vital resource; they are a cornerstone of our culture, livelihood, and heritage as Ojibwe people. During my testimony, I urged lawmakers to allocate additional funding to support the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem, which will ensure that future generations will continue to benefit from the natural resources we have always relied upon.

There is so much work to be done on the federal level to remind our elected leaders, and this administration in particular,

of its treaty and trust responsibility to tribes. I’m happy to do my part, and I appreciate every tribal leader who has stepped up to do so. I will be traveling to

Washington, DC again at the end of the month to meet with our Senators and Representatives to remind them of their treaty and trust responsibility to tribes.

APPOINTMENT BY GOVERNOR WHITMER

I am happy to announce that I was appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to become a member of Michigan’s Community Service Commission! After completing my undergraduate degree, I served in the AmeriCorps VISTA program for a year. Since then, volunteering has been a big part of my life.

This commission is responsible for the following duties: Alongside federal efforts through AmeriCorps, the Michigan Community Service Commission and its community partners have engaged tens of thousands of volunteers of all ages, supported hundreds of community-based projects, and leveraged well over \$200 million for issues such as disaster response, education, the environment, veteran services, health, housing foreclosure,



Tribal Chairman Austin Lowes testifies on Great Lakes preservation and enhancement.

and many other pressing issues around the state. The Michigan Community Service Commission has four main initiatives it supports to fulfill its mission — Michigan’s AmeriCorps, Mentor Michigan, volunteerism, and disaster services.

RX KIDS

I am happy to announce that RX Kids is now operational. This program is piloting in Kalamazoo, Flint, and the following counties within the tribe’s seven-county service area: Chippewa, Alger, Schoolcraft, Luce, and Mackinac. This program provides \$1,500 of cash assistance to expecting mothers during their pregnancies. After babies are born, an additional \$500 is provided every month for the first six months of life, totaling an additional \$3,000. This brings the total award for each family to \$4,500.

Every pregnant woman is eligible for this program. There are no income requirements, and individuals don’t have to be tribal. This program is being run through a non-profit that the Sault Tribe has partnered with, and it will truly do so much good in our tribal community. Having babies is expensive, and I am so proud that the board chose to financially support this program.

FACILITY UPGRADES

There will be several facilities built, renovated, and opening this year. The Sugar Island Powwow grounds will receive a well, septic, bathroom with showers, and an electrical grid. The Elder Building in Sault Ste. Marie will

receive a new roof, new exterior paint, and interior upgrades. The Manistique Fitness Center will open soon. The Marquette Community Center and Health Centers continue to be under construction and on schedule. Black Rocks Restaurant is expected to open this summer in the Kewadin Casino, offering a new restaurant experience to casino patrons. The Shedawin Sanctuary will open this spring and will offer Wellbriety, AA, and NA services to members. The Hessel Community Center project will break ground this year, offering an upgraded facility to tribal members in that community. The casino renovation also continues to go well, and the new hotel rooms have driven revenue substantially when compared to the old rooms.

ONGOING COMMUNICATION

Since the ransomware attack began, I have been updating our tribal citizens on the tribe’s Facebook page. These updates have covered how the ransomware attacks and Trump Administration have impacted the tribe thus far. These updates have been in the form of written posts and videos. I will continue to use this platform to keep our citizens updated on what’s going on.

Miigwech for your support and please stay tuned for additional updates in the coming weeks.

Austin Lowes
Sault Tribe Chairman
(906) 635-6050

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Kaine’s Klassic 2025 and HIP All Star event



The Sault Michigan Hockey Association’s annual Kaines Klassic Tournament was held Jan. 25 and 26, 2025. This family-oriented tournament allowed local kids ages 4 to 6 to play competitive hockey against teams from both Northern Lower Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. Kaines Klassic hosted 12 of the 6U teams this year! Kaines Klassic Tournament is organized strictly by parent volunteers who make the tournament successful by donating food, coaching, refereeing, cleaning the ice the old fashioned way as “human Zambonis” and allowing the boys and girls to play hockey in a positive environment. Many Sault Tribe players were in attendance to share in the fun and showcase their hockey skills!

Tribal member FAQ on cyberattack protection



ISAAC MCKECHNIE
DIRECTOR, UNIT I

Dear Citizens,
On February 9, 2025, our tribe was the target of a cyberattack, during which cybercriminals attempted to extort a ransom for stolen data. Since then, we have worked with law enforcement and cybersecurity experts to restore our systems and investigate the incident.
After a thorough evaluation, we decided not to pay the ransom for two key reasons:
— We successfully restored the majority of our systems and

data without needing to comply with the cybercriminals’ demands.
— There was no guarantee that paying the ransom would prevent the stolen data from being leaked or sold.

We are now carefully reviewing the compromised data to determine what was accessed and who may have been affected.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) – CYBERSECURITY INCIDENT

1. Was my personal information compromised?

We are conducting a manual review of hundreds of thousands of documents to identify individuals whose information may have been exposed. If we determine that your data was impacted, you will receive a letter from the tribe with details on how to access free credit monitoring services. We encourage all members to take proactive steps now to protect themselves (see Question #3).

2. What kind of information may have been stolen?

While our investigation is ongoing, the stolen data may include personal identifying



information (PII) such as names, addresses, Social Security numbers, tribal enrollment details, and financial information. Once we complete our review, we will notify affected individuals directly.

3. What can I do to protect myself?

Even if you have not received a notification from us yet, we strongly recommend taking the following steps:

Monitor your financial accounts – Regularly check your bank accounts, credit card statements, and any online financial services for suspicious activity.

Set up fraud alerts – Contact one of the three major credit bureaus to place a free fraud alert



on your credit report:
— Equifax: 1-800-525-6285 or www.equifax.com
— Experian: 1-888-397-3742 or www.experian.com
— TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289 or www.transunion.com

Consider a credit freeze – A credit freeze prevents new accounts from being opened in your name. You can lift the freeze at any time.

Beware of phishing scams – Cybercriminals may attempt to use stolen information to impersonate Tribe officials or financial institutions. Be cautious of unsolicited emails, texts, or phone calls requesting sensitive information.

Use strong passwords and enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) – If you haven’t

already, update your passwords for important accounts and enable MFA where possible.

4. What should I do if I receive a letter from the tribe?

If we determine your data was compromised, you will receive a written notification with instructions on how to enroll in free credit monitoring services. Follow the steps provided in the letter as soon as possible.

5. How long will this investigation take?

Given the volume of documents that must be reviewed, this process will take time. However, we are working diligently to complete our review as quickly as possible. We appreciate your patience as we conduct a thorough and accurate assessment.

6. How can I stay updated on this issue?

We will continue to provide updates through official tribal communications, including our website, social media channels, and direct mail notifications. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at (906) 440-0661 or by email: imckechnie@saulttribe.net.

Chi miigwech to all our tribe’s team members



LANA CAUSLEY-SMITH,
DIRECTOR, UNIT II

It’s been quite a difficult month for our entire tribe through the latest crisis we have had to endure. I want to say a very sin-

cere “chi miigwech” to all our team members for working extra time, stepping up to the plate to do things that had to be done quickly to keep services going and to the team in the casinos that stayed on and did extra improvements to our properties during the downtime. Our IT staff is worth their weight in gold and so many of us are appreciative for all you expertise and commitment.

In the paper, you will see many items to update you on our progress and on our Facebook site and website you will see updated contact numbers for services and businesses. Our latest reports state that businesses are up and running, security measures are being upgraded for protections and we are consistently rebuilding our

internal workings.

This has been a devastating impact to us initially but patience and commitment by so many are getting us to a good place of normality. Again, I appreciate everyone’s hard work. Like past crises, we will overcome this and be better in the future. That’s the goal everyone has for us.

I want you to know that we have been told that if a member’s information has been compromised, you will receive a letter in the mail from us for instructions. (I myself have received notice that my personal information has been exposed.) If you have any concerns beyond that assurance, please call me and I will give your name and contact info directly to our Legal Department.

A couple things I would like to follow up on. Many months ago, I spoke about the RX Kids project that our tribe was introduced to. We now have that information for tribal members to participate in to see if you are eligible. Refer to the following link 1 RX Kids Project – Pregnant mothers can sign up at RXKids.org for financial assistance, receiving a \$1,500 payment during pregnancy and \$500 per month for six months after childbirth.

We have been continuing to work toward our homes in Hessel and Newberry as well as the community fitness center. These projects are all ongoing and will be beginning this coming spring. We are looking forward to these needed additions to both our com-

munities.

It’s been a long year for myself and family with struggles with my dad and his health. I truly appreciate all that have reached out to us and that are patient with me in returning calls and following up with items — I appreciate that. He’s on the mend and we are very thankful. It’s true that any path in our lives gains lessons and it’s been quite a time for those.

Reach out to me at (906) 322-3818 or lcausley@saulttribe.net and we can discuss any needs or input you have or I can visit with you. Take care of each other and enjoy this time for all the new beginnings.

Baamaapii,
Lana Causley-Smith,
Unit 2 board Representative

Our tribe will fight for our people’s best interest



MICHAEL MCKERCHIE,
DIRECTOR, UNIT I

Our tribe continues to navigate the all the changes with the federal government as well as dealing with our recent ransomware attack. As things change daily with executive orders and court challenges and what everything will mean to Indian Country, we have our staff and outside counsel reviewing things and coming up with the best ways to address

the challenges we face. The tribe continues to be involved with multiple organizations that are combating these orders head on.

I realize our members are very divided on national politics but at the end of the day, our tribe will continue to fight for the best interest of our people. In many instances, tribal funding is mistakenly viewed as discretionary funding rather than as treaty obligations. Indian Country as a whole has to constantly remind and educate our federal counterparts to these obligations, and we will continue to do so. Executive orders have had and will continue to impact tribes. We’ve had federal funds frozen, lost contracts, and closures that threaten our livelihood and impact our daily lives. We will continue to fight for our rights and make congress maintain and protect those funds that are rightfully ours.

Our tribe continues to persevere through the recent cyber-attack and ransomware that halted

our tribes many businesses and services. Our casinos are up and running and many of our programs are back serving the membership. Several services will take more time to be fully functional like our health services, and we ask the members to be patient as we continue to work through the rebuilding. It is a shame that we were a victim of this crime and those responsible could only see the potential pay day and not see the true effect of disruption to membership services that this has caused.

Our constitutional reform has slowed down as we address the many challenges our tribe is facing, but several of us remain steadfast that we move forward and bring much-needed separation of powers that our tribe desperately needs. I have stated in the past that I support both a three-branch and two-branch separation that was being proposed, but what is happening at the federal level is concerning.

I do not wish for our tribe to go down the same pitfalls. No one branch should have more control than the others; the separation of powers are there for a reason and must be honored and supported. My primary concern is for the members to have control and mechanism in place to protect them from a runaway board, and that is why I will continue to advocate for a separate court system.

As I’ve stated in the past and will continue to stand by, our

tribe has a lot of talented and dedicated staff wanting our tribe and community to succeed. There will always be people trying to tear it down, but as a tribe we will always have members willing to build it back up. As always, I urge members to continue to get involved and continue to hold the board accountable with your voices.

Please reach out to me to discuss issues and concerns. I can also be reached at (906) 440-7768. Chi Miigwech.



MOVING? When you move, let us know where you are headed! That way you won’t miss an issue of your tribal paper. Call (906) 632-6398 or email slucas@saulttribe.net.

On cyberattack recovery: It takes a village



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

I would like to thank our executive team and our IT department for all their extremely hard work and long hours since Feb. 9. The team pulled together quickly to protect the tribe. Cell phones were purchased to temporarily replace our land lines at each building and division. The board was kept informed as things evolved.

The casinos were closed down for nearly 3 weeks with the bigger casinos opening before the

weekend and the three smaller ones the following Monday. That was done in stages in case there were issues. Management took that time and got some projects done during the down time such as painting, deep cleaning and improvements.

The health clinics will take more time to get back to normal. If members want to know the most up-to-date information, it is best to either look at our website or Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians official Facebook page or the Health Division Facebook page. Prescriptions can be filled by bringing the bottle to the pharmacy. PRC (Purchase and Referred Care) is still able to provide vouchers as well.

I know many of our members and team members are stressed about some of the proposed changes at the national level, including myself. It is hard to not know exactly what and when things will be changing. We do have firms and our legislative office that keep us updated on proposed legislation and what impact they may have. The board

and chair may need to be in DC more often, joining other tribes in organizing events or joining lawsuits.

During my February HUD TIAC meeting, things sounded pretty promising with focus being put on economic development, opportunity zones, self-sufficiency, job training, home ownership and a path to graduate from HUD assistance. They are also taking input from tribes to streamline requirements for tribes when submitting grant applications and reporting. They would like to reauthorize NAHASDA, but make it more efficient and tribes are submitting their ideas and suggestions. Now, today, I am hearing they might be cutting HUD staff in half.

We have also been trying to figure out these BIA lease terminations and what that will mean to us locally and in Indian Country in general. It seems many things are being proposed but time is not being taken to consult with tribes and see the value of the programs and services and the treaty and trust responsibilities that are owed to

tribes.

This year, Kewadin Shores Casino’s only outdoor concert will be the Barenaked Ladies on July 19. I was really hoping we would have one a month in the summer. Hopefully, in future planning, we will build an amphitheater. I would like to congratulate St. Ignace General Manager Steve Sprecker on his retirement after more than 30 years working for the tribe. I was his administrative assistant before being elected to the board of directors. Steve, I hope you and Steph get to spend more time traveling and with your kids and grandkids and fishing on occasion.

I would like to take the time to thank the ladies in PRC — Claudette, Kim and Carol — who have been there for years and seem to be the constants in the department. You three do a great job and I appreciate you.

The Rendezvous at the Straits Powwow will be happening this year during the Aug. 22 weekend. It will be held between the Museum of Ojibwa Culture and Little Bear Arena.

The Native American Festival

will also take place again this year at the Museum of Ojibwa Culture on May 24. This event usually has a pretty good turnout for a smaller scale powwow.

A few reminders such as: annually submitting an application and copies of your 1040 tax return to PRC if you live in the service area, updating your address with Enrollment and the Tax Office as well.

Great job to the Communications Department with all the recent chaos, they made sure to get all the information out to all outlets in a timely manner! Thank You!

Thank you to all the staff that had to work during these uncertain times and through the obstacles presented. Your dedication is appreciated!

Once again, the UNSUNG HEROES of the month are our IT team members!!

Any questions or concerns, contact me at: bsorenson@sault-tribe.net, bridgett91@yahoo.com or (906) 430-0536.

A lot of new things are coming up for Unit 4



**KIMBERLY HAMPTON,
DIRECTOR, UNIT IV**

Aaniin and welcome to spring. There are still days that are cold and have cooler weather but there is hope that spring is here. A quick reminder for all of those who are eager to begin cleaning out garden beds. Do not start spring garden cleanup until temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees, which helps to protect pollinators like bees and butterflies.

We understand that the recent IT hack within our tribe has been a barrier to many members. However, we want to say thank you to all employees for keeping services going during the last month. Let’s stay Sault Tribe Strong.

REMINDERS

Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow

A planning meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2025, at 5 p.m. EST, Manistique Tribal Center, 5698W US-2, Manistique, Mich. All are welcome.

Additional scheduled powwow planning meetings are as follows: April 14, April 28, May 5, May 12, May 19, May 28

SAVE THE DATE for the 2025 Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow, scheduled for June 7, 2025.

We encourage everyone to “like” the Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow Facebook page to keep updated on events.



**LARRY BARBEAU,
DIRECTOR, UNIT IV**

Unit 4 Elder Meetings

We encourage our tribal elders to attend elder meetings to become involved as well as stay updated on what our elder committees are working on as well as socializing.

The next meeting in Manistique will be held April 9, 2025, at 12 p.m. EST at the Manistique Tribal Center.

The next meeting in Escanaba, Mich. will be held April 9, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. EST at the Escanaba Community Center, 3721 Jingob Street, Escanaba. If you plan to attend please RSVP at (906) 635-4971 at least a week prior.

The next meeting in Marquette, for Units 4 and 5, will be held April 3, 2025, at 6 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, 2472 US 41 W, Marquette, 49855

UPDATES

Manistique Fitness Center: We apologize for the inconvenience that the IT hack has caused regarding the grand opening of the Manistique Fitness Center which has to be canceled. We are hopeful that a new grand opening date will be scheduled very soon. We understand how long everyone has waited for the fitness center to open but some things are out of our hands. This situation is one of them. We ask for continued patience and under-

standing.

LOOKING FORWARD

— The impacts of the compensation studies will continue to be reviewed and necessary changes made.

— We are working with members in Escanaba to get community gardens established. The project will start small to gauge interest and feasibility. If you are interested in joining the garden group please send an email to khampton@saulttribe.net expressing interest and those emails will be directed to the appropriate contacts. Watch for additional information on a potential Manistique community garden.

— Some additional adventures being worked on are as follows:

obtaining additional land for traditional ceremonies, building accessible lodges throughout Unit 4, growing the Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow volunteer crew, expanding the Unit 4 Elder Subcommittee groups and their outings, and more. Updates to these and additional projects will be provided as able.

— This spring there will be the annual spring cleanup of the Indian Point Cemetery. Once the date and additional details are available information will be shared.

— Lastly, we wanted to remind members to watch for upcoming cultural events to participate in. Our culture is a priority and we must continue

partaking in learning and passing knowledge on to others.

We both want to give our sincerest thanks for trusting us to represent Unit 4 members and Sault Tribe. We are always available for questions, comments, and ideas for growth. We encourage members to participate in Maamawi Craft Nights, office hours, community input sessions, Ketchup with Kim, and all other activities and events occurring throughout Indian Country.

Our contact information is:

Larry Barbeau, Unit 4 Representative, (906) 259-3040, lbarbeau@saulttribe.net

Kimberly Hampton, Unit 4 Representative, (906) 440-8138, khampton@saulttribe.net

Challenges faced by those suffering from addiction



**KIM GRAVELLE,
DIRECTOR, UNIT I**

Hello,

I hope everyone is enjoying the warmer weather. Here on the north end of Sugar Island seems like all we’ve been doing is moving snow. According to some we’ve gotten over 240 inches of snowfall on this part of the Island this winter!

Congratulation to Melvin Alstergren on his retirement after 25 years of service to our tribe.

I would like to thank our entire staff for working through the cyber attack that took place within our tribal entities. It took an entire staff to get us back up and running with long hours of around the clock teamwork. We’re sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused our tribal community.

One of the key issues I want to keep in the forefront with our leaders are the challenges facing our tribal (and non tribal) communities suffering from some form of addiction. An individual usually goes to a 6- to 8-week treatment center and most times are coming home to the same environment that got them there in the first place. Statistics show that 6 to 8 weeks are not enough treatment but at least six months to a year is needed. The number

one challenge faced when returning home from a secure setting is lack of transitional housing or sober/safe living units.

Thankfully, our tribe is able to provide walk-in urgent care, residential treatment for substance use disorders, recovery housing, peer recovery coaching, harm reduction supplies, the Family Spirit Program, perinatal opioid care and support coordination services. For further information on these programs you can contact our Behavioral Health Department at (906) 440-1365.

As always please keep the men and women in our armed forces in your prayers and thoughts for a safe return to their families.

If you have any questions or comments you can contact me at (906) 259-3742 or at kkggravelle@saulttribe.net.

Thank You,
Kim Gravelle

LaPlaunt busy with tribal, state, federal work



TYLER LAPLAUNT
DIRECTOR, UNIT V

Aanii, Boozhoo,
I’d like to start out by apologizing for missing my first unit report ever in February. As most of you may know, we were hit by ransomware in the early hours of Sunday, Feb. 9. Our unit reports were due to the editor by the end of day Monday, Feb. 10. The moment we got the notification we had been attacked, we were told not to use our computers because we did not know the extent. At that moment, I shut everything down and I did not turn my work laptop back on for the duration of the cyber event, communicating only through email and text messages from my mobile device. We had to be very careful of what we were sending and opening during that time, and I took every precaution I could to protect our tribe.

I’m glad the paper was still able to go out to our citizens with about half of our board able to get out a unit report. To me, it wasn’t worth the risk. I took more calls than usual during the early days of the cyber-attacks. If for some reason I missed you, please just send a fresh message to get back on the radar. It was a hectic few weeks.

Once the investigation is complete, we will release a report to the membership. For now, ALL pertinent communications regarding this situation will be coming directly from the chairman on the Sault Tribe official Facebook pages and website.

As our teams of cyber security experts and lawyers slowly filter through the data that was corrupted and leaked, we will have a better understanding of the extent. If you have been affected directly, the tribe will assist by providing free credit monitoring services and you will be contacted directly. For now, if you are concerned that your data was breached, but are unsure, reach out to the three credit monitoring agencies and put a freeze on your credit. In today’s age, it is important that we all monitor our credit and accounts daily.

Cyber-attacks happen to even the largest organizations — the Department of Defense, NASA, ATT, Caesars, to name a few. It’s not a matter of if it will happen, it’s when, and how well prepared you are. Luckily, we have an amazing team here at the Sault Tribe. We also have insurance for cyber security issues, as well as losses in revenue for catastrophic events. Chi miigwech to all our amazing staff for navigating this and to all of our citizens for being so understanding and

patient with our team and us.

LEGISLATIVE

Our tribe may have temporarily shut down, but that does not suspend our duties as elected officials. In mid-February, I participated in the Michigan Tribal-State Summit, where we worked together with the various divisions of government across Michigan to discuss how we can work better together and the challenges we face. It was a very productive dialogue with many agencies, and a dialogue that must stay open as we continue to navigate the political changes that could impact the tribes and state.

That meeting was followed up by an evening reception in which we met with Michigan legislators for discussions and relationship building.

Finally, we attended an all-day United Tribes of Michigan meeting where Chairman Lowes also sits as president. Discussions were had that impact all tribes in the state. My main focus was on advocacy for CMS and Medicaid reimbursements being held up by the state. I will continue to push that issue as we rely heavily on those reimbursements to continue to offer robust services and it’s clear that all of the other tribes are running into the same issue.

Last month, I was honored to be appointed to serve on the Health and Human Services Secretary Tribal Advisory Committee, also known as HHS STAC, to represent the Bemidji Area as the primary delegate. The Bemidji Area consists of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana, and Chicago urban. Each IHS service area is represented along with several at-large positions.

To serve on HHS STAC is an absolute honor and a privilege that I do not take lightly. Immediately after being appointed, I flew down to DC to sit at the table with the heads of every agency that is overseen by HHS — IHS, CMS, SAMSHA, NIH, and HRSA, just to name a few. Then, on day two, we met with Secretary Kennedy, himself.

Having experience with Indian Health policy that touches every major division under HHS, I was able to immediately help lead the conversation throughout the two-day event. Due to my feedback, discussion, and guidance, even as a newcomer to the HHS STAC, the entire group allowed me to initiate and lead the discussion with Secretary Kennedy once he arrived in the room. It was a surreal moment, but an especially important one.

Regardless of political beliefs and affiliation, sitting at this table as one of the Secretary’s tribal advisors gives us the ability to effectuate change and have a meaningful dialogue, not only with the agencies that serve the tribes and U.S. people, but the Secretary himself. This is just the first of many meetings to come, but I promise that I will do my absolute best to serve all of Indian Country. I am there to represent ALL of the Bemidji Area to the best of my ability as an elected leader of the Sault



Board representative Tyler LaPlaunt was recently appointed to the Health and Human Services Secretary Tribal Advisory Committee. Above Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and LaPlaunt at an HHS TAC meeting.

Tribe.

I know there is a lot going on in the federal government and many people are worried. Fear of the unknown is a very real thing. Many citizens have been reaching out asking how they can help. If you want to help not only your tribe, but your neighbors, reach out to your Congressional representatives and U.S. Senators. Call them, email them, write them letters. If you see something that will or is causing an injustice, speak up.

Speaking up and flooding them with calls does help. If we ever need you, as citizens, to stand up for something that is harming us, I will be sure to put the word out. For now, allow us to navigate this, and allow the checks and balances in government to play out and work. So far, some things have been scary, and some things have been close to being cut, but your calls and

your voices matter and are helping. Get involved at every level of government.

POWWOW

Unfortunately, Stacie is stepping back from her position as the West End Cultural Coordinator. I want to wish Stacie all the best. Anyone who knows her knows exactly how awesome she is and the wonderful job she did. Chi miigwech, Stacie, for everything you’ve done for us over here.

The Bay Furnace Park Powwow is still moving forward for Saturday, Aug. 9, 2025. We still have a very large Powwow Planning Committee in place and will divvy up the work to make sure it goes off flawlessly. Please reach out if you are interested in helping or have any questions. We are quickly identifying head staff for the event, and hope to have a poster or flyer out shortly.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Shores casino manager to retire, kudos to all who worked on cyber attack



SHAWN BOROWICZ,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III

Boozhoo,

It’s been a long winter and it appears spring is in the air. Over the winter months, several Unit 3 cultural activities were held at the McCann cultural building for tribal members, including mitten, drum, wall sconces, and medalion workshops. Thanks goes to Bridgette for coordinating all

these great activities for all members who signed up. I have been to elder lunches during the week to keep our members up to date with tribal happenings as well as Mackinac County news and events.

Due to the cyber-attack the tribe experienced and workshops and meetings being canceled, there is not much to report at this time. I’m not going to get into the specifics of the cyber attack because for one I really was not made aware of the specifics, but hopefully will be briefed at our workshop. I will say it was an unfortunate incident that we were put through and came out a lot better than other entities that experienced similar situations. In hindsight, Director McKechnie has been bringing this up for several years and we probably should have been more proactive in trying to combat such attacks by upgrading our computer systems. Which, from my understanding,

With Stacie leaving, we will be having some minor setbacks in events we were planning to host in March and April. We have identified local Unit 4 and Unit 5 cultural teachers, we just need some organization. Some stuff to look forward in Spring and early Summer are workshops on ribbon skirts and shirts, moccasins, tobacco, and, hopefully, one more cloth diaper workshops if we can get enough folks to register. Keep an eye out for more information. We will try to get the dates solidified and moving forward.

Thanks to David Craig coming back, we were finally able to get those hand drum classes finished. Chi miigwech! Seeing all of those drums crafted and going out into the community was an absolute blessing. Thank you to all of the participants — now keep those drums beating in the community! The greatest part of all of this, it happened in the midst of our cyber-attack. It was a nice reprieve and our culture remains strong, even during a tumultuous time.

If anyone is interested in providing a teaching of any kind, please reach out so we can support you. We are looking at building up our own communities so we have teachers from within and don’t have to rely so heavily on external sources. Our voice in Unit 5 is growing and it shows with all of the people stepping up to teach.

If you have any questions, comments, or would like to discuss something with me, please use my contact information below. You can also reach out to Unit 4/5 Liaison Mary Jenerou at mjenerou@saulttribe.net or (906) 450-7011 or (906) 341-8469.

Chi Miigwech,
Tyler Migizii Migwan LaPlaunt
Unit 5 Director/Vice-Chairman
tlaplaunt@saulttribe.net
(906) 440-8294

is what has been done since the attack. It may take some time to be fully operational again, but I have full confidence in the great team that was assembled to see this through, kudos to you all.

Our Shores casino will be going through an adjustment in the near future as our long-term general manager will be retiring at the end of March and a replacement will need to be hired. The new GM will have some big shoes to fill as Mr. Sprecker over the years has done a fabulous job in managing this property. Steve was a great boss when I worked at the Shores, and a wealth of knowledge when I was elected to the board. I will miss our weekly talks, updates and general small talk. Thank you for your dedicated service, my friend!

Respectfully,
Shawn Borowicz
(906)430-7612, (906)379-8511
or sborowicz@saulttribe.net

Call to action: help stop massive cuts to Indian Country



AARON PAYMENT
DIRECTOR, UNIT I

First, as we transition out of being held hostage by the hackers to our tribal information systems, we need to stand together. I have spoken to a few tribal leaders from other Michigan tribes who experienced the same. This crisis did not happen out of any neglect on our part but is, unfortunately, a new normal for large organizations. The trend is to hack and hold hostage companies including tribes in order to secure a ransom that often funds terrorist activities in other countries. Federal law prohibits paying unknown and anonymous actors via wire transfer. I support our chair, executive administration and IT team members for their recovery efforts. We are stronger together.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

I want to recognize and thank Chairman Lowes for testifying in Congress on behalf of our treaty rights implementation funds. Search on the Internet the descriptor below to see a day of testimony from tribal leaders and native organization leads. Chairman Lowes’ testimony appears at timestamp 3:42

SEARCH: “American Indian and Alaska Native Public Witness Hearing Day 3”

I also want to congratulate Vice Chair Tyler LaPlaunt for his appointment to the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tribal Advisory Committee. Both Cathy Abramson and I served on this body as co-chairs at different times.

With the recent announcement of nationwide IHS and BIA Office lease cancellations, it remains to be seen if these services will disappear. This is good reason to stay involved at the federal level.

IT’S A TRUST THING!



Recall the “It’s a Trust Thing: Treaties are Not Discretionary” campaign we launched in 2013 to remind Members of Congress of their duty to uphold the treaty and trust obligation and that our funding should be mandatory. Our funding is not reparations or because of the poor Indians. It was pre-paid in full forever with the nearly 2 billion acres of Indian ceded lands that made this

country great.

A government is only as good as its word and we expect the federal government to honor this obligation with full, mandatory, and formula funding. Instead of cutting the benefits of the Affordable Care Act with respect to Medicaid expansion and third-party reimbursements, the income eligibility criteria should be eliminated for qualifying for the ACA Medicaid expansion. This would usher in a new era of IHS portability like the VA. Also, given we prepaid for this right, we should be exempt from any work requirement I suspect the Republicans will try to impose once again.

ATTACK ON INDIAN COUNTRY

So far, we have seen draconian and retribution cuts to Indian Country budgets:

- Record number layoffs of American Indians across the federal agencies fulfilling the treaty and trust obligation
- Elimination of millions in contractual services to Indian owned consulting companies who were conducting “consultation” with tribal nations on several services like:
 - FDPIR, Self-Determination Demonstration food sovereignty projects
 - SNAP Indian country pilot projects
 - Veterans’ Affairs outreach to tribes
 - EPA Environmental justice grants to serve Indian country
 - Disproportionate impacts to funding across agencies that are ancillary to the treaty and trust obligation like cuts to disease research (including cancer) in the NIH
 - Lock down of CDC Indian public health statistical information critically need by tribal epi-centers and tribes. Indian Country data sovereignty is at risk.

While we have had some encouraging signs with Senator Murkowski’s intervention and Secretarial level guidance letters rescinding Executive Orders that conflate our funding with DEI, it remains to be seen whether these guidance letters are just feel good window dressing or substantive directives.

While we have had some encouraging signs with Senator Murkowski’s intervention and Secretarial level guidance letters rescinding Executive Orders that conflate our funding with DEI, it remains to be seen whether these guidance letters are just feel good window dressing or substantive directives.

HHS GUIDANCE

On Feb. 27, at the HHS Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee meeting, HHS shared that directives to date adversely impacting HHS, “do not apply to the department’s legal obligation to provide healthcare for Indian tribes and their citizens.” This directive clarified that several of the austerity measures DO APPLY to IHS “direct service” tribes who receive health care through the IHS directly. I agree that the direct service approach should be phased out to rely entirely on self-governance contracts. But, I also believe that this transition should happen at the direction of tribes and not through arbitrary edicts.

A TEMPORARY REPRIEVE?

I’m not an attorney but I do consider myself a federal Indian policy expert; most tribal leaders are. I do understand litigation to bar the Administration from interrupting the will of Congress

as a co-equal branch of government who are the appropriators. It appears, however, that we have notched some preliminary victories in the injunctions and motions to bar the Administration from draconian and revengeful cuts. I suspect these wins will be short lived until Congress enacts these austerity measures to match the Trump Administration’s values. While we have a reprieve, it appears to only be temporary.

MASSIVE CUTS!

Most alarming is the approved U.S. Senate and House budget blue print drivers now appear to align with the President’s direction to cut nearly \$4.5 trillion out of the federal budget with \$2 trillion in mandatory and \$2.5 trillion in discretionary spending. This is nearly identical to the extreme plan Elon Musk laid out in December for the DOGE strategy. One hundred percent of Indian Country funding is discretionary. While we were successful in securing Advanced Appropriations for IHS in the 2023 budget, this is only as good as the next reauthorization. IHS and all of Indian Country spending needs to be moved to the mandatory side of the ledger. In conventional times, this would shield our funding from impacts of sequestration and budget ceiling set by the OMB. Unfortunately, we are not living in conventional times when the previously understood sacrosanct mandatory funding (defense, social security, and Medicare) all appear to be at risk.

SCHOOL HOUSE ROCK

By way of a little School House Rock review, I borrowed for former IHS Director and my friend Dr. Yvette Roubideaux who recirculated a few budget primers used during the Obama Era. Here are a few graphics that depict this:

To summarize, co-equal



branches of government have their own authorities. It starts with what is typically a simultaneous process between the Administration and the Legislative branches. In 2017, when Trump came in office, he ordered up to 35% cuts to agencies who serve the treaty and trust obligation including ICWA, JOM, Law Enforcement and more. Several legislators, however, advised us not to worry as, “the president proposes, Congress disposes”.

Indian Country’s long-standing federal Indian policy recommendation to designate an Indian Desk in the OMB was honored. As a Biden political appointee, this position appears to have been eliminated. This position was critical to clarify to both the Administration and Congress and all of their staffers that we are not special interests and that the treaty and trust obligation must be honored as a matter of law,

principle and ethics. Currently, we have no one internally in the OMB reminding them of the treaty and trust obligation.

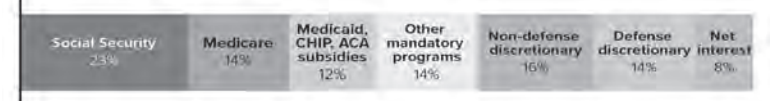
CONGRESSIONAL HOUSE OF CARDS HAS FALLEN

Congressional guard-rails were critical in 2017 but appear to no longer exist with the threat of billionaires to “primary” any republicans who dare oppose Trump. This appears to have been in play with the far-right House Freedom Caucus (Republicans) members holding out on the House budget blue print but capitulating at the last minute. Did Trump or Musk threaten them?

Recall during the final days of the 2024 Presidential Election when Speaker Johnson let a slip of the tongue and announced the “repeal of the Affordable Care Act,” it now appears that while they may not bring legislation to outright repeal the ACA, with \$2.5 trillion in proposed cuts, including \$880 billion Medicaid benefits, the same effect will be felt by simply choking off the funding. I estimate that \$20 million is at risk for our tribe.

To effectuate \$4.5 trillion in cuts out of the budget while preserving tax cuts for the millionaire and billionaire class, serious austerity measures will have to happen. Using Congressional Budget Office estimates, the following continuum (graphic below) from left to right move from man-

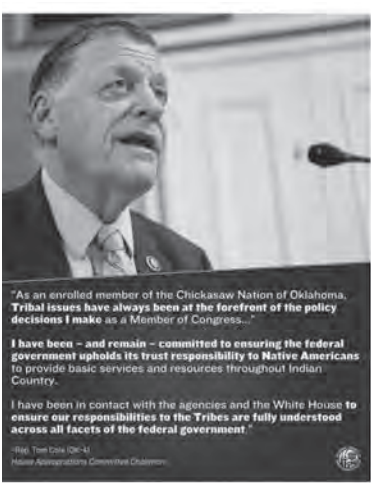
Components of Federal Spending



Components of Federal Tax Revenue



datory to discretionary spending. The mandatory cuts of \$2 trillion



public policy statement to clarify our funding as a federal treaty and trust obligation.

Additionally, he issued a letter to the Office of Management Budget to distinguish our finding from DEI and in many ways hinted and the mandatory nature of the treaty and trust obligation. Congressman Cole’s public policy statement follows Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski’s letter as chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee to both the Department of the Interior Secretary as well as HHS. Also attached is the HHS guidance letter that aligns with the previous letter from the US Department of Interior.

We have strong supporters on both side of the aisle including Representatives McCollum (D-MN), Sharice Davids (Hochunk, D-KS) who also serves

as Congressional Native Caucus Co-Chair and of course, Senator Mark Wayne Mullin (Cherokee, R-OK). Now more than ever, tribal nations have to do our work irrespective of partisanship. We must do our work, “not as a D or R but as an I for Indian.” — Jefferson Keel, Retired Lt. Governor and past President of NCAI.

WARRIOR UP!
Contact your elected federal representatives to remind them of the treaty and trust obligation and that we already pre-paid in full for everything we get. Whatever austerity measures they have to make, please recognize we are not a special interest, we are sovereigns that expect the U.S. government to honor their promises. Afterall, a nation is only as good as it’s word.

US House of Representatives
www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative

US Senators (2)
www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm?lang=en

Tribal members, please take care and love yourself, your family and your tribe!
Chi Miigwech — Aaron
Phone: (906) 440-8946
AAPayment@saulttribe.net

Tribes and students sue Bureau of Indian Education over cuts to staff and services

FROM NARF

WASHINGTON, D.C.—On Friday, March 7, 2025, three tribal nations (Pueblo of Isleta, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, and Cheyenne Arapaho Tribes) along with Native students (Ella Bowen, Kaiya Brown, Danielle Ledesma, Victor Organista, and Aiyanna Tanyan) sued the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Personnel Management, and Office of Indian Affairs.

The case, brought by the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, challenges the staff reductions at the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and the BIE-run schools, Haskell Indian Nations University (Haskell) and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI).

Although the schools have been able to rehire some instructional staff, it is not all of the dismissed staff and it is not enough.

The BIE funds and operates a federal education system in partial fulfillment of its trust responsibility with tribal nations, established through treaty rights. Key to upholding those rights is tribal consultation, which is mandated by law. On Feb. 11, 2025, President Trump initiated large-scale reductions in federal staffing (EO 14210, 90 FR 9670). In response to Trump’s directives, BIE terminated a significant number of employees, which devastat-

ed operations at Haskell and SIPI and undermined BIE-operated schools across the nation. Prior to these sweeping cuts, BIE failed to consult with tribal nations, in clear violation of the law.

“We have a say in how BIE operates the education provided our children in fulfillment of our treaty rights. We will fight to protect the education they deserve and fight to protect the staff that serve them,” Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Chairman Joseph Rupnick said.

“Tribal nations and the federal government should be working together to best serve our Native students. Instead, the administration is randomly, without preparation and in violation of their federal trust responsibility, taking away teachers and staff from already-underserved facilities. Our students deserve better,” Pueblo of Isleta Governor Eugene Jiron said.

“Despite having a treaty obligation to provide educational opportunities to tribal students, the federal government has long failed to offer adequate services. Just when the Bureau of Indian Education was taking steps to fix the situation, these cuts undermined all those efforts. These institutions are precious to our communities, we won’t sit by and watch them fail,” Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Lieutenant Governor Hershel Gorham said.

On the day of the firings, The Indian Leader, Haskell’s student newspaper reported: “For [Haskell] students, the effects are immediately visible. Several courses are now left without their original instructors, putting students’ educational experience in jeopardy. While some faculty members are being asked to take on additional classes to cover the vacancies, this has put an immense strain on the remaining staff. Teachers are now burdened with larger workloads, and the quality of education is at risk as educators juggle responsibilities beyond their capacity.”

Meanwhile, SIPI lost nearly a quarter of its staff. Most classes had no instructors to administer midterm exams that happened the week after the cuts. Power outages that happened after the cuts lasted for hours due to insufficient maintenance staff. The school cut Residential Advisors, leaving students without any support to deal with potentially dangerous situations in their dorms.

“They keep saying that these cuts won’t impact individuals and services, but they do – they affect us a lot. Besides the classes that lost instructors, the entire school only has three custodial staff now. The school’s restrooms have overflowing trashcans and no toilet paper. Students are cleaning up the restrooms themselves just to make them usable,” said Haskell

Freshman Ella Bowen (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians).

SIPI student Kaiya Jade Brown (Navajo) said, “SIPI already was understaffed and things have gotten much worse. We had a power outage in my dorm for 13 hours because there was no maintenance staff available to restore power. I had to leave my dorm to find somewhere I could submit assignments. There also was a campus-wide power outage that cancelled classes. It is really hard to focus on learning and classes when these interruptions keep happening. Meanwhile, the administrators and faculty that are left are having to cover several jobs. It is really demoralizing.”

The loss of staff throughout BIE, Haskell, and SIPI violates tribal rights to prioritize the fields of study in the schools; Native students’ rights to receive adequate post-secondary education; and BIE’s obligation to maintain school health and safety (25 U.S.C. 2003). Additionally, those staff reductions happened without the Tribal Nations notification and consultation required by the law (25 U.S.C. § 2011 and 25 CFR § 32.4 (a) and (q)).

“The United States government has legal obligations to tribal nations that they agreed to in treaties and have been written into federal law. The abrupt and drastic changes that happened since

February, without consultation or even pre-notification, is completely illegal,” NARF Staff Attorney Jacqueline De León said.

NARF Deputy Director Matt Campbell added, “Although the schools have reportedly been able to hire back some of their instructional staff, it ignores all of the other important staff members who are gone. It is not even close to enough. The students and the Tribes deserve better, and we will fight to make sure they get it.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In February 2025, Haskell University lost more than a quarter of its staff. Thirty-four Haskell courses lost their instructors. The welcome back powwow was postponed. The Student Success Center was closed. Financial aid was delayed with some students still not receiving aid as of March. All but three custodial staff were laid off, resulting in restrooms with overflowing trash cans and no paper products, as well as unclean cafeterias and dining areas.

In February 2025, SIPI lost a quarter of its staff. Power outages went unresolved for many hours due to lack of maintenance staff, sometimes causing classes to be cancelled. While water from taps is brown and unsafe, repairs have been postponed indefinitely due to cuts. Midterm exams did not have faculty to administer them.

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