

Partnership serves ongoing learning

"Libraries are about freedom. Freedom to read, freedom of ideas, freedom of communication. They are about education (which is not a process that finishes the day we leave school or university), about entertainment, about making safe spaces, and about access to information."

— Neil Gaiman, 2013

BY JOHN DEGIACOMO

UNDER the direction and collaboration of the boards of directors for both organizations, Anishinabek Employment and Training Services has made the transition into the Thunder Bay Public Library through a partnership which has enabled the library to realize its ambition of transforming Waverley Library into a community hub.

Anishinabek Employment and Training Services is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization, celebrating its 21st year as part of a national network delivering an Indigenous Skills and Employment Training program. The objective of the national program and each of the regional agreement holders, is to increase the participation of Indigenous citizens in the Canadian labour market.

Within the North Superior region, Anishinabek Employment and Training Services delivers continuing education and training-to-employment programs which build capacity for First Nation citizens from nine communities, and sometimes beyond, under special circumstances.

The communities are Animbiigoo Zaagi'igan Anishinaabek (Lake Nipigon Ojibway), Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River First Nation), Binjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (Rocky Bay First Nation), Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point First Nation), Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek (Gull Bay First Nation), Michipicoten First Nation, Pays Plat First Nation, Pic Mobert First Na-

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tion and Red Rock Indian Band.

The Anishinabek Employment and Training Services board of directors has a vision to develop the organization through various strategies, including enhanced co-operations with local, regional and national partners. Over the last decade, we have increased services and programs as well as strategic partnerships with employers and other stakeholders.

In collaboration with Biigtigong Nishnaabeg-Endzhi-gkinoohmaading (Pic River) Private High School, Anishinabek Employment and Training Services is working co-operatively for the development of a skilled workforce through Ontario secondary school diploma credits.

Another partnership is with Leadership Thunder Bay, for the next delivery collaboration of the aboriginal youth focused community leadership program.

The Dinoweghmin Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program will be implemented based on the Leadership Thunder Bay model within the framework of The Seven Grandfather Teachings, The Medicine Wheel, and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The program is designed to contribute to participants' cultural, spiritual, mental, physical and emotional wellbeing.

A new key partnership is between the Thunder Bay Public Library and Anishinabek Employment and Training Services. This partnership will enable Anishinabek Employment and Training Services to ac-

commodate its continued growth to empower the Anishinabek, and support the Thunder Bay Public Library's strategic plan in community hub development, decolonization, relationship building and facilities renewal at both the Waverley and Brodie Resource sites.

This partnership not only helps Anishinabek Employment and Training Services in the delivery of services, but also serves as an example when it comes to inclusion and reconciliation as well as the impact to and for the community.

We trust that the recent Waverley renovation will result in an experience that enables people to learn, grow and be inspired.

The board of directors and staff of Anishinabek Employment and Training Services are excited about the move as we settle into the space.

Anishinabek Employment and Training Services has been graciously welcomed by the Thunder Bay Public Library board of directors and staff, and have already undertaken some internal meet-and-greet activities.

Anishinabek Employment and Training Services looks forward to working collaboratively with the Thunder Bay Public Library. Most of the major facilities renewal, including eight new shared computer workstations, is complete at Waverley, with some final touches expected to be done by mid-September.

Please visit our website at www.aets.org for details and/or feel free to drop by in person to Waverley, and note that after Sept. 3, Anishinabek Employment and Training Services is open to the public on weekdays from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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John DeGiacomo is the executive director for Anishinabek Employment and Training Services. If you have a comment about today's column, we would love to hear from you. Check out the blog at tbplofftheshef.com.