



# Win Awenen Nisitotung

December 17, 2025  
Little Spirit Moon • Manidoo Giisoonhs  
Vol. 46 • No. 12



Bahweting Bidajimowin • Official newspaper of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

## Sault Tribe's Marquette Health Center opens

BY SCOTT BRAND

Unit IV and V members celebrated the official opening of the Marquette Tribal Health Center on Dec. 1 with a ceremonial ribbon cutting.

The new facility, located at 1210 S. Front Street in Marquette, delivers nearly 6,000 square feet of newly renovated space including a large waiting room, front reception, three exam rooms, three medical offices, nurse's station, break and locker rooms.

"It's hard to believe 12 months ago this was a vacant building that used to house an auto repair shop," said CEO James Benko of the Sault Tribe Health Division in opening statement leading up to the ribbon cutting giving credit to all of the various work crews who helped to turn this vision into a reality.

Tribal Chairman Austin Lowes underscored the importance of having this new facility in

Marquette to address the needs of those residing on the western end of the seven-county service area: "It will save lives."

"It wasn't easy, but it was something the community wanted," said Unit V Director Tyler LaPlaunt. "This is a huge step forward for us."

"Prior to now, tribal members had to travel many miles to access primary care services," said Community Health Program Manager Marlene Glaesmann. "Multiple burdens and barriers in rural settings, such as — lack of transportation, lack of resources, severe weather conditions — have mostly been resolved now so that tribal members are able to access health care services closer to home."

The Marquette Tribal Health Center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Appointments can be made by calling, (906) 225-1616.



Photo by Scott Brand

Unit IV and V members celebrated the official opening of the Marquette Tribal Health Center on Dec. 1 with a ceremonial ribbon cutting. L-R: Sault Tribe Health Center Project Specialist Annie Thiebert, Sault Tribe Unit V Director Tyler LaPlaunt, Sault Tribe Chairman Austin Lowes, Sault Tribe Health Division CEO James Benko and Sault Tribe Community Health Program Manager Marlene Glaesmann.

## Heckel honored with Leading for Impact award

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rachel Heckel, CEO of Sault Tribe Inc. (STI), was recently honored with the prestigious Leading for Impact award, recognizing her visionary leadership and the transformational outcomes delivered by the STI Federal companies. STI Federal is the federal contracting brand for STI, the independent business arm of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. STI Federal provides over 95% of STI's revenue by serving mission-critical government programs.

FORUM's Leading for Impact award recognizes women who are making an impact through providing strong leadership, mentoring the next generation of stars, and continually transforming the way technology is implemented through their mission-focused



strategic programs in the federal space.

The award celebrates Heckel's role in driving scalable, mission-focused technology solutions that empower federal agencies

to meet complex challenges with agility and innovation. Under her leadership, STI Federal has advanced initiatives in IT modernization and cloud migration, enabling agencies to better serve the public through secure, efficient, and forward-looking digital infrastructure.

Heckel said, "While I appreciate the recognition, this award is truly based on all of the STI Federal team's hard work in building our foundations and supporting our advancements in IT modernization and cloud migration."

The Leading for Impact award is a testament not only to Heckel's strategic vision but also to the collective excellence of the STI Federal team in delivering high-impact solutions that serve the nation's most critical missions.

STI Federal's premier contract in IT services supports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention vaccine tracking system, which processes vaccine orders provided to grantees for an average of 80 million vaccine doses annually. This system improves health outcomes and saves lives through the vaccina-

tions it helps to ensure reach those that need them. STI Federal's team recently completed a successful migration of the application from on-premises infrastructure to the Azure cloud.

Listen to Heckel's podcast discussing STI Federal's achievements here: [www.buzzsprout.com/1987005/episodes/17941407](http://www.buzzsprout.com/1987005/episodes/17941407).

### Tribe's Enrollment fees increase

The Sault Tribe's Enrollment Department has announced an increase in fees beginning Jan. 5, 2026.

New application fee: \$50  
Tribal card renewal: \$10  
Blood quantum certification: \$25  
Copy of file: \$10  
There has been no increase in the lost/stolen tribal card

replacement fee, which is \$20, and no increase in the tuition waiver processing fee, which is \$15.

Contact the Enrollment Department at (906) 632-8552.

For more information about Enrollment, and to download forms, visit <https://saulttribe.com/membership-services/tribal-enrollment>.

[www.saulttribe.com](http://www.saulttribe.com)

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## Six new homes completed in Wetmore

BY SCOTT BRAND

Sault Tribe members celebrated the completion of six new homes on Nov. 12, as an open house was held in Wetmore showcasing the new structures for the public.

"Since this Tiny Home Pilot Project is new to our tribe, this open house gives people an idea of what they look like," said Unit V Director Tyler LaPlaunt as he made the tour. "They seem really excited."

The tiny homes, ranging from 450 square feet to 550 square feet, were delivered ready made in two different configurations. The cement foundation and associated underground infrastructure were waiting when the crane arrived to get the homes in place. Three of the homes were



Photo by Scott Brand

One of six "tiny homes," newly completed in Wetmore recently.

designed as two-bedroom structures, while the remaining three are one-bedroom homes complete with natural gas for the stove and furnace, washers and dryers and an overhead loft.

"Our hope is to have all these units filled before the snow flies,"

said LaPlaunt observing there is a tremendous need for housing throughout the seven-county service area. "There are only six, but at least it's something. We're doing the best we can with the tools and resources we have available."



# Can-a-thon donations across the service area



Ruth Ann Pokela accepts a check from General Manager Karen Heyrman and Marketing Rep Vickie Lundquist of the Christmas Casino. The Alger County Food Pantry also received 960 pounds of food.



General Manager Wanda Barbeau and Marketing Rep. Abbie Galen dropped off a \$500 check and more than 1,000 pounds of food to Good Neighbors Director Margo Withey of Manistique. Below: Lisa Fisher (right) and Mark Causley deliver to President Sue Sidell of the Cedar Post Thrift Shop and Food Bank in Cedarville.



Rheanna McKechnie teams up with Kent Artley.



Allen Kerridge helping out.



Above, (L-R) Jennifer Goudreau, Kathy Perry, Rick Allen, Unit III Director Shawn Borowicz, Marketing Rep. Sierra Sayles and General Manager David Kucharcyk pose with the big check at the St. Ignace Hope and Food Pantry. Below, (L-R) Coleman Bumstead, Jake Komarnizki, Allen Kerridge, Kent Artley, Eric Gilbert, Rheanna McKechnie, Dana Schlehuber and Alisha Woodard take a break after unloading four full pallets of food collected by the Sault Ste. Marie Casino for The Salvation Army.



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alternate vacancy (4-year term)  
Unit V - Marquette - One  
alternate vacancy (4-year term)  
**Enrollment Committee** -  
One vacancy (4-year term)  
**Food Sovereignty**  
**Committee** - Three vacancies  
(4-year terms)  
**Health Board** - One vacancy  
(4-year term)  
**Sault Tribe Election**  
**Commission** - One cur-  
rent vacancy term expiring  
November 2030 and one  
upcoming vacancy term expir-

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

For more information, contact one of the Sault Tribe Human Resource Departments below:

Governmental-Enterprise Human Resources: 531 Ashmun St., Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783, (906) 635-4937

Kewadin Casino Human Resources: 2186 Shunk Road, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783, (800) 539-2346

Kewadin Casino Human Resources: 3015 Mackinaw Trail, St. Ignace, MI 49781, (906) 643-4176

Health Human Resources, 2864 Ashmun St., Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783 (906) 632-5203

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

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](http://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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[jdale-burton@saulttribe.net](mailto:jdale-burton@saulttribe.net).

The Sault Tribe Membership Services brochure offers an overview of services available to Sault Tribe members residing both inside and outside the service area, including: social services; victim services; Anishinaabemowin (speaking Ojibwe) language lessons, cultural events and facilities; elder services; health services and a national IHS map; home ownership and rentals; natural resources; education; and others. Read or download the brochure at: [www.saulttribe.com/images/2025\\_Membership\\_Services\\_Directory.pdf](http://www.saulttribe.com/images/2025_Membership_Services_Directory.pdf)



# Sault Tribe voters signal strong backing for three-branch government in advisory survey

**BY BRENDA AUSTIN**  
SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — Preliminary survey results show that a majority of participating Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians voters favor adopting a three-branch system of government, a change that would require a Secretarial Election through the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The unofficial totals were shared during a Livestream on the tribe’s Facebook page by Chairperson Austin Lowes and Unit 1 Director Rob McRorie. According to figures released online, 56% of participating voters supported creating separate executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

The tally showed:  
3,566 votes for a three-branch structure;

1,596 votes for a two-branch model;  
1,198 votes opposing constitutional amendments altogether.

In total, 6,388 ballots were returned out of 39,117 sent, yielding a 16.33% response rate, according to the tribe’s Legal Department.

“After the Sault Tribe Board of Directors approved their resolution in July, our Legal Department began crafting the survey and developing a clear list of pros and cons. We also reviewed more than 15 years of constitutional reform drafts and committee notes to ensure the updated Constitution reflects the intent of those original committees,” Sault Tribe General Counsel Ryan Mills said. “On Nov. 18, 2025, we delivered the draft constitutional amendments

and the required Secretarial Election resolution to the board. Once the board votes to initiate a Secretarial Election, my staff and I look forward to helping the tribe finalize the constitutional reform effort begun over 15 years ago.”

The survey represents the latest step in a multi-decade push to modernize the tribe’s governmental structure. The effort began in 2005, when the board of directors convened a Constitutional Convention. Three years later, that body drafted a proposed constitution establishing three branches of government, a document endorsed unanimously by its 29 delegates.

The tribe currently operates under a 1975 constitution developed under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

The Sault Tribe Elder

Advisory Board has twice supported the three-branch concept, issuing unanimous endorsements in 2012 and 2024. Despite those recommendations, the tribe’s board did not advance the proposal until July 15, 2025, when it approved holding a survey to gauge citizen views during a meeting in Lansing.

Lowes said the results reflect broad citizen support. “It’s apparent that our citizens overwhelmingly support a three-branch form of government with checks and balances on the board of directors,” he wrote in a social media post. He added that the Elder Advisory Committee and the Constitutional Committee share that stance.

Lowes also credited McRorie for his role in bringing the matter

forward, saying the Unit 1 representative “did not let this issue fade” and pushed to give tribal members a direct voice.

McRorie described the ballot count results as a milestone. “Tonight is a historical night of which our members have been demanding for decades,” he wrote. He thanked participants for taking part in the process, saying the outcome was only possible because of their engagement.

Mills said, “The Board of Directors is workshopping the language of the Constitutional Amendments over the next several workshops. The legal department will post information on the next steps once the board finishes their constitutional workshops.”

Information is available at [www.saulttribe.com](http://www.saulttribe.com).

## Sault Tribe and Kewadin Casinos donate over \$850,000

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — Organizations in the Upper Peninsula will receive a share of \$856,473 in contributions this fall from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. The support to local government and community organizations is part of the twice-annual payments the Sault Tribe has distributed since 1993 to U.P. communities based on 2% of its video gaming revenues from Kewadin Casino properties.

Counties benefitting from the 2-percent contributions include Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac, Schoolcraft, Alger, Delta and Marquette.

Examples of communities and local programs benefitting from the fall 2025 2% contributions include:

- Lake Superior State University received \$9,999.96 for mobile robotics
- Chippewa County Sheriff’s

Department received \$5,000 for a CAD Unit

- Rudyard Schools received \$5,416.25 to support its cardio lab
- Garfield Township received \$5,000 for Wildland fire fighting boots
- City of St. Ignace received \$5,344.81 for fire department lighting and \$12,000 for a police department ballistic shield
- Schoolcraft Hospital

received \$8,242.81 for a LUCAS Unit (a portable, mechanical device that provides consistent, high-quality chest compressions for patients in sudden cardiac arrest)

- Schoolcraft Medical Facility received \$1,000 for insomnia carts
- Munising Township Fire Department received \$11,352.36 to update its 800 MHz radio
- Alger County Sheriff’s

Department received \$3,274.06 for emergency backpacks

“Our Kewadin Casino properties are not only economic drivers that support local tourism and entertainment, they are also one of the key ways we are able to give back and help improve our region,” Sault Tribe Chairman Austin Lowes said. “This funding will support a wide range of local programs serving everything

*See “Donate,” on page 5*

SATURDAYS IN JANUARY ❄️ ALL SITES



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See Northern Rewards Club to register and for more details. Must earn 50 base points to qualify for promotion.

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### ICE COLD CASH

Christmas | Thursdays in January  
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### PAWS & CLAWS SLOT TOURNAMENT

Sault Ste. Marie | Mondays in January  
Daily 60,000 Bonus Points Prize Pool & Prize Draws

### SPIN TO WIN

Sault Ste. Marie | January 23-25  
Win Up to \$15,000 CASH/Bonus Points

### 57<sup>TH</sup> RUNNING OF THE I-500

Sault Ste. Marie | Saturday, February 7  
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Kewadin Casino Hotel Sault Ste. Marie  
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# Sault Area Art Center holds Indigenous art exhibition

STORY & PHOTOS BY JENNIFER DALE-BURTON

The Sault Area Art Center (SAAC) recently held a juried exhibit, “Celebrating Indigenous Culture through Art,” with 15 entries from Indigenous people on both sides of the St. Mary’s River.

The exhibition started Nov. 6 and lasted until Nov. 22, with a reception on Nov. 14 attended by 53 art lovers and artists.

“The Great Lakes Region is home to over 20 indigenous tribes and Canadian First Nations, each with a rich history and artistic legacy,” SAAC Executive Director Raulaniesa Aranda said. “The Sault Area Art Center is honored to be able to host an exhibit honoring these cultures through art.”

There were two categories, three-dimensional (3D) and two-dimensional (2D), and first through third prize plus honorable mention for each category. Traditional Medicine Practitioner Gerard Sagassige and Blacksmith Bill Morrison served as jurors.

Under the 3D category, first place went to Trisha Gough, Sault Tribe, for her beaded walking stick. Second place went to to Kristin Mayer’s (Sault Tribe) bandolier bag. Jesse Bowen’s (Bay Mills) “Turtle Roots,” spruce roots on birchbark, was judged third. Honorable Mention went to Ron Paquin, Sault Tribe, for his model birch bark canoe.

Under the 2D category, first place went to Zoey Wood-Salomon, Wikwemikong, for her “Journey Across the Great Lakes”

in acrylic on canvas. Second went to Lucia LaFord’s (M’Chigeeng First Nation) “Bawaajige,” acrylic on canvas. Third place went to Devin Massaway’s (Sault Tribe) acrylic “Resistance.” Honorable Mention went to Brenda Brining, Sault Tribe, for her “Seven Generations,” in acrylic.

Viewers Choice, awarded at the end of the exhibition as everyone who visited had a chance to vote, went to Ashley Vogel, for the photograph, “Self Destruction.”

The show was planned and overseen by Aranda. At the reception, SAAC Board Chair Agatha Colbert took names at the door, while flautist Vicki Logan provided background music. Diane Boutilier and Annette King prepared Indigenous dishes for the crowd. SAAC Board Member Holly Morrison and SAAC Gallery Committee Volunteer Judy Merrill-Smith helped with food set up and clean up.

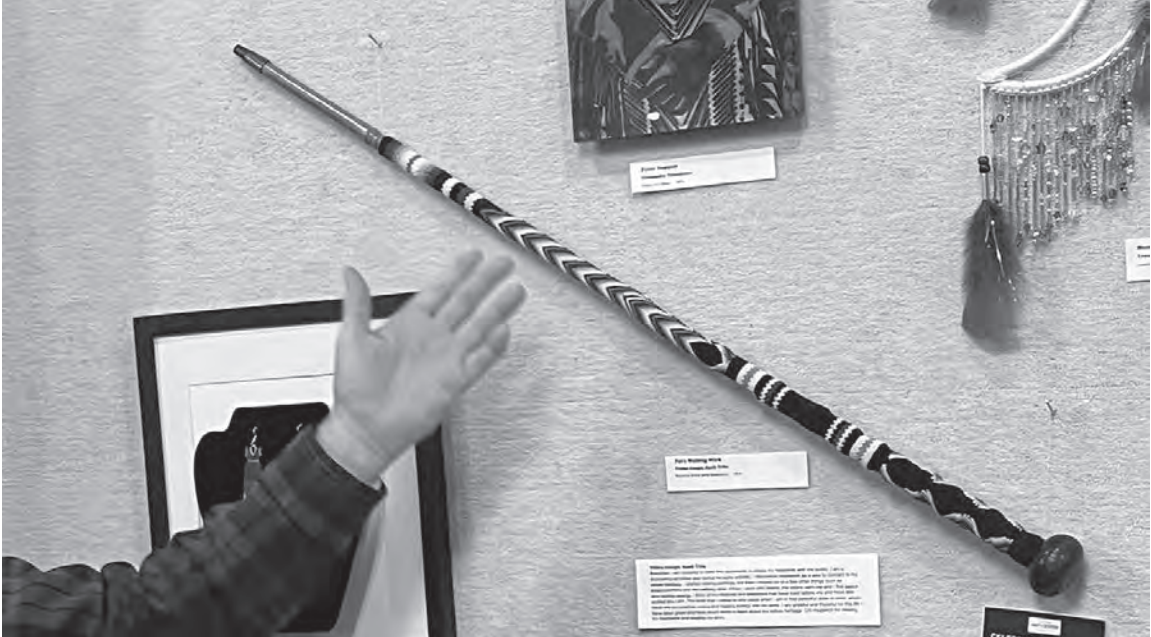
Thanks to sponsorships from the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan and Ben Forejt at Ben’s Electric Contracting, SAAC was able to present first, second, and third place cash awards for both 2D and 3D categories, according to Aranda.

First place received \$00, second place \$00, third place \$0, and the Viewers’ Choice award received \$0.

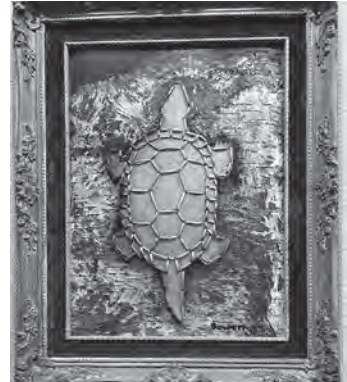
Contact Executive Director Raulaniesa Aranda at saultartcenter@gmail.com with questions about the exhibition or SAAC Indigenous-centered classes.



2D first place: Zoey Wood-Salomon, Wikwemikong, for her painting “Journey Across the Great Lakes”



3D First Place: Trisha Gough, Sault Tribe, for her beaded walking stick



3D Third Place: Jesse Bowen's (Bay Mills) “Turtle Roots,” spruce roots on birchbark



Viewers Choice: Ashley Vogel, Sault Tribe, “Self Destruction”



2D second place: Lucia LaFord's (M’Chigeeng First Nation; pictured) “Bawaajige,” acrylic on canvas.

## Sault Tribe makes 2% contributions

From “Donation,” page 4 from seniors and veterans to parks and recreation and public safety, improved healthcare and more.”

Between this year’s spring and fall allocations, Sault Tribe has made over \$1.55 million in 2% contributions across the Upper Peninsula in 2025.

The Sault Tribe began distributing 2% of its video gaming revenue in 1993 and has since

contributed millions of dollars to communities in the U.P. Those interested in reviewing current and past grant recipients are encouraged to visit <https://kewadin.com/2-percent-donating>.

For more information about the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, please visit <http://www.saulttribe.com>.

For more information about Kewadin Casinos, please visit [www.Kewadin.com](http://www.Kewadin.com).





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# Anishinaabemowin

Winter Solstice: The universe’s way of saying: Now would be a good time to recharge your Vitamin D supplements. And, you can’t afford to lose your gloves yet.

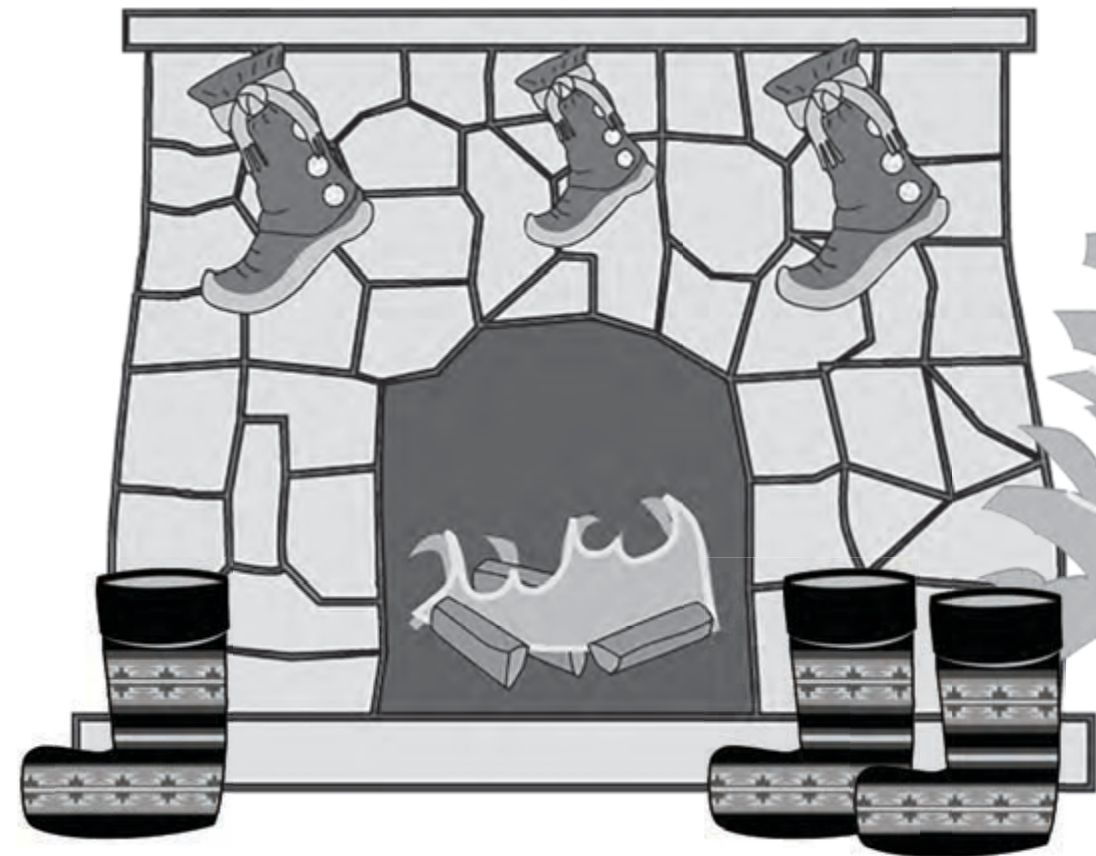
**Mino-niibaanamaam!**     *Merry Christmas!*  
**Minwaanagozin!**     *Be cheerful, joyful, in good spirits!*

**G’da minaachigemi!**     We are celebrating!  
**Segaachige-daa.**     Let’s decorate.

**G’wii wiisinimi, nagamomi, minwaa daminami.**  
We’ll eat and sing and play.

**Niibaanamaa midaasan nanda.**  
These are Christmas stockings.

**N’wii goodoonan.**     **Nang maaba.**  
I’ll hang them up.     This is a star.



**Manidoo Giisoonhs**  
**Little Spirit Moon**  
by Susan Askwith



**Tataagaanhsan nanda.**  
These are the little bells



**Ziisbaakdoohs skowinan nanda.**  
These are candy canes.

**Niibaanamaa mitig maaba.**  
This is the Christmas tree.



**Gechi-miigwed bi-**  
**zhaa oodenang!**  
Santa Claus is coming  
to town!

**Ga biidoonan**  
**shkapijigaanhsan.**  
He will bring presents.

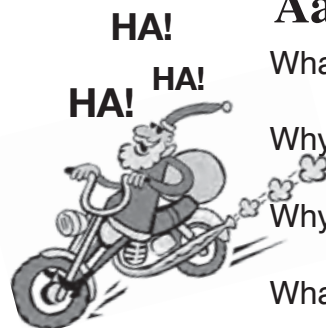


## Maamwi-ginwesh dibikat — Winter Solstice

Christmas is the biggest festival celebrating Winter Solstice. Traditionally, for us, we celebrate the beginning of the very gradual return of light from **Giizis**. It’s a dark time of quiet stillness, calm, and mystery. A time to think about our lives and seek guidance. Stars have been our symbol of those qualities. **nang**- star; **nangook**- stars; **gaagigekamik**- universe

Our nearest star (**nang**), the sun, is the center of our solar system. We call her **Giizis**. She is a middle aged **nang**, located at the far edge of the outer arm of our spiral galaxy (Milky Way). **Giizis** is one of more than 200 *billion* stars in our galaxy alone. There are about 170 *billion* galaxies that are visible from **Shkakamakwe**. Just imagine...

**Making our Sounds** Most letters sound like they do in English. Here are the exceptions.  
**a** sounds like the a in *awesome*     **a** sounds like the a in *about*  
**ii** sounds like the e in *be*     **i** sounds like the i in *dip*  
**oo** sounds like the o in *go*     **o** sounds like the oo’s in *book*  
**e** sounds like the e in *Ed*     **g** sounds only like it does in *go*  
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! Emphasized syllables are underlined.



**Aambe, baapin! (Come on, laugh!)**

What did the gingerbread man put on his bed?  
*A cookie sheet.*  
Why didn’t Rudolph get a good report card?  
*Because he went down in history.*  
Why are Christmas trees always looking forward?  
*Because the present is beneath them.*  
What’s every elf’s favorite type of music?  
*Wrap, of course.*  
What kind of motorcycle does Santa Ride?  
*A Holly Davidson.*



# Why the oak tree hangs tightly to its leaves

Storytelling is an Anishinaabe art. From these stories, we learn about our history, culture, humor, and the everyday values of our community. The traditional stories of the Anishinaabe originated long before there were other races of people among us. Our stories were our education.

Storytelling is carried out in the winter months. Our elders say that because many of the stories talk about the animals, plants and trees, we tell their stories while they are sleeping so they will not be offended.

Sault Tribe Traditional Medicine Program

Gerard Sagassige

2026 January

Healer clinic schedule

January 5,6,12,13,19,20,26,27

Sault Ste. Marie Health Center

(906)632-0236

Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup>

St. Ignace Health Center

(906)643-8689 or (877)256-0135

Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>

Munising Health Center

(906)387-4721 or (800)236-4705

Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>

Manistique Health Center

(906)341-8469 or (866) 401-0043

Wednesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>

Newberry Health Center

(906)293-8181

ANY QUESTIONS, OR TO BOOK AN APPOINTMENT PLEASE CALL

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PROGRAM AT

906-632-0236 OR 906-632-5268

Long ago, an old man lived in a wigwam deep in the forest. He was old and frail, but he had magic and could do many things with it. Because he was feeble, he had to rely on others to help him. But because he had magic, others were afraid of him, for good reason.

Many young men disappeared in the woods and the people attributed it to the old man.

One young man in the village, who was soon to be married, decided to hunt for a bear rug to give his in-laws as a gift for the young woman's hand. So he set off early one morning in search of a large bear.

Soon, he found what he was looking for. Seeing a large bear through the tree branches, the young man prepared himself, then began his stalk. The bear just ignored him. Even when he came into full view, the bear just glanced at the young hunter and turned away.

The hunter followed the bear to a large wigwam where the bear went inside. As the young man followed the bear in, he became paralyzed by the bear's magic. The bear made the young man his slave. He had to hunt



for the bear and do all the work around the wigwam.

Back in the village, the young woman waited for the young man to return, but he never came home. She continued to wait. Others finally gave up on him but the young woman would not.

Finally, one morning, she set off to find the young man. Soon she came upon the wigwam and saw the young man working

there and the old bear inside. She could see that the young man had been enslaved. So she sat down and prayed for help. Soon she had a plan. She walked down to the wigwam and the bear and the young man saw her coming. When the bear saw her, he fell in love with her and invited her inside. As she went in, she, too, was caught by the magic.

But the bear didn't want her as a slave, he wanted her as his wife. So, he asked her to marry him. The young woman answered, "That is impossible I cannot marry a bear." So, the bear turned himself back into an old man.

"Now, will you marry me?" he asked.

"Before I answer, would you set this young man free?" "Granted!" answered the old man.

The young man went outside and grabbed a club and started for the wigwam, but he could not enter.

"Now," said the old man. "What is your answer?"

The young woman said, "I will marry you. But first, you must let me guide this young man back to his village and let me prepare for my wedding."

"But when will you return?" asked the old man.

"I will return when the oak completely sheds its leaves," she answered.

"Agreed!" said the old man. And he let the couple go.

To this day, the oak leaves hang tightly to their branches all winter long until young green leaves sprout in the spring.

## MANIDOO GIIZIS - SPIRIT MOON - JANUARY 2026

NIIZHWAASO GIIZHIGAT	NTAM GIIZHIGAT	NIIZHO GIIZHIGAT	NSWO GIIZHIGAT	NIIWO GIIZHIGAT	NAANO GIIZHIGAT	NGODWAASWO GIIZHIGAT
		 shki bboon (new year)	 Mino Nimkodaading (Happy New Year!)	 1 Jaachaama. (S/he is sneezing.)	 2 Sosdam. (S/he is coughing.)	 3 Mooshkaneshin Dibiki Giizis (It is a full moon.)
 4 gawaan'gamik (spearing shack)	 5 wewebinaabii (S/he is ice fishing)	 6 Nimkaage. (S/he greets by waving)	 7 Biziingwepo. (There is blinding snow.)	 8 Shpaagonagaa. (The snow is deep.)	 9 baataawaagneshin (to be stuck in the snow)	 10 E-piichiksinaa? (How cold is it?)
 11 naabkawaagan (scarf)	 12 gziinjaane'gan (kleenex/tissue)	 13 mjigawanak (mittens)	 14 goonibaakwat (snowball)	 15 gidagoon bembizod (snowmobile [thing that drives on snow])	 16 gidaagoon bimbizoschige (S/he is snowmobiling.)	 17 mitigwaaking (forest)
 18 mooz (moose)	 19 Zhooshkwaade. (S/he is ice skating)	 20 baapaashkaakji (trees make cracking sounds from the cold)	 21 goonigne bik (snow snake)	 22 bootsinan (boots)	 23 Aagamaase. (S/he is walking on snowshoes.)	 24 waagosh (fox)
 25 goonenhsag (snowflakes)	 26 zhiing-waak (pine tree)	 27 zgataagan (tinder)	 28 n'wiijiki'enh (my friend)	 29 Naabadin. (The snow is crusted.)	 30 gii'zhoopzan (dress warm)	 31 bkindaagan (fur pelt)



# Sault Tribe board passes resolutions at November and December meetings in Hessel and the Sault

The Sault Tribe Board of Directors took their Nov. 18 meeting on the road converging on the Hessel Community Center where they approved the following resolutions:

- Established a Fiscal Year 2026 budget with United States Department of Agriculture funds in the amount of \$45,049.51.
- Established a Fiscal Year 2026 budget in the amount of \$88,000 to SOR4 designed to fund opioid response medication assisted treatment.
- Established a Fiscal Year budget of \$798,718.51 to Radiology for the purchase of a new machine.
- Authorized the Natural Resources Division to apply for up to \$50,000 in funding through The Nature Conservancy for lake whitefish restoration efforts.
- Authorized the Natural Resources Division to apply for up to \$200,000 in Michigan Coastal Management funding for the Hoban Creek Project.
- Contracted with Compass Resource Management with Bureau of Indian Affairs money not to exceed \$96,000 to develop a Midwest Wild Rice (Manoomin) Strategic Plan to guide restoration efforts.
- Approved 10 liquor licenses including all five casinos — Christmas, Hessel, Manistique, St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie — three convenience stores, Christmas, St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie, and two golf courses, Tanglewood and Bear on the Mountain.
- Waived sovereign immunity and consent to waiver of tribal court jurisdiction clearing the way for transactions with PNC Bank and Sacred Path in separate resolutions.
- Amended Resolution 2025-225 providing tribal entities an additional 90 days to develop organizational charts for review and approval.

— Reappointed Robert McRorie to the Child Welfare Committee and named Michael McKerchie as board liaison alternate.

The board also met Dec. 2 at Kewadin Casino and Convention Center, taking action on a slate of fiscal year 2026 budget approvals, grant applications, and governance matters while keeping essential government services funded into the new year. Resolutions approved:

- Purchase of Bison Meat for Elders - The board approved using up to \$15,000 from an Indian Energy donation to

purchase bison meat from DuBray Buffalo Ranch in South Dakota, with processing provided by Leadercharge’s Mobile Processing Unit and Mauer’s Little Meat Shop, ensuring distribution to tribal elder members at no cost to Tribal Support.

— Continuing Funding Authority – Governmental FY26 - Directors approved temporary funding for governmental programs at 2025 levels through March 31, 2026 to prevent any lapse in services while final budget reviews continue.

— Continuing Funding Authority – Health Division FY26 - Health services will also continue without interruption under the same short-term funding extension through the first quarter of 2026.

— NRD – Tribal Youth Initiative FY26 Budget - A new \$4,779 federally supported youth initiative budget was established with no impact on Tribal Support.

— NRD – Aquatic Invasive Species FY26 Budget - A \$100,000 federal U.S. Fish & Wildlife-funded budget was approved to continue combating invasive species.

— ACFS – USDA 2740 FY26 Budget - The board established a budget supported by more than \$753,000 in USDA funds and \$273,833 in third-party revenue for ACFS programs.

— ACFS – USDA 2745 FY26 Budget - A second ACFS budget was approved at \$60,666 in USDA funding and \$15,984 in Tribal Support.

— Government Human Resources FY26 Budget - Human Resources will operate with \$602,593 in Tribal Support and \$473,466 in indirect cost revenue for the coming fiscal year.

— Apply for EPA SWIFR Grant - Directors authorized a grant application of up to \$260,000 to support tribal recycling and integrated waste management planning.

— Apply for NFWF Healthy American Forests Initiative - The Tribe will seek up to \$2 million in support of watershed and habitat restoration benefiting treaty rights and ecosystem resilience.

— Renewal of Tribal License – Sault Tribe Youth Facility - The Youth Facility was re-licensed to continue operating under federal compliance on tribal trust lands.

— Amend ADP Agreement - The payroll and timekeeping system agreement with ADP was updated so all tribal enti-

ties—including Kewadin and Housing—can utilize the platform.

— Amend Chapter 11 Membership Ordinance – Fees - Directors approved administrative setting of enrollment-related fees, replacing fixed dollar amounts in code to allow flexibility with a 30-day notice requirement.

— Award Construction Contract – Unit III Lodge - A \$105,000 contract was awarded to Sault Tribe Construction to build a cultural lodge near the McCann School property, with

a waiver of the competitive bid process.

— Support NIH Tribal Advisory Committee Nominations - The board backed the continued service of Directors Tyler LaPlaunt and Kimberly Hampton as Bemidji Area delegate and alternate to the NIH Tribal Advisory Committee.

— Authorize Amended Constitution Submission - Following a membership survey, the board selected a preferred amended constitution and authorized submission to the Secretary

of the Interior for review.

— Secretarial Election - A vote on this was tabled until further discussion could be held at the Jan. 6 meeting: Upon completion of federal review, the amended constitution will proceed to a secretarial election, allowing eligible voters to decide whether to adopt the changes.

New Business Items - The board also reviewed its 2026 meeting calendar, made several committee appointments, and discussed board concerns before adjourning to executive session.

## Family gathers for Thanksgiving



Submitted by Clyde Morell

For many years, Bonnie Bright, 89, has hosted Thanksgiving dinner at her home in Deckerville, Mich. This year, 38 family members attended. The farthest family members to come were her brother, Clyde Morell, 87, and his wife, Bobbi, who came from Virginia. There was lots of great food, storytelling and laughter. Many family members went out and did some deer hunting in the woods behind the house, including Bonnie’s brother, Clyde. Bonnie has five children, 15 grandchildren, 28 great grandchildren and one great great grandson. The picture at her home shows four generations with the grandchildren and great grandchildren who attended this year.

NEW YEARS EVE

SOBRIETY POWWOW

SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS

DECEMBER 31, 2025

BIG BEAR ARENA - 2 ICE CIRCLE DR (SAULT, MI)

Head Staff

Emcee - Joe Medicine

Head Veteran - Nick VanAlstine

Arena Director - Les Ailing

Host Drum - Big River

Invited Drums - Ice Circle & Frog Hills

Head Male Dancer - Jessy Farley

Head Female Dancer - Melissa Causley

Schedule of Events

Vendor Set Up - 12:00pm

Doors Open to Public - 3:00pm

Dinner @ Niigaaniigizhik - 4:00pm

Sobriety Recognition - 5:00pm

Grand Entry - 6:00pm

Traveling Song - 10:00pm

Drum Split for all other drums (must have 4 singers)

Honorarium for first 50 dancers in regalia

Spot Dances & Giveaway

Drug & Alcohol Free - No Pets - No Politics

Vendors Free (Must be Tribal)

contact Scott Garcia

sgarcia@saulttribe.net

Powwow Information

contact Cody Jodoin

cjodoin@saulttribe.net

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# Bipartisan bill seeks \$500M to protect Great Lakes fisheries from invasive mussels

By Brenda Austin

Michigan lawmakers are pushing a major new federal initiative to defend the Great Lakes’ struggling fisheries from invasive zebra and quagga mussels, which experts warn are driving key species such as whitefish toward collapse.

The Save the Great Lakes Fish Act — formally H.R. 6053, the SGLF Act of 2025 — was introduced in November by U.S. Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.) and Tim Walberg (R-Mich.). The bipartisan legislation would authorize \$500 million over 10 years to support federal, state, tribal, and local partners in a coordinated mussel-control effort led with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

Dingell said the invasive mus-

sel crisis is now as urgent as the sea lamprey invasion that devastated Great Lakes fisheries in the mid-20th century. She pointed to the federally managed lamprey control program as a model for the scale and coordination needed today.

“This is critical to protecting and preserving the Great Lakes, not to mention our fishing economy,” Dingell said, noting that whitefish — once a foundation of Michigan’s commercial harvest — account for more than 80 percent of the state’s catch and are now in steep decline. “This is an urgent problem that requires an urgent, robust plan of attack.” Walberg stressed that mussel damage threatens not just native fish, but the regional economy

and communities that rely on the lakes.

“The ecological health and well-being of our Great Lakes fisheries is vital to Michigan’s economy and our way of life,” he said. “We must combat the spread of invasive mussels and ensure future generations can enjoy this national treasure.”

The SGLF Act would amend the Great Lakes Fishery Act of 1956 and strengthen long-term mussel response by: directing USFWS, USGS, and NOAA to assist with mussel control and research; formally coordinating work through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission; and delivering \$500 million in funding for large-scale solutions over a decade.

Officials say the approach mirrors the proven lamprey-control partnership that has restored balance to key predator-prey systems over the past 70 years.

Support for the bill spans tribal nations, conservation groups, and sportfishing advocates. Douglas Craven, Natural Resources Director for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, said mussels have pushed culturally important whitefish “to the precipice of extirpation,” praising the effort as “long needed” and overdue.

Commission Chair Ethan Baker called mussels an “existential threat” and warned that without coordinated action, the invasive species “will continue to inflict harm on the environment,

infrastructure, and critical species.”

Groups including the American Sportfishing Association, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes have also endorsed the bill, citing the importance of the Great Lakes’ \$5.1 billion sportfishing economy and the region’s role as home to 20% of the world’s surface freshwater.

“We are all protectors of the Great Lakes waters,” said Virgil Wind of the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes. “We are in this together.”

The House passed the bill in 2025, and it now awaits action in the Senate.

# Combating the challenges facing manoomin

By Amy Schneider, Natural Resources Division

Manoomin (wild rice), translating as “the good berry,” is a culturally important relative of the Anishinaabe people, providing nutrition and habitat for people and non-human relatives alike. Manoomin play a key role in the Anishinaabe migration story, telling of how ancestors traveled from the East Coast to the Great Lakes region to reach the prophesized “land where food grows on water.” Furthermore, the benefits that manoomin provide to an ecosystem are numerous, ranging from providing spawning grounds for native fish to stabilizing shorelines and reducing erosion. Thus, manoomin allows for interconnectivity between the Anishinaabe, their relatives, and their ancestral homelands.

However, manoomin populations are under threat for multiple reasons, including habitat loss and poor water quality. Although broadleaf cattail (*Typha latifolia*) is native to



Left: A hybrid cattail stand that has been cut down by Sault Tribe coastal biologists. Right: A Sault Tribe coastal biologist kayaking through a manoomin stand.



the area, hybrid cattail (*Typha x glauca*), a hybrid between broadleaf and narrowleaf cattail (*Typha angustifolia*), has developed a stronghold in wetlands throughout the Laurentian Great Lakes region. Specifically, hybrid cattail has the ability to form dense monocultures in locations ideal for manoomin

stand growth, pushing out and overtaking manoomin populations. Hybrid cattail is also tolerant of higher salinity and fluctuating water levels and can therefore flourish in disturbed wetlands and urban areas.

To combat the negative impacts of hybrid cattail, the Sault Tribe Natural Resources

Division’s Coastal Resilience Initiative conducts targeted treatments of hybrid cattail in the St. Mary’s River each year. This treatment is performed by using weed whackers to cut down cattail at least 1 foot below the water in the fall, allowing the water to freeze over the cattail in the win-

ter before it has time to grow back. Coastal biologists have been treating hybrid cattail for approximately 10 years, and have seen success in reduction of large monocultures in Shingle and Munuscong Bays, which may help provide native manoomin plots in these areas the space to begin to thrive.

## 2026 Black Lake Sturgeon Lottery Application

Sault Tribe has an allocation for **sturgeon harvest** from Black Lake in Cheboygan County in 2026. Please fill out the following application and return to Sault Tribe Natural Resource Department at: **2428 Shunk Road, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783.** **Application must be received by 5:00 pm on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025.** Applications received after 5:00pm on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025 **WILL NOT** be accepted.

First Name	<input type="text"/>	Middle Name	<input type="text"/>	Last Name	<input type="text"/>		
Address	<input type="text"/>	City	<input type="text"/>	State	<input type="text"/>	Zip Code	<input type="text"/>
File Number (Red # on Tribal ID)	<input type="text"/>	STS #	<input type="text"/>				
Date of Birth	<input type="text"/>	Sex	<input type="text"/>	Phone Number	<input type="text"/>	Email	<input type="text"/>

One entry per applicant.  
Open to Sault Tribe members ONLY.



# Tribe participates in Shingabawossin statue project

On Nov. 19, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians was proud to take part in the dedication of the new Chief Shingabawossin bronze statue at the I-75 Business Spur roundabout in Sault Ste. Marie. This project was made possible through strong partnership with the Bay Mills Indian Community, the City of Sault Ste. Marie, and several community partners who worked together to honor this important leader of Bahweting.

Chief Shingabawossin played a vital role in guiding our people, protecting our homelands, and helping shape the early relationships in this region. His leader-

ship during the 1820 Treaty of Sault Ste. Marie helped secure rights for our people, including lasting access to the St. Mary’s fishery, which the statue’s netted whitefish signifies. Recognizing him in this way is a meaningful reminder of the teachings, responsibilities, and strength our ancestors carried forward.

The statue stands as a testament to our shared history and to the ongoing commitment of our tribal nations and local partners to preserve and uplift the identity of Bahweting for future generations.

Chi miigwech to everyone who contributed to this

effort, including the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Sault Tribe’s Language and Culture Department, artist Andy Sacksteder, Tom Robinson (River of History Museum), Linda Hoath (Sault Area Convention and Visitors Bureau), Sailor Creek Construction (placed statue), Vital Signs (created statue’s plaque), Charlee Brissett (technical guidance), Robin Clark Ph.D. (technical guidance), and many others. We are grateful for your dedication and teamwork in bringing this project to life.

Bahweting has always been a place of connection, and today’s dedication continues that legacy.



# Oak wilt now found in Luce and Chippewa Counties

Oak wilt, a disease that kills red oaks, has spread to the EUP in Luce and Chippewa counties.

Red oaks are valuable sources of acorns for wildlife, and timber in our forests. There is no treatment for oak wilt, but there are two things you can do to help.

The disease is spread between trees through roots, by beetles and by the movement of infected firewood. Get your firewood locally.

The main symptoms of oak wilt include discoloration and wilting of the leaves and defoliation, and it can kill some

**Now is the time to trim your oak trees. Do not prune them during the growing season, from April 15-July 15.**

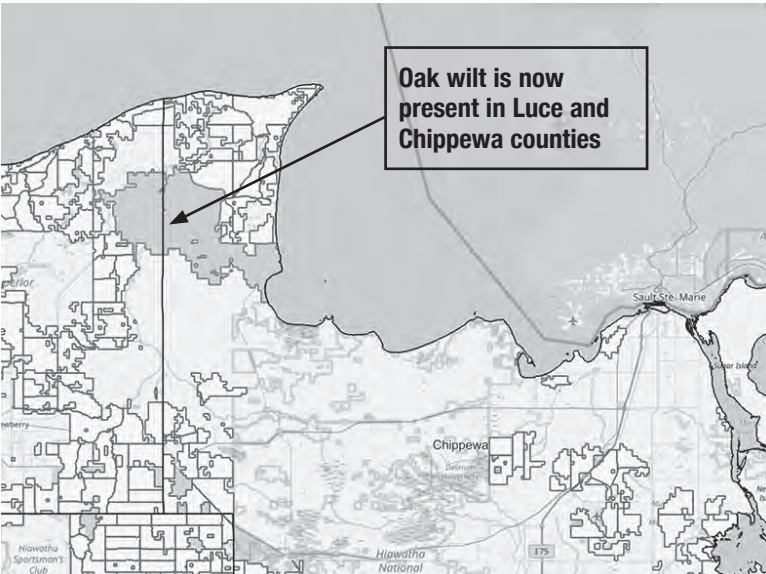
species of oak within weeks or months of infection. If your tree has a spore mat, it’s dead.

Do not prune oak trees during the growing season — between April 15 and July 15. Right now is a good time to prune oaks if needed. Although White oak is more resistant to oak wilt, white oak can also become infected.

Report oak wilt if you think you’ve identified it.



How oak wilt might look on your tree.



# Elk cows harvested in South Dakota



Sault Tribe Chairman Austin Lowes (right) and his wife Tara Maudrie-Lowes (above) harvested these cow elk on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota on a recent trip.



# Winter walking tips to help you avoid slips and falls

**FROM SAULT TRIBE INSURANCE/SAFETY DEPARTMENT**

With the weather changing daily we here at the Insurance/Safety Department would like community members be aware of the dangers of slips and falls and how to help avoid them.

Falls can be serious. Falling can cause bruises, sprains, or more serious injuries like broken bones or concussions. Melting snow can freeze overnight, forming a thin layer of ice that is hard to see. The ground can then become very slippery in the morning when the ice starts to melt. In months where the ground is frozen, ground frost and ice can make it slippery for walking. No matter how well the snow is removed from parking lots or sidewalks, there will still be slip-

pery places.

What you wear on your feet can help lower your risk of falling. Boots or shoes that fit well and have a good grip are the best choice. Special items like shoe grips or ice cleats can give you extra traction when you’re walking on snowy or icy surfaces. You can buy these items from places like department or sporting goods stores. Always take off these grips or cleats when walking inside because they can make you slip on indoor flooring.

How can I avoid slipping and falling on snow or ice?

- Find a path around snow or ice when you can.
- Learn how to walk like a penguin — walk slowly, take small steps, and point your toes out slightly to be more stable on

icy paths. (See <https://youtu.be/PVkj08NkYSA>)

- Keep your head up and don’t lean forward.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets to help keep your balance.
- If you use a cane, you can buy an ice pick for the cane.

More tips for winter walking

- Plan ahead to make sure you have enough time to get where you’re going.
- Assume that all wet, dark areas on the pavement may be slippery or icy. If you can, walk around them.
- Walk on cleared walkways—avoid shortcuts that haven’t been cleared.
- Download a local weather app on your phone (such as WeatherBug Weather Alerts) so

you know what the weather is like before you go outside.

- Don’t text or talk on your phone and walk at the same time.
- Use handrails on stairs and ramps. If you’re walking on a slope where there are no handrails, be extra careful.
- Spread sand or grit on your steps and walkways. You could

also try carrying a small container of sand or grit to sprinkle on icy or sloped surfaces that you can’t walk around.

- Try not to carry heavy things that can make you lose your balance, or large things that could block your view. If possible, use a backpack to keep your hands free.

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# Common myths about Narcan, where to get it

**TOMMISSA ENNES, SAULT TRIBE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PREVENTION SPECIALIST**

**Narcan encourages drug use**

Studies do not show any evidence that access to Narcan increases drug use or risk-taking behaviors. It is estimated that between 1996 and 2014, Narcan reversed over 27,000 drug related overdoses (CADCA, 2015). Narcan saves thousands of lives every year. There is no evidence to suggest that providing Narcan will lead to negative outcomes, but there is plenty of evidence to show the positive outcomes of providing access to the lifesaving medication.

**Narcan is only for people in active addiction**

Narcan is used to reverse the effects of opioids. In 2023, over 125 million opioid prescriptions were dispensed in the US (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). Narcan is for every person who may be exposed to a form of opioid. This includes people living with opioid use disorder, patients managing chronic pain with prescription opioids, children in households where family members use prescribed opioids, individuals prescribed opioids after surgery, and anyone who has access, or is close to someone who has access

to opioid medications.

**Narcan is unsafe to administer if someone is not overdosing on opioids**

If an individual is administered Narcan and they do not have opioids in their system, nothing happens. Narcan is safe to administer to anyone, even if they are not using opioids (CADCA, 2015). If someone is unresponsive and it is believed to be an overdose, Narcan should be administered even if it is unknown what the individual took. If opioids are present, it will help reverse their effects; if not, it won't cause any harm or have any effect.

**Narcan is used to get high**

Narcan can not be used to get high (Indiana State Department of Health, n.d.). It is not considered to be an addictive substance. Narcan works by removing opioids from receptors in the brain. If there are no opioids to remove, nothing will happen. There are no significant psychological or physiological effects of Narcan on the body.

**Only medical professionals can administer Narcan**

Anyone can administer Narcan. Directions on how to administer are provided on the box and can be found at <https://narcancan.com/en/>

**One dose of Narcan is**

**enough to reverse an overdose**

It can often take a second, or even third dose of Narcan to reverse an overdose. When administering Narcan to an unresponsive individual, it is recommended to wait 2-3 minutes before administering a second dose (Washington State Department of Health, 2024). This process should be repeated until medical services arrive.

**Where can I get Narcan?**

Narcan and other prevention supplies can be picked up, at no cost, in the Sault Tribe Health Center main lobby (2864 Ashmun St.) and in the entrance of the Shedawin Haven (2318 Shunk Road).

# Artificial intelligence impacts the art and science of dentistry - Part 1

**JESSICA A. RICKERT, DDS, ANISHINAABE DENTAL OUTREACH**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a recent tool developed by computer experts. What is it? Here are some definitions to start with.

Intelligence. The word comes from Latin intelligentia, meaning 'to understand.'

Learning is the complex acquisition and retention of facts, information and abilities and being able to recall them

for future applications. Learning involves analyzing data, recognizing patterns, and making decisions. Yes, animals exhibit intelligence. Some examples of animal intelligence include tool use and cognitive abilities like understanding commands. Instinct is the natural inclination towards a particular behavior, programmed by the genes.

AI uses technologies that allow machines to perform the complex task of learning. AI systems can analyze data,

recognize patterns, reason, problem-solve, and make decisions. Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) can create original content such as text, images, audio, software code and video in response to user prompts.

GAI is done through algorithms based on large datasets to produce new data.

Machine learning (ML) is the ability for computers to learn from stored data and make decisions without human program-

ming.

A computer's neural network is modeled on the human brain with its many neurons and synapses. It consists of connected units called "nodes." Signals are sent between connected nodes via algorithms to imitate human learning.

In mathematics and computer science an algorithm is a finite sequence of mathematically rigorous instructions called computer code. For example, algorithms are used to solve com-

putations. Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer (chatGPT) analyzes data and uses previous outputs to produce human-like communications such as writing, speaking and singing.

In the future as always, dentistry will be on the cutting edge of science and technology. AI is a useful and promising tool which is welcomed by dentists.

Next month's news will highlight the potential of an amazing future powered by our brilliant young Anishinaabe.

# Sault Elder Center birthdays celebrated



The Sault Tribe Elder Center celebrates elder birthdays once a month during their regular meal time. Above: December birthdays, from left: Jeanine Marble, Jolene Nertoli, Harold Hilborn, and Frank Marble. Right: October birthday was Donna Munsell. Below, November birthdays were celebrated by: Tonya Robbins, RN, Shirley VanAlstine, and Bea Leighton.



## Happy Holidays

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# Obelisk removed from Indigenous burial grounds after 27-year effort by local tribes

**BY BRENDA AUSTIN**  
SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — A stone obelisk erected more than a century ago on Indigenous burial grounds in downtown Sault Ste. Marie was removed last month, marking the end of a decades-long effort by tribal nations to reclaim and protect a sacred site known to the Anishinaabe as Wadjiwong. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers removed the monument from Brady Park on Nov. 4, following years of consultation with the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.

The structure, built in 1907 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Soo Locks, stood directly atop graves belonging to ancestors of both tribal nations.

Tribal officials say the history was never in doubt. “The Army Corps had maps showing that area was a burial ground,” said Emma Donmyer, the Sault Tribe’s repatriation and historic preservation specialist. “They knew it. They decided to place the monument there anyway. For many in our community, that act was a desecration.”

For Donmyer, the project carried personal meaning. Her great-great-grandmother once sold black ash baskets to help purchase the land that later became Wequayoc, a cemetery the Sault Tribe now owns. “She felt it was important that our people had a final resting place,” Donmyer said. “It’s deeply humbling that I am able to continue that work today. Caring for our ancestors is a responsibility passed down through generations.”

The removal comes after roughly 27 years of negotiations, advocacy and formal consultation. Bay Mills initiated the effort in the late 1990s, and the Sault Tribe joined shortly afterward. Over time, the two nations worked with the Corps through a series of agreements, including a lease granting the tribes’ authority over the fenced burial area.

Donmyer began working on the project three years ago as an employee of the tribe’s Culture Division. “It’s really special to see the end result of decades of hard work by so many people,” she said. “Removing it is healing — for our community, for the ancestors buried there and for those who still use this place for cultural practices.”

As part of her role, Donmyer served as a tribal monitor for all activity inside the fenced burial area — even work that didn’t disturb the soil. She watched as survey crews examined the monument’s foundation and structural stability. “They needed to know how deep it went,



**Elder advisor and longtime NAGPRA representative for the Sault Tribe, Cecil Pavlat**



**Sault Tribe Repatriation and Historic Preservation Specialist Emma Donmyer**



**Ojibwe Learning Center Library Aide Nicole Maleport**

what condition it was in, how quickly it could come out,” she said. “Everything had to be done carefully.”

The monument, weakened by more than a century of freeze-thaw cycles, ultimately couldn’t be relocated. Instead, the Corps plans to develop an interpretive exhibit for the Soo Locks Park or Visitor Center explaining the history of the site and the decades-long tribal effort behind its removal.

Cecil Pavlat, an elder advisor and longtime NAGPRA representative for the Sault Tribe, said the obelisk’s removal closes a chapter that began when he started cultural repatriation work in 1999. “One of my first projects was the obelisk,” Pavlat said. “Back then, we were notified the city and the Corps planned to modify the park. That would have meant ground disturbance. We knew it was a burial ground, and we made it clear we didn’t support it. The project was stopped.”

By 2005, the tribes, the

Corps and the city collaborated to install a fence, remove sidewalks and asphalt from within it, and restore the ground as a protected cemetery. A lease later granted the tribes primary authority inside the fenced area.

Pavlat offered the prayer and pipe ceremony on the day the monument came down. “It’s been over 25 years,” he said. “To see it come full circle — it’s an awesome feeling. A lot has changed. Archaeologists and professionals today are much more understanding and sympathetic than they were back then. That shift has made a difference.”

He said the timing of events often felt guided. “A lot of things happened in an order you can’t explain,” he said. “During that same time, I was working with the Smithsonian Museum and brought some of our ancestors home. It felt like the work was all connected.”

Beyond the obelisk project, Donmyer represents the Sault Tribe in the Michigan Anishinabek Cultural Preservation and Repatriation Alliance, a statewide coalition where representatives from all Michigan tribes collaborate on repatriation issues, protection of sacred sites and shared cultural priorities.

She also oversees the tribe’s Ojibwe Learning Center and Library, which houses more than 1,000 books on Indigenous history, politics, foodways and culture, as well as a children’s and young adult collection.

The library has become a home for repatriated non-funerary items that can be respectfully displayed. “We’re not a lending library yet, but people are welcome to come in, study, take photos or use the space for meetings,” she said.

The library is open to the public — including non-tribal members — and often serves as a gathering and learning place during events at the Big Bear. Many children visit to read or color while siblings participate in sports, and materials are provided for them to draw.

The space is also available to reserve for meetings, such as the Sugar Island Powwow planning sessions held there last spring. The center recently launched a weekly Craft and Tea Night on Tuesdays from 6 to 8 p.m., where community members bring their own projects to work alongside others.

Library Aide Nicole Maleport, who started in August 2024, helps manage the space. To reserve the library, attendees can contact Maleport at [nmaleport@saulttribe.net](mailto:nmaleport@saulttribe.net).

In her repatriation work — conducted under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act — Donmyer collaborates with



**Photo by Carmen Paris, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

**The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, removed the Obelisk signifying the Soo Locks 50th anniversary located in Brady Park, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., on Nov. 4, 2025. When the Obelisk was constructed, it was placed on an Indigenous burial site, related to multiple tribes including the Bay Mills Indian Community and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.**

institutions across the country, including Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, the Field Museum, the Chicago History Museum, and Oklahoma State University, for the return of ceremonial items and the repatriation of ancestors to their final resting place.

“Repatriation means getting back what we hold sacred,” she said.

For Donmyer, the removal of the obelisk is one part of an ongoing commitment. “It’s our duty as Anishinaabe to care for our ancestors. Removing the obelisk was part of that. Repatriation is part of that. And protecting places like Wadjiwong is part of that.”

Tribal leaders say the November removal marks not an ending but another step in a much longer continuum. “It shows respect for our people, our culture and our sacred sites,” Donmyer said. “It honors those who came before us.”

Pavlat agrees. “The work we started 25 years ago has come a long way. The tribes are doing a great job. And this, protecting our burial ground, is something that needed to happen. We are their voice — and we are still here,” he said.

## What is Wadjiwong?

Wadjiwong is the Anishinaabe name for the Indigenous burial grounds located at today’s Brady Park in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Ancestors of both the Bay Mills Indian Community and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians are buried there, and historical maps held by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers long identified the area as a cemetery.

Despite that knowledge, a stone obelisk marking the Soo Locks’ 50th anniversary was built directly on the site in 1907, a decision tribal leaders describe as a desecration.

Protection efforts began in the late 1990s, when proposed park alterations would have disturbed the ground. The tribes worked with the Corps and the city to install a protective fence in 2004-2005, restore the land and establish tribal oversight of all activities inside the burial area.

Today, Wadjiwong remains an active place of cultural and spiritual practice, and tribal leaders say the November 2025 removal of the monument marks a significant step toward healing.



# NMU’S Learning to Walk Together Powwow



At left, above, Arena Director John Hutchinson assembled the dancers in preparation for the grand entry. Above, at right, the staff bearers enter kicking off the 2025 Learning to Walk Together Powwow on the campus of Northern Michigan University. The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians braved lake-effect snow, cold temperatures and gusty winds to convene on this central location for the Dec. 6 event.



The Northern Center Grand Ballroom hosted the event. With multiple drums, numerous vendors and a curious public, the facility was filled to near capacity throughout the day.



Left, The Teal Lake Singers perform with their drum Gidinawendemin as the host drum. Right, the Ice Circle Singers traveled from the Eastern end of the U.P. to participate.



Above, Sarah Garver and Julie Buchholtz greeted visitors looking to make purchases, while below Summer Cloud plays an inter-tribal dance.



Above, Stephanie DePetro visits the vendor booth of Karen Moses. Below, Lee Ailing at his booth.

Photos by  
Scott Brand



Adeline Derwin helps her younger sister, Ruby, 13, get ready for the powwow.



# Sault Tribe elders pack DreamMakers Theatre for 2025 Christmas dinner celebration



Pat and Frank Bures enjoy the festivities.



Al and Carol Colegrove.



The Grinch lays hands on Chuck Forgrave.



Gabby Gil, 10, dances on the big stage at the DreamMakers Theater.



Aimee Penrose and the Grinch.



The JKL Bahweting School drummers and dancers performed for the elders before dinner was served.



Dave Zammit and Chris Cadreau of Port Huron, Mich.



Nicole Weir and Victoria Albert-Ruthruff



Maryellen and Walter Dillon.



Amy Schwiderson with her father Ed Schwinderson.



Margaret McPherson, 98, center was awarded a special blanket by the Sault Tribe Board of Directors for being the oldest person to attend the 2025 Christmas dinner while her daughter and son-in-law look on.



Aaron Payment accepts an eagle feather that he was honored with by Beatrice Menase Kwe Jackson for his work over the years for the tribe.



Edie and Jerry Reno, and Kathy and Ken Knapp shared a table. Jerry and Kathy are siblings.



Mrs. Claus made an appearance with jolly old St. Nick.



Ted Aikens with Judy and Lou Aikens.



From Left: Mark Mavretic, Terry Carr, Colleen Carr and Candace Blocher.



Diane McLeod-Maleport with ice cold pop.



A group eagerly awaiting the delivery of their dinner.



The moment they were all waiting for arrives.



Katie Peabody carrying pie to the guests.



Volunteer servers Myah McKerchie and Mike Pins enjoy a short break.



# Tribe spawns whitefish for release in the spring

BY SCOTT BRAND

With an eye on stocking whitefish to bolster numbers in the Great Lakes, the Sault Tribe Fisheries Department, in conjunction with Barbeaux Fisheries, set nets on northern Lake Huron to catch the fish as they came in to spawn on the shallow shoals.

“We are looking to get 100 pairs,” said Fisheries Enhancement Coordinator Rusty Aikens. “About 90% of the males will be released back into the water and around 50% of the females will be returned.”

The bulk of the fish were captured in trap nets set by Paul Barbeaux of DeTour Village. Aikens said the prime spawning time for whitefish is mid-November, with some outliers spawning as early as the last week in October and as late as early December.

On Nov. 19, virtually all of the males were primed to spawn, while the egg-laden females arrived at various stages of readiness.

“The males are always ready,” Aikens said with a laugh, “it doesn’t matter what species.”

The captured fish were trucked to the Nunn’s Creek Hatchery located just west of Hessel on the northern shore of Lake Huron where they were initially placed into large holding tanks.

Each fish was measured and weighed before having a section of their pectoral fin clipped for further research. The eggs were then extracted from the females using a milking technique before the milt was released into a cup of water.

Using a goose feather as a stirring stick, the eggs and milt

were combined enhancing the fertilization of the individual eggs.

“We can get up to 50,000 eggs from a big female fish,” said Aikens.

The next stop was an iodine bath, for a minimum of 30 minutes, to serve as a disinfectant.

From there the eggs were bottled up in individual tubes where they will remain until conditions are right for hatching in the spring of 2026.

The eggs, Aikens added, will be cooled by well water at around

35 degrees, which simulates real world conditions where the fertilized eggs would be incubating under the ice awaiting the warmer waters of spring.

The Sault Tribe is in its eighth year of operating a whitefish hatchery and is seen as one of the original pioneers in this field as they have literally taught themselves how to successfully fertilize the eggs and rear the microscopic fry until they are big enough to be released.

In 2025, more than 100,000 whitefish were released into the Pine River under this program.



Noah Blackie nets one of the newly-arrived whitefish on the morning of Nov. 19. The fish were quickly separated into male and female holding tanks inside the Nunn’s Creek Hatchery.



Above, the fisheries department takes the weight, length and pectoral fin clipping for future research purposes. Below, up to 50,000 eggs can be produced by a single mature female.



Photos by Scott Brand



Above, the freshly fertilized eggs get an iodine bath that serves as a disinfectant. Below, the final stage until the April hatch.



At left, Aikens carefully drains the iodine bathwater leaving only the eggs. Right, due to research purposes and handling, there are some mortalities associated with this effort. All of the deceased fish were placed on ice and sent to a local processor. The cleaned fish were then delivered to the Elder’s Program, so nothing goes to waste.



Rusty Aikens, above, and Amy Schneider, below, pose with a couple of hefty whitefish that will contribute to next year’s stock.



Extracting milt from the male fish to be mixed with the eggs.





# Walking on...

**BARRY WALLACE ADAMS**  
The Mackinac Tribe of Odawa and Ojibwe Indians has lost another historical leader: Barry Wallace Adams, 85, of Naubinway, Mich. Barry walked back into the spiritual world at 3:30 a.m., on Sept. 11, 2025 at his residence in the presence of his loving family and in the care of North Woods Home Care and Hospice.

Barry was a direct descendant of the Ainse Band (15-16) — Chief Louis Ance who signed the Treaty of 1820 & 1836 — Son of Amable Ance who signed the Treaty of 1855 — Grandson Peter Hance who also signed the Treaty of 1855 on behalf of the Mackinac Tribe (Bands). Barry loved his heritage and was a vigorous outspoken historian and activist on behalf of (all) the various Mackinac Bands encompassing Bands 11-17 and Band 10. His historical records and personal knowledge has been used by many legal scholars and litigation court cases in too many ways to be mentioned. Like his ancestors before him and up until his “spirit journey.”

Barry was in a consistent fight to regain the Mackinac Tribe’s Federal Recognition Status and regain the membership, lands, and money losses that the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians misappropriated, by enrolling Mackinac Band descendants into their tribe, a violation of the 1855 Treaty.

Barry not only used his retirement savings, but thousands of hours of research and diplomatic relationships to gather financial support on behalf of the Mackinac Bands, so their voices would be heard. His selflessness and devotion will be greatly missed by all those who continue to fight for the freedom and recognition of the Mackinac Tribe of Odawa and Ojibwe Indians.

Barry was born in Pontiac, Mich., to the late Dean and Marie (Jones) Adams. He attended Pontiac Central High School. On Oct. 16, 1959, he enlisted in the U.S. Army serving until his honorable discharge on Sept. 26, 1962. On May 10, 1962, he married Lieselotte Sieben while stationed in Germany.

In addition to his parents, Barry is preceded in death by his nephew, Dean Adams, granddaughter Danielle Marie Hall, and brother-in law James Smith who passed way on Sept. 13, 2025.

Survivors include his loving wife, Lieselotte of Naubinway; children Lori (Dennis) Hall of Imlay City, Mich., Andrea Moore and Marie (Adams) Liskey, of Waterford, Mich., Barry (Sue) Adams of Waterford, Diane Adams of Waterford and Christine (Shane) Hester of Waterford; siblings, Dean Lee Adams of Grand Blanc, Mich., and Colleen Smith of Clarkston, Mich., seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Graveside services with military rites were conducted by the U.S. Army Honor Guard and the American Legion Post

#290 on Sept. 22 at Maple Wood Cemetery in Rexton, Mich.

Obituary condolences may be expressed at [www.beaulieufuneralhome.com](http://www.beaulieufuneralhome.com).

**JEFFERY ALLAN GAUS**  
Jeffery Allan Gaus, 60, of Kincheloe, Mich., passed away Dec. 2, 2025, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., surrounded by his family and friends.

Jeff was born Aug. 28, 1965, in Nelsonville, Ohio, to Edward Joseph and Bonnie Jean (Brammer) Gaus.

Jeff moved with his family to Sault Ste. Marie in 1967 where he attended Sault Area Public Schools, he graduated from Sault Area High School in 1983.

Jeff was a lifelong fan of science fiction and fantasy books. His love of the genre began at age eleven when his brother Bill gave him a copy of “The Hobbit” by J.R.R. Tolkien, which he read four times, then went on to read the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy. Those books fueled his interest in Dungeons & Dragons and many other fantasy roleplaying games, which he played with his friends beginning in high school and continued into his entire adult life.

Jeff enjoyed cosplaying. He would regularly dress up for events including the Michigan Renaissance Festival, the Annual Rendezvous in the Sault, various pirate festivals around the state and science fiction and fantasy conventions. He particularly enjoyed dressing as a pirate and competing in pirate costume contests, trading victories with his “rival” known as “Captain Bob.”

Jeff was diagnosed with kidney failure in 1996 and received a kidney transplant in 2000, but even with those difficulties he went on to graduate as valedictorian from Bay Mills Community College in 2005 with a degree in Business Administration, later attending Lake Superior State University and graduating in 2009 with a bachelor’s degree in finance and economics.

Jeff is survived by his sisters, Sandra Gaus and Rosanne Casey, both of Sault Ste. Marie; brothers, Kenneth Gaus of Sault Ste. Marie, John (Delores) Gaus of Ohio, William (Judi) Gaus of Kansas and Edward Jr. (Janice) of California.

Jeff was preceded in death by his parents, Edward and Bonnie Gaus; and his brother, Richard (Elizabeth) Gaus Sr.

A Native American pipe service was conducted for Jeff by Les Ailing, who knew Jeff for many years.

A remembrance ceremony was held at the Sault Tribe Cultural Center in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., on Dec. 6.

Memorial Contributions can be made in Jeff’s honor to Hospice of the EUP, 308 W. 12th Ave, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783.

Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be given to the family at [www.familylifefh.com](http://www.familylifefh.com).



**JOHN MORRIS GOORHOUSE**  
John Morris Goorhouse, 75, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., died Nov. 16, 2025, at the Ball Hospice House in Sault Ste. Marie. He was born Dec. 21, 1949, in Lansing, Mich., to Donald and Phyllis (Hogan) Goorhouse.

John grew up in Lansing, Mich., and graduated in 1968 from Everett High School. He joined the United States Air Force in 1968 and was stationed in the Vietnam for a year. John’s commitment to personal growth was evident in his thirty-eight years of sobriety, an accomplishment he honored by supporting others on their journeys. He remained affiliated with the men’s Hope House for some time, as a Certified Apprentice Counselor. During that time, he was guided by a trusted and respected mentor, John Menta, whose influence meant a great deal to him.

In his spare time, John loved fishing and golfing, pastimes that brought him peace, joy, and cherished moments outdoors.

John will be deeply missed by his loving and devoted family, who will forever carry his memory in their hearts.

John is survived by his loving wife, Ruth Ann; sons, Kyle and Kevin (Lilaneya) Goorhouse, and Chad (Amber) Waucaush; stepsons, Charles (Colleen) Waucaush and Douglas Waucaush; grandchildren, Rachel, Dougie, Sara, Lara, Corinne, Claire, Gracie, Joe, Marcella and Elizabeth; great grandchildren, Joleen, Joaquin, Jaramis; siblings, Patricia (Ken) Blankenship, Trudy Schutte; and his dear nieces and nephews.

John was preceded in death by his parents, Donald and Phyllis; sister, Karen Matuzak; grandparents, Morris and Gladys Hogan and John and Marie Goorhouse.

A special thank you to the Ball Hospice House for all their kind services, they were greatly appreciated by John’s family.

A memorial service was held Nov. 24, 2025, at the New Covenant Church in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements.

**GAIL M. HARTWIG**  
Gail M. Hartwig, 84, of Rapid River, Mich., passed away peacefully on Monday, Dec. 1, 2025 at her home with her loving family by her side.

Gail was born on June 2, 1941 in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., the daughter of Emil and Marie (LeLievre) Paquin. Gail was united in marriage to Lewis Hartwig in Sault Ste. Marie in 1961.

Gail was active in the community as a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, Rapid River Lioness Club, Rapid River PTC and Sports Boosters Club. She



was also a Girl Scout leader and a 4-H club leader.

Gail was a stay-at-home mother who adored her children, volunteering and participating in everything and anything her children were involved with. In her later years, her doting attention turned to her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Gail was an artistic soul who loved to write poetry and create and design art pieces for family and friends. Gail was the family historian, spending countless hours researching family genealogy. Gail and Lewis moved to Rapid River in 1967 where they raised their children.

Gail is survived by her husband of 64 years, Lewis Hartwig; children Dean (Cathy) Hartwig, Deeanna Hartwig, and Loreen (Donald) Harris; 10 grandchildren; and 17 great-grandchildren.

Gail was preceded in death by her parents, Emil and Marie Paquin; sister Joan (Larry) Cellucci; and brother David Paquin.

In accordance with Gail’s wishes, no funeral services will be held. Gail will be laid to rest in Oaklawn Chapel Gardens Cemetery in Sault Ste. Marie Mich. The Skradski Family Funeral Homes of Delta County are assisting the Hartwig family.

**JOHN WILLIAM MASSEY**  
John William Massey, 87, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., died peacefully Dec. 4, 2025, at MyMichigan Medical Center in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., surrounded by his family.

He was born Dec. 5, 1937, in Sault Ste. Marie, he was the son of Albert Joseph and Jane Isobel (O’Neil) Massey.

John was immensely proud of his parents and his American Indian descent. He is proceeded in death by his parents Albert and Jane Massey, daughter Lisa Kay Massey, brothers, Albert, Franklin, and Robert Massey. Sisters Mary Formalo, Kathleen Allen, Verna Lawerance and Evelyn Heldt.

John attended St. Mary’s grade School and later graduated the class of 1956 from Sault High School. He enlisted in the United States Coast Guard on Oct. 16, 1956. He attended numerous Engineer Schools earning an associate’s degree in marine engineering. During his service career, he sailed on four of the seven oceans and served on five of the seven continents.

He served on the Cutter Sundew of Charlevoix, Mich., and was on board for the search of the sinking ship, Carl D. Bradley, in 1958 in Lake Michigan. John was the watch stander aboard the United States Coast Guard Cutter EOW of the ice breaker Mackinaw in 1961, the watch stander aboard the United States Coast Guard Cutter Sundew in Charlevoix and watch stander aboard the United States



Coast Guard Cutter in Duluth, Minnesota. In 1964, while serving in Alaska, he experienced the Good Friday Earthquake.

John was promoted to Warrant Officer W-4 in 1974 and was then transferred to the United States Coast Guard Cutter Valiant as 2nd Engineer, where he was responsible for searching for drug boats. John was instrumental in locating a vessel that contained 1,250 kilos of raw cocaine on the vessel named the “Snowflake” out of Columbia, South America.

John also served as an engineer in Cape Coral, Fla, and Juneau, Alaska, and was second engineer of the Medium Endurance Cutter Valiant in Galveston, Texas, as well as the second engineer aboard the WHEC 721 Gallatin of Governor’s Island, New York. While at sea on the Gallatin, he witnessed a Russian Nuclear Submarine explode south of Iceland in the North Atlantic Ocean. He was at sea for eighty-four days on the Gallatin.

John served as the engineer of Long Island Sound New Haven, Conn. In 1976, John was selected to go to Saudi Arabia to evaluate their Coast Guard Engineering Department. He spent a year helping to implement the Saudi Arabia Coast Guard. In 1978, John was promoted to full Lieutenant and was transferred to United States Coast Guard Cutter Steadfast. The Steadfast was a 210-foot ship stationed in St. Petersburg, Fla. John served as the Engineer Officer and always spoke highly of his engineering crew and the people who worked for him.

John spent his off-duty time traveling in the middle east visiting the Pyramids in Egypt, Athens Greece and the Vatican in Rome and Germany’s Black Forest.

John retired from the service in 1985 and returned to Sault Ste. Marie where he worked for Wellington Towing Company. and was an engineer on the tug the Chippewa. Seven years later, he worked for the Corp of Engineers on the Soo Locks until 1993. John loved country music and was a guitar player for The Country Gentlemen band for over twenty years. During these years John became a successful country music song writer.

John is survived by his children, Christina Marie Carbone (Michael) of Clayton, North Carolina, Linda Lee Carbone of Hamden, Conn., John Anthony (Valeria) of Largo, Fla., Daniel Thomas (Lori) of Westland, Mich., and Andrew Patrick of St. Petersburg, Fla. Grandchildren, Jennifer Carbone, Stephanie (Steven) Bolyard, Alyssa (Heather) Carbone, Nicholas (Stephanie) Massey, Jacob (Jasmine) Massey, Shae Massey, Eric (Savanna) Massey, and Maxwell Massey. As well as five great grandchildren.

Visitation was held on Dec. 10, at St. Mary’s Catholic Church with A Mass of Christian burial following.

*see “Walking on” Page 18*



# Walking on continued...

## From “Walking on” page 17

Final Resting Place will be at Oaklawn Chapel Gardens, in Bruce Township, Mich. Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements.

## KAISER JETT “KJ” LAPINE

Kaiser Jett “KJ” LaPine, beloved son of Anton and Andrea (McQuiston) LaPine, was born sleeping on Nov. 16, 2025, at MyMichigan Medical Center in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.



Though Baby KJ never took a breath on this earth, he brought immeasurable love, joy, and hope to all who awaited his arrival. KJ was deeply loved, and his family spent 14 beautiful weeks dreaming of meeting him and watching him grow. He would have been the second born, a cherished little brother to Keenan. Even in his short time with them, Kaiser already showed the same sweet features as his big brother.

KJ is survived by his parents, Anton and Andrea LaPine; and big brother, Keenan Asher LaPine.

A traditional tribal ceremony was held on Nov. 19, 2025, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

“Sometimes the smallest lives leave the biggest footprints on our hearts.” Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be given to the family at [www.familylifefh.com](http://www.familylifefh.com).

## MICHAEL JOHN KINNEY

Michael John Kinney, 79, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., died Nov. 5, 2025, at Medilodge in Sault Ste. Marie, surrounded by family and friends. He was born Oct. 29, 1946, to Walter and Elizabeth (Joseph) Kinney.



Michael was a proud elder of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. He graduated from Sault Area High School and went on to serve his country in the United States Army from 1965 to 1968.

Michael enjoyed attending Soo Indians hockey games with his brother and cousin, Ed Cook. He was an avid fan of the Detroit Lions and loved watching D.W.R. games. In his free time, he could often be found on his computer, reading, or listening to music.

Michael is survived by his lifelong partner of 55 years, Susan “Tota”; daughter, Deborah Spoiala of Windsor, Ont.; grandchildren, Alisha Carins of Sault Ste. Marie, Courtney Spoiala of Windsor, Douglas Kinney of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Amber Owill of Sudbury, Ont., and Kamryn Akre of Houston, Texas; brothers, Phillip Kinney of Munising, Mich., Harold “Dooder”(Julie) Kinney of Sugar Island, Mich.; four great grandchildren; and many nephew and nieces.

Michael was preceded in death by his parents, Walter and Elizabeth; son, Lucas Kinney;

grandson, Brandon Kinney; granddaughter, Danielle Spoiala; brother, Kenneth Kinney; sister, Evelyn Johndrow; nephews, Todd Shannon and Jody Johndrow; niece, Becky Kinney; and sister-in-law, Cindy Kinney.

A memorial gathering was held Monday, Nov. 10, 2025, at the Niigaanagizhik Cultural Building in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Michael’s final resting place will be at Wilwalk Cemetery on Sugar Island, Mich.

A special thank you to all the staff at Medilodge and Hospice for the care and compassion shown to Michael.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to his sister-in-law, Julie Kinney, for her unwavering support, compassion, and strength. She has truly been our rock during this difficult time.

Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left to the family at [www.familylifefh.com](http://www.familylifefh.com).

## RONALD FRANCIS LEE SR.

Ronald Francis Lee Sr., 85, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., died Nov. 9, 2025, at the Ball Hospice House in Sault Ste. Marie.



He was born Sept. 25, 1940, in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, to Francis and Grace (Kabishkong) Lee.

Ron grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., and attended Loretto High School. He began his career as a butcher, a job he truly enjoyed, and later worked in the construction field as a laborer. Ron met Beatrice, and together they raised six children and lovingly adopted two more.

A proud member of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Ron found peace and happiness in the outdoors. He especially enjoyed hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping. He also had a lifelong passion for coin collecting, which brought him much joy over the years.

Ron is survived by his children, Dawn Wilson, Robert Lee, Dustin Lee, and Lexi Lee, all of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.; grandchildren, Michael LaCoy, Taylor LaCoy, Krystal Willis, Kevin Willis, Stephanie Willis, Christopher Fish, Nicole Fish, Jamie Lee, Rachael Lee, Brandi Lee, Shawn Vert, Steven Vert, Chantelle Cook; great-grandchildren, Kayden, Da’Jon, Madison, Randen, Jade, Blake, Colton, Tanner, Tatum, Kenna, Ryder, Korbyn, Bria, Trenidy, Alazayah, Gayje, Lillie, Brayden, Siena, and Jordan; and brother, Richard (Karen) Lee of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.; and grandson-in-law, Jeff Aikens.

Ron was preceded in death by his wife, Beatrice; children, Ronald Lee Jr., Randy Lee, Michelle Merchberger, and Renee Lee; grandchildren, Danielle Aikens and Shannon Vert; parents, Francis and Grace; brother, Raymond Lee; sister, Janis Kosiewicz; and brother-in-law, Paul Kosiewicz.

A celebration of life will be

held at a later date.

Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be given to the family at [www.familylifefh.com](http://www.familylifefh.com).

## RAYMOND ELMER GALLAGHER

Raymond Elmer Gallagher, 63, of Lennon, Mich., passed away Nov. 6, 2025, surrounded by his family.

Raymond was born on May 15, 1962, on Mackinac Island, Mich., to Anthony “Don” and Florence (Fisher) Gallagher. He grew up with a love for the outdoors and carried that passion throughout his life. Ray enjoyed hunting, fishing, and camping, and he especially loved getting together with his friends to cheer on the Detroit Lions. Known for his strong work ethic, he took great pride in everything he did. His boss once said, “The world would be a better place if we had more people like Ray.”



Ray is survived by his mother, Florence (John) Enright; sister, Joanne (Bill) Closs; brothers, Don and Kenneth Gallagher; son, Raymond (Samantha Wylie) Gallagher; grandson, Benjamin Gallagher; daughter-in-law, Amy Gallagher; and longtime partner, Nina Canfield. Ray also shared many years and two wonderful sons, Raymond and the late Jeremy Gallagher, with his former wife, Tammy Gallagher, who remained an important part of his life and family. He is also survived by many nieces, nephews, and close friends who will cherish his memory.

He was preceded in death by his father, Anthony (Don) Gallagher; brother, James Gallagher; sister-in-law, Alice Gallagher; and his beloved son, Jeremy Gallagher.

A celebration of life will be held in Lennon, Mich., on Saturday, May 16, 2026, with additional details to be shared at a later date. Ray will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. To sign the online guestbook, visit [www.cremation-societymidmi.com](http://www.cremation-societymidmi.com). Arrangements were made with the Cremation Society of Mid Michigan.

## NANCY FAYE SMITH

Nancy Faye Smith, 73, of Hessel, Mich., died Nov. 5, 2025, in St. Ignace, Mich. She was born Sept. 2, 1952, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., to Fred Howard and Frances Marian (Causley) Smith.

Nancy grew up in Hessel and St. Ignace, Mich., where her life was surrounded by family, friends, and the beauty of the Upper Peninsula she loved so much. She was deeply loved by her family and will be remembered for her kind heart, her laughter, and her joyful spirit.

Nancy enjoyed spending time at the casino, listening to music, and singing along to her favorite songs. She also loved coloring pictures, making jewelry for friends and family, flipping

through magazines, singing, and sharing family dinners and get-togethers for birthdays and Christmas. Those moments—filled with love, laughter, and togetherness—brought her the greatest joy. She will be forever missed by her family and friends, who will cherish the many memories they shared with her.

Nancy is survived by her sisters, Maggie Rounds and Betty Smith both of Hessel; brother, Fred Smith of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Nancy was preceded in death by her parents, Fred and Frances; siblings, Mary (Bill) Albert, Frances (Tony) Hamel, Bev (“Buddy”) LaFrenier, Becky Smith, Patty (Mike) Chambers; brothers-in-law, Henry Rounds and Ken Ermatinger; and nephews, Tony “Chito” Hamel and Paul LaFrenier.

The family would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to Heidi, Nicole, Brandi, and all those who cared for Nancy over the years. Your care and compassion were truly unwavering, and your kindness brought comfort to her and her loved ones.

A memorial gathering was held Nov. 14, 2025, at the Tribal Health Center in Hessel, Mich. with services following.

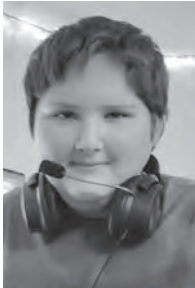
Nancy will be buried at the Italian Cemetery in Hessel next to her parents.

Memorial contributions may be made to Bay Human Services – Portage House - W568 Old Portage Trail, St. Ignace, MI 49781

Family Life Funeral Homes – Pickford assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be given to the family at [www.familylifefh.com](http://www.familylifefh.com).

## WYATT ANDREW MICHAEL SAURO

Wyatt Andrew Michael Sauro, was called home unexpectedly Nov. 26, 2025, the same date his maternal great-grandfather, William, passed away exactly 30 years earlier.



He was born Dec. 20, 2013, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., to Derrick Parr and Samantha Sauro.

Wyatt was his mom’s right-hand little man, always by her side. He was a good boy, loving, caring, funny, and always ready for an adventure. Wyatt embraced life with excitement and curiosity. His most recent passion was learning to hunt, and he had been eagerly looking forward to this year’s hunt and to spending more time with his hunting buddy and mentor, “Papa Rich.”

Wyatt loved fishing and camping with Grandma LouLou, his cousins, aunts, and uncles. He had a special talent for building forts of any size and could learn to drive a boat, tractor, or four-wheeler in minutes. Wyatt enjoyed his action figures and could create one from almost anything he found. He loved playing Minecraft and Xbox with his mom, his friends, and his

brother. He even rode a horse for the first time, complete with goggles and a helmet.

Wyatt treasured time spent with his cousins and best friends, Jack, Nate, and Finn. He loved to laugh, loved his family deeply, and was both a wonderful big brother and little brother.

Wyatt is survived by his mother, Samantha Sauro; father, Derrick (Nicole Kravis) Parr; brothers, Keeton Sauro, Coleson Sauro and Judah Parr; grandparents, Richard and Nancy (Sauro) Reining and Frank and Maria Parr; auntie, Abigail (Brett Anderson) Reining; uncles, Nathan (Maci Crebo) Sauro, Allen (Debbie) Sauro, Frank (Crystal) Parr III and Kevin (Kimberly) Parr; great-grandparents, Edward and Sandra Reining; great-grandmother, Barbara Parr; along with several aunts, uncles and cousins who will all miss him dearly.

Wyatt was preceded in death by great-grandparents, William and Grace (Aikens) Sauro; great-grandpa, Frank Parr Sr.; great-grandmother, Pearl Marble.

In his short time on earth, Wyatt touched the hearts of so many with his funny antics, his enormous heart, and the smile that could brighten any room.

A fire was lit to get Wyatt’s journey started and a visitation was held on Dec. 4, 2025, at Family Life Funeral Home in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. The funeral service followed at 3 p.m.

He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. He will never be forgotten, and his love will live on in our hearts forever.

Condolences may be given to the family at [www.familylifefh.com](http://www.familylifefh.com).

## DAVID JAMES WATSON JR.,

David James Watson Jr., a cherished father, grandfather, brother, and partner, passed away Nov. 18, 2025, at the age of 68. Born Dec. 17, 1956, in Mt. Clemens, Mich., he was the beloved son of the late Harry Matthes and Celia O’Neil.



David’s legacy is carried on by his adoring family. He is survived by his three daughters, Amanda Watson of Marine City, Sara Watson of St. Clair, and Katlyn Watson of Inkster; his grandchildren, Scott, Georgianna, James, and Ava, who were the light of his life; his siblings, Kenneth (Patricia) Watson, Kimberly Watson, and Gina (Susan) Lupo; and his significant other, Maria Dupuis, who stood by him with unwavering love and support. David was a beloved uncle to many nieces and nephews.

David was preceded in death by his wife, Carol Watson, whom he married on May 23, 1987.

Carol’s passing on Dec. 8, 2020, was a profound loss for David, yet he carried her memory with grace and love. He was also preceded in death by his sister, Deborah McNeil.

See “Walking on,” page 19



# Walking on continued...

**From “Walking on,” page 18**

Professionally, David dedicated 25 years to the Bud company as a tool and die maker before moving on to Chrysler, where he retired. His work ethic and expertise were highly respected, and he continued to share his knowledge as a contract worker for the big three auto manufacturers.

David’s interests were as genuine as his smile. He loved shooting pool, working on cars, and watching football with his brother. Above all, David loved spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren. He was a proud member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. David’s dog, Franklin, was a constant companion and source of comfort.

No services are scheduled at this time. Arrangements were entrusted to Grace Memorial.

**MURIEL MARGARET WHITMAN**

Muriel Margaret Whitman of Manistique, Mich., passed away peacefully at the age of 100, on the evening of Nov. 25, 2025, at Woodland Assisted Living, Manistique.

Muriel was born the third of six children to George and Aurora (Guertin) Farley, in Garden, Mich., on Feb. 3, 1925. She was raised in the area and graduated as valedictorian from Garden High School in 1943. That same year, Muriel headed for Detroit where she would share an apartment with her sisters. She soon found herself employed at the Briggs Manufacturing Company riveting airplane wings during the height of WWII—she was a true “Rosie the Riveter,” doing her part to win the war. Muriel saved whatever she could from her earnings, so that she could afford to attend



business school. Muriel remained employed as a riveter at the Briggs factory for nearly a year before leaving to attend Cleary Business College in Ypsilanti, Mich. After the war, she returned home to Garden and married Walter Whitman, Jr. on June 21, 1947. Whitman was co-owner of the Cloverland Lodge in Manistique where Muriel worked for many years as a bookkeeper. Walter preceded her in death on Jan. 16, 2015.

Family gatherings were very important to Muriel. She loved baking and was an avid bridge player.

Muriel is survived by her children, Ronnie (Sue) Whitman of Manistique, Jeffrey (Lana) Whitman of Schofield, Wisc., and Wayne (Cathy) Whitman of Holt, Mich.; eight grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren, two great-great grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Walter; and son David Whitman.

Visitation was held Dec. 1, 2025, at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church in Manistique, Mich. A mass of Christian burial followed at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church with Rev. Fr. Benedetto Paris officiating. A luncheon was served following the funeral services. Burial will take place in the Hiawatha Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be directed to St. Francis de Sales School or to the Schoolcraft Historical Society.

The family has entrusted the funeral arrangements to the Anderson Funeral Homes of Escanaba and Gladstone, Mich.

Condolences may be sent to the family online by visiting <http://www.andersonfuneral-homes.net>.

**ELIZABETH BERNADETTE YOUNG**

Elizabeth Bernadette Young, of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., walked on to the spirit world at age 78, on Nov. 30, 2025, in

Bahweting (Sault Ste. Marie) peacefully in bed with a loving family by her side. She was born Sept. 14, 1947, in Wiikwemkoong, Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada to Eli Maiangowi and Josephine Mary Peltier.



Elizabeth was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and homemaker who took meticulous care of her home and the people she loved. She valued hard work, organization, cleanliness, generosity, and kindness, and she expressed those values through her daily acts of service. Grounded, practical, and deeply spiritual, she embodied a balance of common sense, humility, and quiet strength.

Elizabeth also had a remarkable sense of humor. She possessed both an innocent, dry wit and a mischievous streak that surfaced when least expected. Every so often, she would deliver a totally inappropriate joke with perfect timing, catching people off guard and leaving the room erupting into hysterical laughter. Her humor was disarming, healing, and unforgettable, and it reflected the resilience with which she navigated life. Elizabeth grew up in Wiikwemkoong and was a first-language speaker of Anishinaabemowin in the Odawa dialect. She belonged to the turtle clan, and her spirit name was “Niizhwaaswi Kwe,” meaning “Seven Woman.” She was raised by her great-grandparents, who taught her both Anishinaabe traditions alongside the Catholic faith. She was Anishinaabe Kwe through and through, proud of her heritage and committed to passing it on. She always dreamed of becoming a teacher, and although she was not formally trained, she was a force of wisdom, humor, and insight who imparted invaluable teachings to

her grandchildren. Elizabeth did not have an easy life, but she met every challenge with determination. In her youth, she attended Catholic school where speaking Anishinaabemowin was discouraged and often punished, as part of wider assimilation efforts. She was the descendant of residential school survivors, including her mother and great-grandfather, whose experiences shaped the lives of generations to come.

Although those experiences attempted to erase her language, they could not squelch her identity or spirit. She carried her cultural identity with immense strength and dignity throughout her lifetime. Those experiences profoundly shaped her worldview, creating a unique blend of Anishinaabe spirituality and Catholic faith that guided her prayers, her decisions, and her way of life.

In 1963, at just sixteen years old, Elizabeth moved to the United States. Three years later she met James “Frisky” Young and the two of them got married. They had three children, Clarence, James, and Elaine. Elizabeth and Frisky shared fifty-five years of marriage. After his passing in 2022, Elizabeth grieved deeply, but she honored him by living “Frisky’s way”- embodying the lessons he instilled in her. She looked forward to reuniting with him in heaven.

Elizabeth loved to spend quality time with her family and husband on Sugar Island, quilt, listen to country music, and tend the vegetable garden. She also loved to attend tribal community events, pow wows, language classes, elder trips, and helping out at elder lunch. She especially loved going to garage sales and had a penchant for collecting countless towels, and pots and pans, which became a running joke in the family.

Elizabeth was a unique and strong spirited woman who will

never be forgotten. She was loved by many and her memory and legacy lives on through those that know and honor her.

May she rest in eternal peace and love with the Lord. Aho miuwe.

Elizabeth is survived by her sons, Clarence Young and James (Sue Menard) Young; daughter, Elaine (Eric) Clement; four grandchildren, Alicia K. Gervais, Alex Young, Dagwaagin Wright, and Jamey (Matt Mills) Young; three great-grandchildren, Jim Young, Tony Young, and Danny Young; siblings, Walter Santiago, Mark Santiago, Sandra Foldi, Laurie (Sunny) Kozeyah, and Margaret Santiago; many nieces and nephews; and special friends, Shirley Trudeau, Bernadette Azevedo, Barbara Parr, Moni LaLonde, Lonna and Karen Gorenflo, Kalvin Hartwig, and Dorothy Gervais and family.

Elizabeth was preceded in death by her parents, Josephine and Eli; grandparents, Charlie and Cecilia Peltier; great-grandparents, Moses and Agnes Trudeau; siblings, Rose Peltier, Bernice Santiago; and mother and father-in-law, Catherine and Anthony Young.

Visitation was Dec. 3, 2025, at at Niigaanagiizhik Ceremonial Building in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., with a light dinner following and prayers and story sharing.

A traditional ceremony was held on Dec. 4, 2025, including a feast, pipe ceremony, prayers, and drumming.

The funeral mass was held Friday, Dec. 5, 2025.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Elizabeth’s honor may be made to the Sault Tribe Elder Center, 2076 Shunk Rd., Sault Ste. Marie, MI, 49783.

Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be given to the family at [www.familylifefh.com](http://www.familylifefh.com).

## St. Ignace Elders Lunch Menu Through January 2026

**Dec. 15** — Beef Enchiladas, Rice, Refried Beans, Fruit  
**Dec. 16** — Italian Sub Sandwiches, Three Bean Salad, Potato Chips, Fruit  
**Dec. 17** — Baked Salmon, Oven Roasted Potatoes, Veggies, Fruit  
**Dec. 18** — Unit 3 Christmas Pot Luck. Elder Services will provide Roast Beef  
**Dec. 22** — Egg Omelet, Sausage Links, Cheddar Bacon Tater Tots, Fruit  
**Dec. 23** — Baked Ham, Sweet Potatoes, Green Bean Casserole, Apple Pie  
**Dec. 24 and 25** — Closed for Christmas Holiday  
**Dec. 29** — Swedish Meatballs, Noodles, Veggies, Fruit  
**Dec. 30** — Chicken Ala King, Biscuits, Veggies, Fruit  
**Dec. 31** — Pizza Pasta Dish, Veggies, Fruit, Dessert  
**Jan. 1** — Closed for New Year’s Holiday  
**Jan. 5** — Split Pea w/ Ham Soup, Ham Salad Sandwich, Fruit  
**Jan. 6** — Shephard’s Pie, Diced Beets, Fruit  
**Jan. 7** — Sloppy Joe’s, Potato Chips, Coleslaw, Fruit  
**Jan. 8** — Chicken Cordon Bleu, Rice Pilaf, Veggies, Fruit, Dessert

**Jan. 12** — Chili, Cornbread or Biscuit, Fruit  
**Jan. 13** — Chinese Chop Suey, Veggies, Rice, Fruit  
**Jan. 14** — Spaghetti and Meatballs, Green Beans, Garlic Bread, Fruit  
**Jan. 15** — Liver & Onions or Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes, Corn, Fruit, Dessert  
**Jan. 19** — Pancakes, Egg Bites, Sausage, Fruit  
**Jan. 20** — Homemade Cream of Mushroom Soup, Chicken Salad Sandwich, Fruit  
**Jan. 21** — Smothered Beef, Mashed Potatoes, Carrots, Gravy, Fruit  
**Jan. 22** — Chicken Parmesan, Noodles, Veggies, Fruit and Dessert  
**Jan. 26** — Chicken Noodle Soup, Egg Salad Sandwich, Fruit  
**Jan. 27** — Chef Salad w/Chicken, Egg, Tomato, Lettuce, Cheese, Crouton, Fruit  
**Jan. 28** — Smothered Chicken, Stuffing, Gravy, Veggies, Fruit  
**Jan. 29** — Pulled Pork Sandwiches, Baked Beans, Coleslaw, Fruit, Dessert  
Elder Services- St. Ignace Kitchen, (906) 643-6484  
Lunch served 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday  
Menu is subject to change.

## 4th Annual Youth Leadership Conference held Nov. 21



The 4th Annual Youth Leadership Conference was held at Kewadin Casinos Hotel and Convention Center on Nov. 21. Youth facilitators were Rudy Indigenous (above) and Abby Rush. There was also an adult track with presenters Melissa Isaac, Michelle Simms and facilitator Melissa Causley, the Youth Education and Activities Services Coordinator for Unit I. The JKL Bahweting Youth Drum provided drumming and songs.



# Message from the chairman: Separation of powers



AUSTIN LOWES  
TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

My unit report this month will focus exclusively on the issue of separation of powers within the Sault Tribe. This is a discussion that has been ongoing for many years and is now more important than ever.

**Background: How we got here**

For decades, our tribe has explored options to modernize and separate the political authority that is currently consolidated within the board of directors. Our existing governing structure is based on a corporate-style board model created by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. While this may work for corporations, it is not reflective of Indigenous forms of governance, nor does it provide citizens with the protections and balance of power they deserve.

In 2005, the Sault Tribe established a constitutional committee made up of respected tribal elders, who worked closely with contracted attorneys to study and recommend reforms. In 2008, this committee unanimously recommended adopting a new constitution that would create a three-branch government. These branches would be separate but equal, with strong checks and balances.

This structure would also provide our tribal citizens with standing in Tribal Court, a right they currently do not have. Today, if a tribal citizen is discriminated against by the board—whether in employment, enrollment, or other decisions—there is simply no legal avenue for recourse. This is a fundamental gap in our government that the proposed reforms would fix. Despite the committee’s unanimous recommendation, the board of directors did not act.

**Renewed support for reform**

Last year, the Elder Advisory Committee, which is made up of the chairperson of every elder subcommittee across our service area, appeared at a board workshop and once again urged the tribe to adopt a modern three-branch government. After considerable debate, the board authorized a survey to be sent to every registered voter asking which form of government they preferred:

- A one-branch system (our current corporate board model)
- A two-branch system, combining a legislative board with an independent court
- A three-branch system, adding a separate executive branch, full checks and balances, and standing for citizens in Tribal Court

Survey results: A clear man-

date

On Nov. 14, 2025, the surveys were counted, and the results were historic. A total of 6,360 tribal citizens participated—an 18.17% response rate, which was higher than the total votes cast in the recent Sault Tribe elections. The results were overwhelming:

- 56% - Three-branch government
- 25% - Two-branch government
- 19% - Current one-branch corporate structure

In terms of polling, this was a landslide. It was also the first time in over a decade where tribal citizens were asked to voice their opinion on such an important topic. Despite this, I have heard some board members attempt to discredit the results because they expected more members to participate. Quite simply, this argument does not hold water. The board accepts election results even with lower participation. Several board members were elected with 500 or fewer votes, which represents just 1.2% of our roughly 39,117 registered voters. Comparatively, 18% of registered voters participated in this survey, which is a large number by polling standards.

The message is clear: our citizens overwhelmingly support a three-branch government. Not only does the constitutional survey confirm this, but it is also supported by our Elder Advisory Committee, the Constitutional Committee established by the board itself, and the chairman’s office.

**Why reform matters: Lessons from costly decisions**

Some argue that the tribe cannot afford a three-branch system. I strongly disagree. The truth is that we cannot afford not to adopt it.

Under our current system, the board of directors controls tribal operations and can force the tribe to pursue business deals even when our professionals clearly warn against them. When these ventures lose money — as predicted — the board often blames staff instead of taking responsibility. These losses must then be subsidized by our profitable enterprises, leaving less funding for services to our tribal citizens. Let me repeat that: the board’s bad business deal have cost the tribe millions of dollars in services.

A three-branch government would allow the executive to veto reckless or financially irresponsible decisions. Consider the many questionable deals the board has approved over the years and imagine if veto authority had existed.

One of the most significant examples is the board’s decision to partner with the JLLJ developers to pursue a downstate casino when we didn’t even have land in trust. Land in trust is the first requirement for opening a casino. Still, the board agreed to waive sovereign immunity, accepted millions from developers, and guaranteed them a share of profits from a casino that had no realistic path to approval.

Because the Bureau of Indian Affairs has never placed a single acre of downstate property into trust for an Upper Peninsula tribe, the casino predictably did not

move forward. This caused the JLLJ developers to sue, resulting in an \$88 million judgment against the tribe in 2023, just one month into my chairmanship. This judgment threatened our ability to make payroll. Fortunately, our team successfully negotiated the amount down to \$25 million, but the financial and emotional toll on our tribe and our employees was profound.

It should also be noted that one of the board members, who I successfully ran against for chairman, worked as a consultant for the JLLJ developers during a period when he was voted out of office by Sault Tribe citizens. This is one of the most shameful things I’ve learned in my time in office.

Despite the clear advantages of a modern three-branch government, I firmly believe several board members don’t want to become legislators due to their decisions being vetoed, which is badly needed on occasion.

**Costs and practicality: What reform really requires**

I have heard some board members argue for a two-branch system to “save costs.” During workshops, our Legal Department confirmed that the difference in cost between a two-branch and three-branch government is minimal. Transitioning into a three-branch system would require the following:

- Updating the organizational chart so that the Executive, not the Board, oversees operations; and
- Hiring a senior-level attorney or general counsel for the Board, who would transition

into a purely legislative role, to avoid passing laws that violate our Tribal citizens’ rights. This is achievable, reasonable, and long overdue.

**A call to action**

A three-branch government is not just an option — it is a mandate from the people. It will be my top priority heading into 2026.

I encourage all tribal citizens to respectfully contact the board members who campaigned on this issue and hold them accountable to their promises. I also urge you to attend our first meeting of the

new year. This meeting will occur on Jan. 6 at 5 p.m. I have requested that constitutional reform be the first item on the agenda. Your presence and voice matters. I hope to see many of you there as we take this critical step toward a stronger, fairer, and more accountable government.

As always, it is an honor to serve as your elected Chairman.

Chi Miigwech,  
Austin Lowes  
Chairman, Sault Ste. Marie  
Tribe of Chippewa Indians  
(906) 635-6050

## Blessings to All...



KIM GRAVELLE,  
DIRECTOR, UNIT I  
Aaniin,

I would like to send blessings to everyone this holiday season. Christmas is a time of giving, passing on stories, sharing and caring for those less fortunate.

Let’s pray for those who have lost a loved ones during the past year and remember there will

be an empty chair at their dinner table during the holidays.

In September, our Housing Department had 459 applicants on a waiting list for available rental units. Most of our housing is income-based, therefore, you need to contact them at (800) 794-4072 or housing@saulttribe.net to get the process started or if you have any questions.

As always keep the men and women in the armed forces in your prayers for a safe return to their families. I would also like to thank our team members for their hard work and continued dedication.

Please feel free to call me at (906) 259-3742 or email at kkggravelle@saulttribe.net. Please leave a message and I will return your call.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Miigwech,  
Kim Gravelle

### SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2026 CALENDAR

<b>January 6</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>January 20</b>	Sault Ste. Marie
<b>February 3</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>February 17</b>	Sault Ste. Marie
<b>March 3</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>March 24**</b>	Sault Ste. Marie
<b>April 7</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>April 21</b>	Manistique
<b>May 5</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>May 19</b>	Marquette
<b>June 2</b>	St. Ignace	<b>June 16</b>	Sault Ste. Marie
<b>July 7</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>July 21</b>	Lansing
<b>August 4</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>August 18</b>	Sault Ste. Marie
<b>September 1</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>September 15</b>	Munising
<b>October 6</b>	Escanaba	<b>October 20</b>	Sault Ste. Marie
<b>November 3</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	<b>November 17</b>	Hessel
<b>December 1</b>	Sault Ste. Marie		

Per the Constitution and Bylaws, Article 1 – Meetings of the Board of Directors, Section 1: .....provided that at least one meeting per year shall be held in each of the five election units established pursuant to Article V, Section 1 of the tribal constitution.

General meetings of the Board of Directors are held the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of the month.

All general meetings start at 5:00 p.m. All Sault meetings will be held at the Kewadin Casino and Convention Center, other locations to be announced. Meetings with \*\* are changed to accommodate the Chair/Board attendance at MAST, NCAI, United Tribes, various Washington D.C. meetings, and/or holidays.

All special meetings will be announced.

**For further information please call Lona Stewart (ext. 26338) or Ashlee Mielke (ext. 26337) at the Administration Office: (800) 793-0660 or (906) 635-6050.**



# Director LaPlaunt discusses Unit V updates



TYLER LAPLAUNT  
DIRECTOR, UNIT V

Aanii, Boozhoo,  
As the cold settles in, we are reminded of the teachings our elders have carried forward, that winter is a time when we gather close, care for one another, and strengthen the ties that hold our community together. These colder months ask us to slow down, to listen, and to learn. Winter teaches us that survival and wellbeing are not individual achievements, but shared responsibilities. It is in checking on our relatives, lending a hand to those in need, and offering comfort to those who may feel the weight of the season that we honor some of these teachings.

This is also a season of learning, where stories are told, knowledge is passed down, and we make space for reflection and growth. Even as the weather challenges us, winter gives us the opportunity to reconnect with our values, with one another, and with the collective strength that has carried our people through every season. Let’s take the time to care for one another. Learn with and from each other. Above all, lift each other up whenever and wherever we are able.

**ENROLLMENT UPDATE**

As of Dec. 5, there are 5,425 adult applications entered into the tracking system. A total of 215 adult applications have been denied and 3,532 new members have been enrolled, including children. The total membership in the tribe is currently 52,704. We appreciate all of your patience during this process.

**CULTURAL ACTIVITIES UPDATE**

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who attended the James Vukelich speech in Marquette. The event was a tremendous success and standing room only, with an energy that reflected the deep hunger our community has for language, culture, and connection. James reached out afterward to express his sincere appreciation for the warmth and hospitality he received from our tribal community. He shared that he hopes to make the Upper Peninsula a regular stop in his work, and we welcome that opportunity to continue bringing his teachings and knowledge to our people.

The Marquette Unit 5 powwow, hosted in partnership with the NMU Native American Student Association, Bay Mills Indian Community, and Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, was another powerful success this year. Even with a touch of weather trying to slow us down earlier in the week, the



community showed up strong. The dancers, singers, and head staff brought an incredible spirit to the arena—one that reflects how strong and vibrant our people continue to be. We are excited to host again next year and are hopeful that the two remaining UP tribes will join us so we can continue “Learning to Walk Together.” Judging by our turnout, we may need a bigger venue soon, which is a good problem to have.

A particularly meaningful milestone took place recently at the Marquette Tribal Community Center, where the Teal Lake Singers and community volunteers came together to build a new dewe’igan (big drum). Our drum group had grown so much that we outgrew our previous drum — another incredible sign of cultural revitalization. Creating a drum from scratch is no small task; it is ceremony, prayer, and community care all woven together similar to the leather that binds the drum. The new drum was given a name that reflects the essence of its creation and the spirit of our people: Gidinawendimin “we are all related” named after our community center. His voice is deep, resonant, and full of life, and we were honored to bring him to his first powwow at NMU. This is

powerful medicine for all of our people, and we are proud to see our cultural circle grow.

Marquette Culture Night continues to be held on the second and fourth Thursday of every month from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Marquette Tribal Community Center on 204 Cherry Creek Road. What began as a simple drum practice has grown into something much larger, an evening for community, learning, laughter, and cultural reconnection. We always share a meal, good conversation, and teachings that arise naturally from being together. The upcoming dates are Dec. 11 and 25 (yes, even on Christmas as Mishomis still likes to sing), and Jan. 8 and 22. If you haven’t joined us yet, we hope to see you there.

As we head into the new year, we continue to face the challenge of not having a Unit 5 cultural coordinator. However, our community has stepped up in a big way, with dedicated volunteers keeping things moving. We are planning ribbon skirt workshops in both Munising and Marquette, exploring the possibility of a cloth diaper workshop if interest is sufficient, and working toward offering another hand drum workshop. We will share dates and registration information as soon as we can. Miigwech to all who



are helping us keep culture alive for our future generations.

**ADVOCACY**

On Thursday, Dec. 11, NMU will honor our tribe along with the four other UP tribes during a flag-raising ceremony. This effort began with a request I submitted over three and a half years ago, and we are proud to see it come to fruition. Last spring, the Sault Tribe and KBIC flags were raised for graduation, and now all five tribal nation flags of the Upper Peninsula will be permanently displayed in the Superior Dome. Every graduating class will see them, an acknowledgment of our sovereignty, our history, and our future. This is representation that matters, and it will stand for generations.

Our tribe has also taken an important step in expanding services by voting to apply for an expansion of our PRCDA to include Emmet and Cheboygan counties. After introducing the resolution in November, we now begin the next stage of the process, which involves ongoing communication with HHS and IHS. While we anticipate a smooth progression, especially since we already serve many citizens from these counties at

our St. Ignace clinic, federal processes can be unpredictable. I will continue to advocate at the highest levels and use my committee roles to push this forward for our citizens.

Another milestone: the Marquette Tribal Health Center has officially opened its doors, and FNP Lorelei Johnson is now seeing patients. This is a long-awaited accomplishment that expands access to healthcare for our citizens in Marquette and surrounding communities. The clinic is located at **1210 Front Street in Marquette**. To schedule an appointment, please call **(906) 225-1616**. We are grateful to see this long-term vision come to life.

**ELDERS**

The next Munising Elder meeting and meal will be held on Thursday, Jan. 8 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Munising Tribal Health Center Community Room. If you are an elder age 60-plus and living in Unit 5, you are welcome to show up and attend. New faces are always welcomed.

The next Marquette Elder meeting and meal will be held on Thursday, Jan. 8 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Marquette Tribal Community Center at 204 Cherry Creek Road in Harvey. If you are an Elder age 60-plus residing in Units 4 or 5 in the Marquette County area, you are welcome to show up and attend. New faces are always welcomed.

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](mailto:mjenerou@saulttribe.net), (906) 450-7011 or (906) 341-8469.

Chi Miigwetch for all you do to strengthen our community, in every season.

Tyler Migizii Migwan  
LaPlaunt  
Unit 5 Director/Vice-Chairman  
[tlaplaunt@saulttribe.net](mailto:tlaplaunt@saulttribe.net)  
(906) 440-8294





# Hampton shares Unit 4 fall 2025 2% allocations



**KIMBERLY HAMPTON,**  
**DIRECTOR, UNIT IV**

Aniin kina waya, and welcome to winter, which came way faster than I was anticipating. We are upon the holiday season and I wish you all the love, warmth, and laughs this season. I also want to take this time to remind you all of some winter reminders:

**Keeping Warm**

— Keep your home temperature steady and warm. Elders and young children are more sensitive to cold — check in with family members who may need help with heating or weatherproofing.

— Dress in layers, cover your head and ears, and wear proper boots when outside.

**Preventing Falls**

— Please use caution when walking on icy steps, ramps, and parking areas.

— Spread sand or salt on slippery paths. Even a small amount can prevent serious injuries.

**Home Safety**

— Make sure heaters are used safely and kept away from blankets and curtains.

— Test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. These devices save lives during winter heating season.

— Let faucets drip during extremely cold nights to help prevent frozen pipes.

**Emergency Preparedness**

— Keep extra food, water, medications, and blankets at home in case of a storm or power outage.

— Families traveling during winter should keep an emergency kit in the vehicle with blankets, snacks, and a phone charger.

**Check on Elders**

— Elders may feel the cold more quickly and may hesitate to ask for help.

— Please take a few minutes to check on elders in your family, neighborhood, or housing areas — especially after storms or very cold nights.

**Community Care**

We strengthen one another when we look out for one another. If you or someone you know needs support with heating, safety supplies, or wellness checks, please contact the local ACFS office at (906) 341-6993.

Thank you for helping keep our community safe and connected this winter. Stay warm, stay prepared, and take care of one another.

Over the last month I have been busy with the following:

Nov. 4 - Attended a JKL Fiduciary Committee, board workshop and board meeting

Nov. 5 - Participated in a drum social at our local elementary school

Nov. 6 - Attended Kewadin CFO Interviews and met with Director Barbeau to finalize fall 2% allocations (details below)

Nov. 10 - Held a party planning meeting for this year’s Manistique Children’s Christmas Party

Nov. 12 - Attended the Escanaba Elder Meeting

Nov. 14 - Attended the ballot tabulation for the separation of powers survey that had been mailed to members

Nov. 18 - Attended board

workshop and board meeting

Nov. 21 - Attended the Tribal Youth Leadership Conference in Sault Ste. Marie

Nov. 25 - Attended board workshop, in person Kewadin CFO interviews

Dec. 1 - Joined the Unit 1 Zoom member meeting to hear feedback regarding separation of powers

Dec. 2 - Attended board workshop and board meeting

Dec. 4 - Attended the Manistique Elder Christmas Dinner

Dec. 7 - Went shopping in Escanaba for the Manistique Children’s Christmas Party gifts (over 130 children registered)

**Fall 2% Allocations**

This Fall Director Barbeau and I had met to finalize the 2% allocations which are as follows:

— Manistique Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Rapid River Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Gladstone Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Big Bay de Noc Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Escanaba Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Ishpeming Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Negaunee Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Mid Peninsula Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Gwinn Area Schools, Native American education, \$3,000

— Little Bear Arena in Manistique for free tribal skate, \$5,000

— Manistique High School for free tribal open pool, \$5,000

— YMCA Escanaba for Free Tribal usage of gym and pool, \$5,000

— Rapid River Schools for a betterment of our youth program, \$2,715

— Schoolcraft Medical Care Facility for patient insomnia carts, \$1,000

— Schoolcraft Memorial Hospital in conjunction with Thompson Township LUCAS compression unit, \$8,242.81

**Dec. 7 Unit 4 Children’s Christmas Party Gift Shopping**

I want to extend a chi miigwech to Manistique YEA Coordinator Shaun Peterson, Manistique YEA Assistant Jordan Carroll, Sault Tribe member Stacie Chambers, and Director Barbeau and his daughter Olivia Barbeau, for the immense help in gift shopping for the over 130 children who are registered for the Manistique children’s party scheduled for Dec. 13. I also want to say a pre-party miigwech to all of the volunteers who are signed up to assist with this party. A Chi miigwech to Escanaba YEA Coordinator Sarah Hoffmeyer, her staff, and community members for all of the planning, preparation, and the work I know you will carry this coming weekend for the Escanaba children’s Christmas party. They say it takes a village, and does Unit 4 ever have a great village. Miigwech to you all.

**Reminders**

**Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow**

SAVE THE DATE for the 2026 Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow, which has been scheduled for June 6, 2026. I encourage everyone to “like” the Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow Facebook page to keep updated on events.

**Unit 4 Elder Meetings**

I 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 Jan. 14, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. EST at the Manistique Tribal Center

The next meeting in Escanaba will be held Jan. 14, 2026, at 4 p.m. EST at the Escanaba Community Center. If you plan to attend, please RSVP the week before by calling (906) 635-4971.

**Looking Forward**

— Niiwin Noodin Pow Wow planning sessions will resume after the new year.

— Some additional adventures being worked on are as follows: obtaining additional permission to access 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.

— Katchup with Kim, Maamawi Craft Nights, and office hours will be resuming this winter since the business of spring and summer are behind us, watch for schedules.

I want to give my sincerest thanks for trusting me to represent Unit 4 members and Sault Tribe. I am always available for questions, comments, and ideas for growth. I encourage members to participate in Maamawi Craft Nights, office hours, community input sessions, Katchup with Kim, and all other activities and events occurring throughout Indian Country.

My contact information is below:

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

# Greektown, JLLJ illustrate need for three-branch



**ISAAC MCKECHNIE**  
**DIRECTOR, UNIT I**

I support a three-branch government and I would like to share some thoughts. A separation of powers exists for one basic reason: to stop any single center of authority from becoming judge, jury, and executive all at once — and to make accountability unmistakable. The idea is old and blunt: divide governing power into separate, independent branches so each can check the others, reducing arbitrary action and abuse.

In a 2010 Secretarial Election, voters approved an amendment striking language that had

described the chairperson as the tribe’s “chief executive officer.” The effect, as explained in the tribe’s own legal analysis of the amendment, was to confirm that operational authority is not independently vested in the chairperson’s office, but rests with the board of directors, which may delegate day-to-day authority as it chooses.

Opponents of a three-branch government now cite this history to argue against creating a defined executive function. Supporters counter that the post-2010 model has produced a different problem: blurred accountability — where strategy, operations, and oversight frequently collapse into the same decision-making lane.

Here are two stories that illustrate why this debate refuses to die: Greektown and JLLJ.

**PART I - THE RISE AND FALL OF GREEKTOWN:**

A Detroit casino dream that ended in bankruptcy — then sold for \$1 billion without the tribe. A promising launch, then structural pressure. Greektown Casino opened in November 2000, placing the tribe in the middle of Detroit’s emerging casino market. But, the project’s structure

and financing would become a long-term strain. Public reporting and later coverage frequently cite a roughly \$275 million buyout figure connected to early partner interests — an enormous weight for any gaming operation, even before the next wave of borrowing and capital expansion. The 2008 collapse moment. By late May 2008, Greektown filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy as economic conditions tightened and debt pressure mounted.

2010: Exit, restructuring, and the end of tribal ownership. The bankruptcy reorganization was confirmed in early 2010 and became effective June 30, 2010, with state regulatory approval allowing the ownership transfer that enabled Greektown to emerge from bankruptcy — effectively ending the tribe’s ownership position through that restructuring.

2019: the billion-dollar headline — for everyone else.

Years later, Greektown sold in a deal reported at about \$1 billion: \$700 million to VICI Properties (real estate) and \$300 million to Penn (operations).

**PART2 - JLLJ DOWNSTATE CASINO PIPE DREAM**

The next debacle was the

two proposed downstate casinos becoming a courtroom fight — then a settlement crisis. The pitch: Lansing + Romulus/Huron Township. Starting in 2011, the tribe’s gaming authority entered agreements with development partners to pursue two proposed off-reservation casino projects — one in the Lansing area and one near Detroit Metro — built around land acquisition and the land-into-trust process.

The core risk: off reservation trust approvals don’t happen and long timelines. The trust pathway became central to the project’s fate. Federal proceedings and agency records show the trust applications faced a high evidentiary bar and were ultimately not approved under the arguments presented — leaving the projects stranded in a costly, multi-year limbo.

In April 2023, the tribe (through Kewadin Casinos Gaming Authority) announced a settlement with the former Lansing/Romulus development partners JLLJ Development and Lansing Future Development II. The structure was straightforward: \$25 million due by April 12, 2023, plus additional money tied to proceeds from a malprac-

tice claim — up to \$10 million, or \$5 million if the malpractice case failed.

Then came the part that should never happen in any well-controlled government or enterprise: a calendar-certain obligation. Under the settlement terms the tribe later summarized publicly, another \$5 million was due beginning May 1, 2025. The payment wasn’t made. The tribe described it plainly: staff failed to make the required May 1 payment, triggering a default and forcing an emergency push for an amended deal. And the consequences weren’t theoretical. The tribe stated that, to cure the default, the amended agreement would require the \$5 million already owed plus an additional \$5 million. Why this belongs in the same story as Greektown: This is the same failure mode—just a different chapter.

Greektown showed what happens when ownership of outcomes gets muddy in high-stakes, long-horizon projects. JLLJ shows it again: when the system can authorize, oversee, and then explain away the results inside the same loop, accountability blurs. Nobody “owns” the due

*See, “McKechnie,” page 23*



# Reporting on Unit 2 and tribal issues, events



LANA CAUSLEY-SMITH,  
DIRECTOR, UNIT II

I want to highlight a few things that this year brought for our unit. It's been a struggle through the year for the tribe as a whole but we made the best with moving forward with our housing projects and are on target as well as our new youth fitness/recreation center. I spoke about the funds we used to do improvements on members' homes around our unit and that had made things better for families this year. We are also on target with a new home completed at Hillcrest for fair market rental. I'm grateful these things will be completed. It's been a long road and I'm equally grateful for all the people that helped in the planning and construction of these projects. We are still awaiting the final report for all the ARPA funds used throughout the units but will make sure these numbers are given to the members once completed.

We have been meeting and discussing the separation of powers for an amendment to our Constitution. The recent survey that we mailed to 39,117 had 6,388 returned, which was disap-

pointing but also understandable to me as it's been an item that you have been told of for many years. It's time for change and a separation, that is a constant that I have always supported but how that looks will be determined moving forward with the discussions. I've spoken to others tribes that have had the separation and either way comes with problems and struggles.

In my opinion, having a separate court Judicial Branch is priority. Having said that, I will be supporting moving toward a change, but it's seems the board is now changing things as we move along. The intent was to keep it as close to the original draft as possible but things are going differently. I'm at the table to keep the intent as close to the original and also a separation that works for our people and of course a judicial separation. I've spoken to many members with thoughts and suggestions and always invite anyone to keep that input coming. I will do my best to move toward a fair change that works for the members and provided a court that is separate and where members can go for fair decisions and accountability from decisions made.

We are winding down to the end of the year and the board had been given conflicting amounts of the deficit we are facing for the end of 2025. The numbers reported have been from \$14 million to \$3 million. We should be given the accurate amounts soon and we will face decisions on how to fund this with our reserves. It's not acceptable that we have conflicting amounts reported but this is where we are at as a tribe. Board members seem to shout out numbers at will and it gets



Naubinway elders Christmas dinner/concert on Dec. 6.

frustrating. I will as always get through it and make the decisions that will keep us steady.

Our costs in this past year have increased substantially with many factors including administration increases, loans, projects, settlements and cyber attacks. At the end of the month we should have the factual amounts to consider and move forward. I will report in January the information I receive.

Our YEA program held the annual Newberry area youth Christmas party this past weekend and it was record numbers. I would like to thank Kara and Kelly and all who took the time to make this event good for our families. A special chi miigwech to Leo and Tim for saving Christmas and making sure Santa

showed up.

This past Saturday, Director Lee and I had the honor of being invited to the Naubinway Elders Christmas dinner/concert that your group planned on your own. I want to say that this was a very special day of memories for me and I was so thankful to be included and spend that time with all of you. A special chi miigwech to Krista (Elder Care Services) and Kim for getting us safe to our locations in this U.P. weather. It was a cherished time for me and quite frankly a time that felt safe and kind with the elders of our tribe. Chi miigwech for that gift.

Our Annual Elders Christmas dinner in the Sault is scheduled for Dec.9 and this gathering will be very different for me this year

as my dad won't be with us in physical presence but my faith in our ways assures me that he is always around, just like all your loved ones that you're missing this season are. I want to say I know it's a struggle for many this time of year but know that you aren't alone and our loved ones are always by our sides.

I would like to wish all of you a very blessed 2026 and a blessed holiday season with your loved ones. Hold them very close to you.

As always, if you would like to meet with me or talk please contact me at (906) 322-3818 or lcausley@saulttribe.net. Baamaapii.

Lana Causley-Smith  
Unit 2 board representative

# Winter is here to stay–Barbeau's Unit 4 update



LARRY BARBEAU,  
DIRECTOR, UNIT IV

Aaniin,  
I think it is safe to say winter is finally here to stay for a while. The fall was a tremendously busy and productive season for our unit and myself. Fishing has come to a stop for now and the boat is pulled out of the water. Now it is time to harvest some deer. Snow fall has hit all across the U.P. and doesn't appear to be stopping anytime soon. I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving surrounded by family and friends.

**Upcoming meetings/important dates**

We only have a few scheduled meetings coming up for the month of December; including, board workshops/meetings, JKLFC

meetings, Kewadin Gaming Authority meetings, Enterprise Authority meetings, Conservation meetings, etc. The board continues to work on ways to increase transparency for our members for all of these meetings.

Dec. 2, 2025 – Board workshop/Enterprise Authority meeting/Kewadin Gaming Authority meeting at 10 a.m. and the board meeting starting at 5 p.m. in the Whitefish Point Room at Kewadin Casinos, Sault Ste. Marie.

Dec. 8, 2025 – Conservation Committee meeting starting at 5 p.m. in the Whitefish Point Room at Kewadin Casinos, Sault Ste. Marie.

Dec. 9, 2025 – Board workshop/JKLFC meeting starting at 9 a.m. in the Whitefish Point Room at Kewadin Casinos, Sault Ste. Marie.

Dec. 25, 2025 – Merry Christmas everyone – hope you all have a wonderful holiday break surrounded by family and friends.

Dec. 31, 2025 – Happy New Year's Eve! Hope everyone has a safe and fun New Years.

### Unit 4 Elder Meetings

We encourage all tribal elders to attend the elder meetings. The next meeting in Manistique will be held Dec. 10, 2025, at 12 p.m. EST at the Manistique Tribal

Center. The next meeting in Escanaba will be held Dec. 10, 2025, at 5 p.m. EST at the Island Resort and Casino – this will also be their Elder Christmas Party.

### Looking Forward

Dec. 11, 2025 – Unveiling ceremony of the tribal nation flags of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, starting at 3 p.m. at the Superior Dome in Marquette.

The Manistique Elders Christmas Party will be held Dec. 4, 2025, at 5 p.m. EST at the Manistique Tribal Center. The Escanaba Elders Christmas Party will be held Dec. 10, 2025, at 5 p.m. EST at the Island Resort and Casino.

Dec. 12, 2025 – Sault Tribe Escanaba YEA & Unit 4 Directors' Kids Christmas Party, 3-7 p.m. at the Escanaba Tribal Community Center (3721 Jingob). Must register by Dec. 5, 2025, by texting (906) 440-8356 with youth name(s), age(s), and three likes/wants within \$20 budget.

Dec. 13, 2025 – Sault Tribe Unit 4 Christmas Party, 12-3 p.m. at the Manistique Tribal Center (5698W US 2). Must register by Dec. 5, 2025, by texting (906)-440-8138 with youth name(s) and age(s).

SAVE THE DATE – Honoring

our Elders Pow Wow – April 18, 2026, 1-7 p.m. at the Escanaba High School. Doors open at 10 a.m., Grand Entries at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., feast at 4:30 p.m. For vendor information contact: chuckjennifer09@gmail.com.

I want to give my appreciation for believing in me to represent Unit 4 members and the Sault

# McKechnie continued —

*From, "McKechnie," page 22*  
date until it becomes a crisis — and by then the only options left are expensive.

People defend the post-2010 model by saying it stopped one person from acting like an unchecked CEO. Fine. But let's stop pretending that the only threat is "one strong chair."

Greektown and JLLJ exposed a different threat — a structure where power is shared so widely that blame becomes impossible to pin down. When the same body can vote the strategy, steer the execution (directly or through shifting delegations), and then judge the results, accountability turns into a fog machine. And, in that fog, two things happen every time:

1. Risk grows quietly, because

Tribe. I am always available for questions, comments, and ideas for growth. I encourage members to participate in any and all activities/events occurring throughout Sault Tribe.

Contact information:

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

nobody has a clear duty to slam the brakes.

2. Responsibility gets passed around, because everybody had a piece of it. That's not good governance. That's a system designed for explanations instead of results.

Greektown showed what debt can do. JLLJ showed what litigation and compliance failures can do.

When one body effectively does all three (strategy + execution through shifting delegations + "policing" results), accountability blurs — not because anyone is evil, but because the structure allows it. Separation of powers fixes that by design: it forces transparency, forces ownership, and forces consequences when something goes wrong.



# Director Lee addresses separation of powers



**KIMBERLY LEE,  
DIRECTOR, UNIT II**

Aanii, I hope this report finds you all well, staying safe and warm, and enjoying the season. Our unit is active with holiday celebrations, serving the membership through meaningful gatherings, cultural connections, and community support. This month is a special time, bringing members together, ensuring our elders are honored, our youth are engaged, and our traditions are carried forward with care and respect.

I am grateful for the opportunity to chauffeur our Naubinway elders to their Christmas dinner and concert in Escanaba, a beautiful evening filled with laughter, good food, and unforgettable music by Collin Raye and Lonestar. From the moment we hit the road, the bus was filled with stories, laughter, and holiday spirit. Watching our elders sing along, dance, reminisce, and truly enjoy such a special night together was incredibly heartwarming. So many priceless memories were made, and it was truly an honor to play a small role in giving them a night of joy, celebration, and connection during this Christmas season. Special thanks to Krista Schnicke from Elder Services for also braving the elements to get our Naubinway elder group safely to and from this event.

Walking forward, without losing our way!

As members of our tribe, we all care deeply about our future, our families, and our identity as Anishinaabe people. As conver-

sations continue about possible changes to our government structure, it is crucial that every member clearly understands what these systems truly mean. Not only in a legal sense, but also culturally and relationally. In my opinion, this discussion is beyond politics and titles. It is about how power is handled, how decisions are made, and how our people are treated within our Nation. Many members already feel that ego and political ambition are challenges within our current system, and it is important to honestly acknowledge that reality as we consider any changes moving forward. At the same time, it is also important to recognize that a committee of individuals, years ago, believed these structures were created in our best interest, with the intention of protecting and strengthening our nation.

There is also an elephant in the room that many feel, but few want to discuss out loud. Beneath the discussions of branches, models, and structures lies a deeper tension about trust, control, and fear of losing voice. Some feel unheard. Some feel targeted. Some feel exhausted. Others feel protective of systems they believe were built to bring order and stability. When these feelings go unspoken, they surface in sideways ways, through anger, division, and public conflict. If we genuinely want healing and clarity, we must be willing to acknowledge not only the structure of government but also the emotional fractures that exist among us. We cannot design a healthy system on top of unspoken hurt, mistrust, and unresolved power struggles. Those things deserve honesty, not avoidance.

Traditionally, Indigenous governance was built on relationships, balance, humility, and shared responsibility. Leadership was not about command or control but about service. Leaders were accountable through connections and community, not just through written law. Decisions were guided by elders and cultural wisdom, often made through consensus rather than majority

rule. Justice focused on restoration and healing, rather than punishment. Power was shared, not concentrated, and spiritual responsibility to the Creator was foundational. Humanity was never separated from leadership because leaders and the people were the same.

A three-branch government, composed of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, is designed to organize power through law and procedure. While this system can offer clear structure and efficiency, it also changes how leadership connects to the people. Authority becomes attached to offices rather than relationships. Decisions are based on written policy, which may not always reflect cultural context or human circumstance. Yes, some view strict policy and procedure as necessary for consistency and order. Still, the deeper question is what happens to human nature and compassion when everything is reduced to black-and-white rules. People do not live in black and white. Families face complex struggles, elders carry stories that cannot be measured by policy, and real life often requires discernment, grace, and understanding. When systems rely too heavily on rigid procedures, leaders may feel unable to respond with flexibility or empathy, even when their hearts tell them otherwise. Over time, this can create a government that is legally correct but emotionally disconnected. And if egos are already unchecked within a system, increasing executive power does not reduce that risk; it multiplies it. This is what people mean when they say that such systems can “remove humanity,” not because leaders do not care, but because the structure itself can begin to prioritize legal process and authority over lived experience and accountability to the people.

These choices matter because government systems shape how members are treated in their most challenging moments, how voices are heard or dismissed, and how power is protected or challenged. Today, we also see this tension play out on social

media, where frustration, fear, and uncertainty have too often turned into anger, insults, and harassment. That kind of division does not reflect who we are as Anishinaabe people, nor does it lead us toward wise decisions. When communication breaks down into attack and hostility, it becomes even harder for truth, understanding, and unity to prevail.

And this brings us to a deeper question we must ask ourselves with honesty and courage. How do we ensure that everything our ancestors fought to protect? Our culture, our voice, and our sovereignty remain truly safeguarded for future generations? I encourage each of us to think long and hard about this, reflecting on the wisdom, teachings, and lived experiences of our elders, and to picture honestly what each choice will look and feel like for our children and grandchildren. These decisions will shape not only our laws, but the spirit of our nation.

Looking at how the three-branch system is functioning in the U.S. federal government today also offers an important lesson. While the structure of executive, legislative, and judicial branches still exists on paper, in practice, it is often strained by ego, political division, and gridlock. Lawmaking frequently stalls; courts are relied on to resolve issues on which leaders cannot agree, and many people feel disconnected from those making the decisions. This shows us that structure alone cannot restrain human nature, heal division, or guarantee compassion. If humility, accountability, and relational responsibility are not actively protected, even the strongest systems can become disconnected from the people they are meant to serve. And today, we must also be honest about this reality: power is being concentrated in ways we have never seen before. Leaders at every level are holding more power than ever, protected by policy, legal teams, and layers of procedure that create distance from the people. When ego already exists as a concern,

adding even more authority to a single office or branch does not bring balance. It increases the risk of harm. History shows that unchecked power rarely corrects itself, and once centralized, it is incredibly difficult to return to the people. This is why humility, accountability, and human connection matter just as much as structure.

Given that many people are concerned about where I stand, I want to say this clearly. First and foremost, I stand with human empathy. I stand with leadership that remembers the faces behind the policies, the families behind the cases, and the people behind the titles. I stand with a government that is strong enough to uphold structure, yet humble enough to lead with compassion.

The core issue before us is not whether one system is more modern or more traditional, but how we protect sound structure while preserving humanity, culture, and accountability to the people. A powerful government protects against misuse of power, keeps ego in check, reflects Anishinaabe values of balance and humility, provides firm leadership without removing compassion, and ensures that laws serve the people rather than override them. No matter what system is chosen, it must guard against political overreach while honoring seven generations past and those yet to come.

As we move forward, may we continue to lead with respect, humility, and care for one another. Our strength has always come from our people, our ancestors who give us wisdom, our elders who guide us, our youth who inspire us, and our families who keep our culture alive. Thank you for standing together, supporting one another, and walking this journey as one Tribe. Chi miigwech for your continued trust, commitment, and love for our people.

As always, miigwech for your time.

Kimberly Lee  
Unit 2 Board of Directors  
klee@saulttribe.net  
(906) 379-8965

# McKerchie discusses separation of power issue



**MICHAEL MCKERCHIE,  
DIRECTOR, UNIT I**

As we fast approach the new year, I wanted to remind the membership that January also brings an upcoming election cycle. You might be able to tell if you follow any social media sites tagging our tribe. It seems

that campaigning has certainly started early for some and some may have never stopped. Issues that we’ve been working on and discussing like the separation of powers amendment are front and center. I encourage members to watch our workshops when discussing, we have had really good dialogue and have made a lot of progress.

The recent survey shows the majority of those that did vote support a three-branch amendment. Now the board has to piece together what that looks like. It’s true that a Constitutional Committee worked on these decades ago and much of what they came up with is what we are using as a template, but it is a working document and we need to make sure it’s a good document to amend our Constitution. Much

will be said about who supports what and I fully expect several will mislead the membership on what is occurring. Truth is, the entire board supports a separation of powers — we’ve witnessed in the last few years several violations of members’ constitutional rights and all board members recognize a need to have a separate court system. It is also true that I support a two-branch form of government for several reasons, primarily that the membership needs a separate court to protect themselves from unconstitutional actions by the board.

But I also recognize the recent survey does indicate (of those that voted) that the membership leans to a three-branch form of government. I had hoped for a better turn-out for the survey as the results only indicate 9%

of registered voters prefer the three-branch and overall voter turn-out was 16%. I was hoping for a turn-out similar to when the membership voted to separate the CEO from the chairman’s office in April 2010, which had 76% of the votes favor to remove the CEO (the executive branch) from the chairman. It also had a larger percentage of the register voters as well. These aren’t words to make excuses or to misguide the membership, I’m stating the facts and would’ve have liked a better turn-out to help guide the board as we move forward on the amendment. With that being said, I continue to support a separation of powers and will support an amendment for a three-branch government so long as it’s a good, well-thought-out document that will help our tribe move forward.

I understand the urgency that several are making this, as the election cycle is fast-approaching, but I will not rush this for any reason. I want our tribe to succeed. I want a separation of powers. I want the members to be able to bring action to the board when their constitutional rights have been violated. I urge the membership to look past all the bluster that comes with campaigning and know that the board is making progress and hold us accountable to get this done in the right way with an amendment and constitution that serves the entire membership.

As always, I urge members to join a committee, attend events when you can, and get both sides of any story you hear. Please reach out to me to discuss issues, I can be reached at (906) 440-7768. Chi miigwech.



# Community takes down Wequayoc Cemetery flags



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,  
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

At the Nov. 4 board meeting, the board voted on accepting the 2024 401k audit, made changes to the Child Welfare Code, such as having an alternate board liaison, defining the best interest of the child, and definition of parent and placement preferences. Opioid settlement funds were approved to be given to the Child Welfare Program and Lodge of Hope, due to many families struggling with addiction. We also passed a resolution to expand the tribe’s Contract Health Services to Cheboygan and Emmet Counties. This means we will file an application with IHS to include these members in our Purchased and Referred Care Program. We do need to be approved for this to take effect but it is a step in the right direction.

On Nov. 11, we had our annual taking down the flag ceremony at the Wequayoc Cemetery for Veteran’s Day. The flags are replaced with freshly made wreaths. Mukwa Giizik was there to play a few songs for us, we read off the veteran’s names while we burned the flags and then had a potluck. Several eagles hovered over us throughout the ceremony. The Wequayoc Cemetery Committee members were all there and they do a great job.

After the cemetery gathering, I traveled to Marquette for the night. On Wednesday morning, I toured the new Marquette Health Center building; it is located on the main road across from the Huron Bakery. I then drove over to see the new community building, which is located after turning at the light in Harvey. This building is beautiful and has a state-of-the-art kitchen and many rooms and garage space.

After leaving Marquette, I drove to Wetmore to tour the six new tiny homes that were purchased with ARPA funds. This was the tribe’s first time dealing with tiny homes. They are beautiful but are not appropriate for elders. They will be great for college students, singles or a couple. The homes themselves were about \$120,000 but the infrastructure costs were outrageous.

The next stop was the new quadplex that is being built for elders on the Newberry reservation. This building is my favorite color red and is going to be very nice for four lucky elders.

There were some other buildings I wanted to see but ran out of time. I did also make it to see the Marquette Midjim by the college, which includes a beer cave.

Nov. 13 was supposed to be

our monthly elder meeting but the fire alarm system was going off and several elders left because it was really annoying. The meeting was moved to the next Thursday and I was out of town at NCAI. At the rescheduled meeting, the chair showed up playing Santa Claus with a cooler of meat with a Unit 2 member probably running for a seat. The chair hasn’t been to a meeting here since he was running and that it was about time. The elders see through the bs. It was also about political pressure for the three-branch government. Elders should be able to gather for a meal and socialize without these dirty politics.

Nov. 14 housing had organized a memorial for Joni Talentino at the Sault Casino followed by a day of staff training. The administrative staff did a great job compiling a video and some people spoke. Her parents were in attendance and also spoke. It was very sad but was a good tribute to Joni.

The Constitutional Advisory Election ballots were opened on Nov. 14. The number of ballots that were mailed out was 39,117 and 6,388 were returned for a 16.33% voter return. This to me is a sad number of returns. Of those 6,388, 3566 wanted a three-branch, 1,596 wanted a two-branch and 1,198 wanted it to remain at the one-branch. So, essentially, 9% of eligible voters voted for a three-branch system. Regardless of which way we move toward, it is not a simple and easy process. There is cost associated with it ranging from \$3-9 million, many codes have to be changed and many positions would need to be filled. The most important aspect to me is that members get standing in court. The judicial branch is a majority of the price tag for sure.

We have been told by prior legal counsel of other tribes constantly being in court with suing each other if the board and chair were separated. Also, the membership did vote in 2010 as a constitutional amendment to separate the chair and CEO. There were 6,300 eligible voters in that election with 3,315 supporting separation and 1,014 opposing separation. Total votes were 4,333 which was a 68.78% return and 76.58% supporting the separation of those who voted.

With the many problems with the current U.S. administration, I wonder why some members want to replicate that. One thing I see is a bully that has limited authority now, what will happen if given the CEO role, oh yeah, the legislative branch with a two-thirds vote can overrule that unless there are four loyal supporters of the chair. When some campaign so hard, like every day on social media, what is in it for them? Some people just bring a lot of toxicity to the table and tribe.

On Nov. 16, I flew to Seattle for the NCAI annual meeting. This conference is always a full schedule of events and it was an election year too. I sat in on our Midwest caucus meeting and nominated VC LaPlaunt to the VP seat for the Midwest; unfortunately, he did not get the seat. It seemed that the tribes that did win the seat or alternate had

many members in attendance.

I testified for the establishment of the U.S. Wildland Fire Service on behalf of our tribe’s Natural Resource Department. The USWFS took so long presenting its plan that many tribal leaders didn’t get to speak in their 1.5-hour allotment. I was fortunate enough that I was the first one in the room and had the opportunity to speak.

I also was honored to nominate Jackie Pata (Alaska) to run as the President of NCAI. Jackie for many years was the executive director for NCAI and I have had the pleasure of working with her on the HUD TIAC for the last three years. I helped distribute her campaign materials as well. Thursday, Nov. 20 was the vote and there were three candidates running. There was not a 50% or greater win so there was a run off. She was running against current NCAI President Mark Macaro from the Pechanga Tribe in California. If she would have gotten the votes from the third candidate she should have won but it was clear that it takes money to buy those seats. Mark was re-elected.

During this conference, I debated getting on Zoom for the board meeting because I was also in a Housing Committee meeting at NCAI. I decided that I better get on our tribal board meeting because you never know what stuff might happen.

The Nov. 18 board meeting was held in Hessel, hate missing that meeting because the elders do a great job making lunch and pies to sell. Many of the resolutions on the agenda were to do with approving annual liquor licenses for the Midjims, casinos and golf courses. There were a few grant applications approved for the Natural Resource Department, one being for white-fish rehab. Radiology in the Sault was approved to purchase new equipment. Mike McKerchie was appointed to serve as an alternate on the Child Welfare Committee, when Rob can’t be there. Issac had again put on the agenda to establish a Wilwalk Cemetery Committee. Many Unit 1 members were upset with pushing this through without consulting with them, so I motioned to table it until there was a workshop with the members to get their input. The board supported tabling.

There was also a push to appoint a person to the vacant Unit 2 Housing Commission seat before it went to the Housing Commission. I asked that this was tabled until the next week when the Housing Commission would be voting on it. For some reason there was a political push for this and should have followed the process after it was noticed in the tribal newspaper for the required two months (September and October) and then the commission meets once a month so Nov. 24 was appropriate. The board administrator did say the first time this happened that she didn’t realize it was supposed to go to Housing first. This time she made it known it was not following the correct protocol.

On Tuesday, Nov. 25, the board had a workshop let by VC

*See “Sorenson,” page 26*



**Taking down the flags at Wequayoc Cemetery for Veteran’s Day. Flags were replaced with wreaths. Aggie and Francie carrying wreaths.**



**Kelli Powers Sullivan with a wreath.**



**Wequayoc Cemetery Committee and volunteers have a potluck after the work.**



**Midge Moses hanging a wreath.**



# The voters have spoken: But will the board listen?



AARON PAYMENT  
DIRECTOR, UNIT I

The tribal poll results are in and reveal what the Sault Tribe voters want in terms of a separation of powers. The result? Landslide support (56%) letting tribal voters vote to establish a three-branch separation of powers. Pretty clear right? You’d expect after 20 years since the Constitutional Convention Committee (CCC) was established and after \$500,000 in costs (to draft up a three-branch separation of powers) that the board would let you vote to ratify a three-branch government.

Recall, in 2008 the CCC voted unanimously to move forward. In 2012, the Elder Advisory Board made up of elders in all nine tribal communities and the CCC voted unanimously for a three-branch government. In 2024, the Elder Advisory Board voted unanimously again to move forward with a three-branch. Then the board relented at the July 15, 2025, meeting to poll the members to determine the support for a three-branch versus a two-branch or no change. Unfortunately, we remain just one vote shy to move forward to protect your constitutional rights.

## PROTECTING YOUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

One of your constitutional rights is to decide who shall be our chairperson. Had you or I had standing in Tribal Court in 2022 and any semblance of due process, I would NEVER HAVE HAD TO RESIGN. Once we have a three-branch separation of powers, I will push for an independent investigation to expose exactly what happened.

Two additional examples of when your constitutional rights were violated include:

1. The December 2016 denial of a referendum petition with over 500 Sault Tribe voter signatures (only 100 are required) to preserve the delegated authority of the chairperson position; and
2. The March 2022 denial of a referendum petition with over 300 signatures to overturn a sole-source contracting scheme to one construction vendor.

Each of these petitions were circulated by tribal voters in compliance with our Constitution and determined valid by tribal Legal then subsequently invalidated after pressure from select tribal board members. Politicians making political decisions on legal matters is precisely why a three-branch separation of powers is needed.

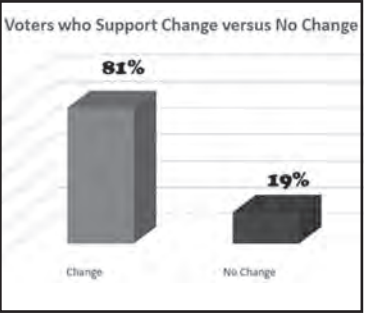
## MALICIOUS PROSECUTION?

One of the most strident examples of the need for a three-

branch separation of powers is past attempts to prosecute me following a complaint made by a tribal member after a board meeting where the individual attempted a political attack but was moved to a closed session. Not satisfied with this outcome, an assault allegation was made. The tribal prosecutor dismissed the complaint as having no merit. The board subsequently voted to redirect the prosecutor to “reconsider” her determination. Under our current government system with no separation of powers, this is tantamount to ordering a prosecution which is a corruption of any law and order system. The prosecutor refused and was subsequently terminated after a so-called investigation into her work.

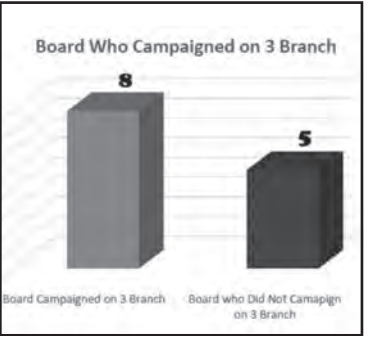
## DO THE VOTERS EVEN MATTER?

The poll results should put to rest — once and for all — the claim that tribal voters are satisfied and that no change is needed. Despite this continued claim, you can clearly see in the graph (lower left) that 81% of our Sault Tribe voters have been expecting change for two decades. Recall the Constitutional Convention Committee met for three years in all nine of the Sault Tribe communities in the U.P. (the Sault, Hessel, Newberry, St. Ignace, Naubinway, Manistique, Escanaba, Marquette, and Munising) and in Cheboygan and the Detroit area to gather input and to present the results. Based on the overwhelming support for a three-branch, I estimate that all five units support a three-branch. With 81% support, it seems incredulous that an elected official would resist honoring the will of the people. In analyzing the results, one thing that should be crystal clear is that the members demand change.

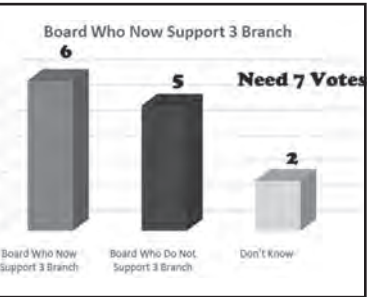


## NO GOOD REASONS ONLY EXCUSES

An argument still being made by those who oppose any change is that the board is elected to represent the people and therefore it is solely our discretion to do so. While we are a representative democracy and often have to discern what our people want and need, when you tell us directly, as is the case with the poll, it seems futile to continue to argue otherwise. While not everyone on the current board has expressed interest in establishing a separation of powers in a real three-branch government, eight current board



members have done so in their campaign ads. Just go back and read the February – June (2022 & 2024) Sault Tribe newspaper online to see who promised to



support a three-branch. Of course, promises at campaign time often evaporate once elected. The graph above shows that eight board members promised support a three-branch which is in stark contrast to the graph below which shows two of the eight having switched allegiances from a three-branch to a two-branch or no change at this time.

Another excuse to do nothing is that, “Hardly anyone voted in the poll so we should just ignore it.” However, if you look at the graph top right you see this is not true. More voters cast ballots in the poll than the last chair’s election. Now that we know what the people want, those still arguing for a two-branch government despite the clear will of the people may just be sly as a fox. Pushing for an amendment for a two-branch (which will most likely fail) will result in the status quo and the board remains all powerful with no checks and balances. To do nothing or a vote on a two-branch is likely to result in the same outcome — no change.

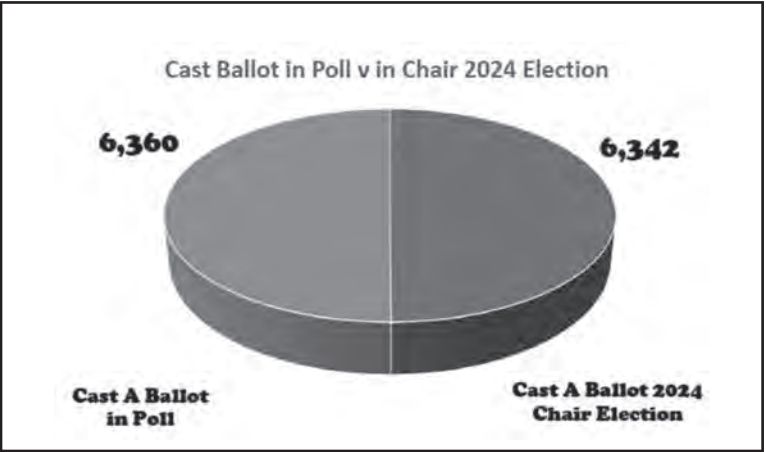
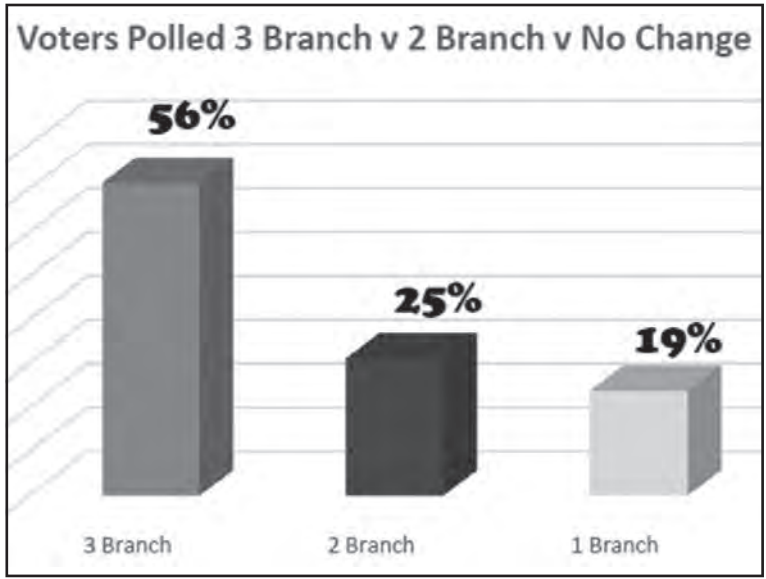
## YOUR SUPPORT FOR CHAIR MATTERS

In 2008, I “lost” the chair election by about 900 votes. In 2010, the board appointed a chair without the vote of the people. In 2012, you returned me to office with a huge margin of 1,200 votes. This tells us that our voters oppose the board deciding on who is tribal chairperson. In 2020, we set a 30-year record for the number of votes for chair and a landslide margin of victory of 13% greater than my opponent.

While I am not yet at liberty to fully explain my 2022 departure as your chairperson (following six months of harassment, threats of \$5K fines for the exercise of free speech exposing corruption, and a \$100,000-plus censure investigation that led to no charges), the result was your 2020 chairperson vote was made null and void. Coincidence or not, weeks later, 100% of the incumbents lost their re-election bids.

## IGNORING TRIBAL VOTERS HAS CONSEQUENCES

I left office at the height of my tribal voter support. I had just delivered over a half billion in federal relieve funds that delivered \$2,000 relief checks, and brought health clinics, fitness centers and housing to all units. After I resigned, an appointment was again made for chairperson while ignoring the will of the people. When the board relented and held a special advisory election, you made it clear you did not support the board deciding who the chair is and elected Austin Lowes. In 2024, voters



elected Austin Lowes as chair. Sadly, some board constantly work to undermine our chairperson.

## SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE FOR A THREE-BRANCH GOVERNMENT

We need one more vote. Those who support a three-branch government at this point are as follows.

1. Chairman Lowes
2. Treasurer McKechnie
3. Secretary Hampton
4. Director McRorie
5. Director Borowicz
6. Director Payment

I anticipate retribution for exercising my constitutionally-protected right to free speech here. Watch for it. Again, this is why we need constitutional protections and the right to sue to uphold our constitu-

tional rights.

Finally, I am heartened that tribal members have been brave and creative in exercising their First Amendment constitutional right to free speech. Check out this video that explains the need for three-branch government and how a two-Branch is a ruse.

## LINK TO SEE A VIDEO SUPPORTING A THREE-BRANCH GOVERNMENT

[www.facebook.com/rvanheuveleen/vid-eos/1927776378081584?idorvanity=179365535590109](https://www.facebook.com/rvanheuveleen/vid-eos/1927776378081584?idorvanity=179365535590109)

Tribal members, please take care and love yourself, your family and your tribe!

Chi Miigwech ~ Aaron  
(906) 440-8946

AAPayment@saulttribe.net

# Sorenson report continued

*From “Sorenson,” page 25*  
LaPlaunt. We started the day by doing second interviews for the Kewadin CFO position. We discussed as a group with executive input what person to offer the job to at the Dec. 2 meeting.

After lunch, we began going through the results of the separation of power advisory vote with Legal. This session was open to the membership. After several hours of discussion, we knew we needed more time to work through things and decided to continue to dedicate workshops time to get through the process.

At the Dec. 2 workshop we again were discussing the Constitution because some added it to the meeting agenda for that evening knowing it wasn’t ready. It is frustrating when people are pushing for the sole reason of another campaign season. These will be big changes. All board members want to see changes but we need to make sure it gets done right and we can afford it. Austin asked to remove it off the meeting agenda but stated that it will be on the first meeting in January.

Our Unit 3 housing project (Savard property) was moving

forward with water being run to the land before winter set in. We have recently been told our budget might need to be cut because costs maybe over a million more than projected. We knew that unfortunately with the cost of infrastructure we probably wouldn’t have anything left for houses but would at least be ready to apply for grants. Housing is submitting for a grant to build I believe 26 units in 2027. Believe me none of this is for lack of trying and it is disappointing to Shawn and myself but we will stay course as best we can.

There was much more I wanted to discuss but it is getting rather lengthy, so I will try again next month. If anyone has any questions or concerns please contact me at bsorenson@saulttribe.net, bridgett91@yahoo.com or (906) 430-0536.

Thank you to all of our dedicated team members for taking care of our customers and members. We wouldn’t be what we are today without all of you!

Merry Christmas to all of our members, team members and military! Hoping we all can push for better things in our tribe in 2026!!



# Director Borowicz discusses Unit 3 and board business



**SHAWN BOROWICZ, DIRECTOR, UNIT III Boozhoo,**  
Hope all is well, that you're keeping up with the weather and that your hunting season fared well for you and that your freezers are full. In Unit 3 we have been utilizing our new elder services van to its potential. It is one of the best purchases in my opinion and is used extensively for our elders' benefit.  
This board is talking about reorganizing our recyclable waste program, that evidently, we have had in the past but in recent years has not been adhered to. We need to start by reclaiming the deposit on our MI .10 cent returnable law. At any given time, you can look in

any of our trash cans on the gaming floor and see numerous returnables being thrown away. The tribe pays the initial deposit on those and when they're not returned we are losing thousands of dollars a year. This may not seem like a lot to many, but it adds up and surely will help with the deficit we are facing. Lights need to be turned off in areas that are not in use and the heating and air conditioning needs to be looked at as well. Combined all these are cost saving measures that will add up in the end.  
I've asked our CFO to compile a list of all tribally owned property, which I thought we would have had. Any new products purchased should be tagged stating property of SSM Tribe before they leave shipping and receiving. This list should be updated as goods are purchased and put in use. This simple procedure is used in most all government agencies to combat misuse and theft.  
The ongoing talks about the new Constitution are moving forward, a few things needed to be upgraded since its been so long since the elders presented their final draft and it was

not acted upon. The paperwork will be sent out to the BIA for their review as soon as the board votes to do so.  
This is a great tribe to be a member of and I'm very proud of my heritage, but several issues need to be worked on to make it more efficient and cost effective and I think we should rely on our employees for some guidance. They see the day-to-day operations and are in contact with our guests and can relay needed information to this board to make sound decisions for our future. A lot of times I hear why something is done is, "well that's the way we have always done it." That's bull\*\*\*\* because times change and in a lot of areas we have not kept up with the times. Another issue around here is everybody wants to be in charge, but nobody wants to be responsible, or, as commonly said in Indian country, there are too many chiefs and not enough Indians.  
Have a great year end and enjoy family, friends and the holidays.  
Respectfully,  
Shawn Borowicz  
sborowicz@saulttribe.net or (906) 430-7612 or (906) 379-8511



## RESIDENTS OF DRUMMOND & MACKINAC ISLANDS ENROLLED IN THE PRC PROGRAM

**RESIDENTS OF DRUMMOND & MACKINAC ISLANDS ENROLLED IN THE PURCHASED REFERRED CARE (PRC) PROGRAM ARE EXEMPT FROM SEEKING URGENT MEDICAL SERVICES AT A TRIBAL HEALTH FACILITY PRIOR TO SEEKING URGENT CARE FROM ANOTHER PROVIDER LOCATED ON MACKINAC & DRUMMOND ISLANDS FOR THE MONTHS OF NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, JANUARY, AND FEBRUARY.**



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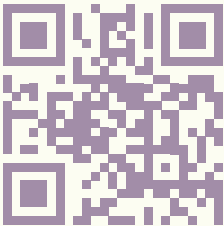
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# FEELING OFF? FOLLOW UP.

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If you have any of these symptoms during or after pregnancy, talk to your health care provider right away. For the safety of you and your baby.

- Overwhelming tiredness.
- Persistent headache.
- Dizziness, fainting or vision changes.
- Fever over 100.4°F.
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.
- Trouble breathing.
- Chest pain.
- High blood pressure.
- Fast heart rate.
- Severe nausea.
- Belly pain that won't go away.
- Baby's movement slowing or stopping during pregnancy.
- Vaginal bleeding or leaking fluid during pregnancy or heavy bleeding after pregnancy.
- Extreme swelling of your hands, face, arms or legs.
- Swelling, redness or pain in legs.



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Michigan Department of Health & Human Services





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Start at 10 a.m.

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Must earn 50 base points to qualify for promotion.  
\*May not be offered at all sites.



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