

# SERDC NEWS

SUMMER 2025 VOLUME 11 ISSUE 1

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RECAP: SERDC HOSTS ELDERS  
GATHERING



Southeast Resource Development Council

# NOONGOM



**MEMBER COMMUNITIES**



**Berens River First Nation #266**  
204-382-2161



**Black River First Nation #260**  
204-367-4411



**Bloodvein First Nation #267**  
204-395-2148



**Brokenhead Ojibway Nation #261**  
204-766-2494



**Hollow Water First Nation #263**  
204-363-7278



**Little Grand Rapids First Nation #270**  
204-397-2448



**Pauingassi First Nation #327**  
204-397-2371



**Poplar River First Nation #277**  
204-244-2267

**HEAD OFFICE**  
BROKENHEAD OJIBWAY NATION  
SCANTERBURY, MB  
204-766-2386

**WINNIPEG OFFICE**  
360 BROADWAY, WINNIPEG  
204-956-7500

- Administration
- Advisory Services
- Clinical Services  
*(Nursing, Home and Community Care, Foot Care, Children's Oral Health Initiative, Diabetes Initiative)*
- Commercial Tobacco Reduction Strategy
- STAR Regional
- Social Development
- Food Sovereignty
- Shawano Wapunong Investments Corp
- Shawano Consulting

**EDMONTON STREET OFFICE**  
208 EDMONTON ST., WINNIPEG

- Economic Development/  
Southeast Community Futures  
*(204-943-1656)*

**SOUTHEAST WELLNESS LODGE**  
225 MASTERS AVE., WEST ST. PAUL  
431-977-0720

- Jordan's Principle
- STAR
- Wellness
- NIHB
- Mental Health Therapy



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# IN MEMORIAM

## Gail Ballantyne

In Memoriam of Gail Ballantyne who passed away August 20th, 2024. She worked in Advisory Services and with Shawano Consulting for 15 years. She brought a light, enthusiasm, and laughter to our office that is missed.

We thank her for her years of service, the time she dedicated to our organization, and the friendships that she had with many staff members.

## Chief Tanya Bittern

The Southeast Resource Development Council mourns the loss of Chief Tanya Bittern who was recently elected on October 31st as the new leader of Poplar River First Nation. She passed Saturday, November 2. The community has lost a beautiful matriarch who stood at the beginning of what promised to be a strong and impactful leadership.

Chief Bittern, a former Poplar River First Nation councilor of six years, was also the community's Aboriginal Head Start program Coordinator for 14 years. Chief Bittern served on the boards for SERDC affiliates Shawenim Abinoojii Inc. and Southeast Collegiate. Her positive influence on our communities was felt for many years and she will be deeply missed by all those who called her a colleague, friend, mother, granny, sister and partner.

# Greetings From the Executive Director

## Irene Linklater

It's been a busy and rewarding first year as Executive Director of SERDC, during which I've continued to learn about our programs and services while preparing for Board meetings and implementing their decisions. Our dedicated staff make incredible efforts to advocate for our members, always guided by SERDC's mission and values, which have been rooted in Anishinaabe language, culture, and governance since 1978.

Per our bylaws, the organization is governed by the eight SERDC Chiefs who form the Board of Directors. I report directly to the Board Co-Chairs—Chief Gordon Bluesky of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and Chief Roddy Owens of Pauingassi First Nation—and collectively to all eight Board Directors. The others are:

- ✿ Chief Hartley Everett, Berens River First Nation
- ✿ Chief Sheldon Kent, Black River First Nation
- ✿ Chief Lisa Young, Bloodvein First Nation
- ✿ Chief Larry Barker, Hollow Water First Nation
- ✿ Chief Clinton Keeper, Little Grand Rapids First Nation
- ✿ Chief Darcy Bruce, Poplar River First Nation

I lead the daily operations at SERDC with a team of department directors: Rhonda Bistyak (Chief Financial Officer), Crystal Gustafson (Director of Human Resources), Carol Johnston (Director of Economic Development), Chris Olson (Director of Advisory Services and Housing), Dora Simmons (Director of Health Programs), and Candace Linklater (Director of Clinical Services).

Since the summer 2024 issue of NOONGOM, we've had seven board meetings where I shared updates—sometimes with the managers—about our work, including finances, hiring, health, housing, safety, internet access, and northern roads. On April 1, 2025, the last four SERDC First Nations took over operations of post-secondary education services, returning control to the communities.

In March 2025, we held a two-day gathering in Winnipeg called *Wabinogamik: Anishinaabe Healing Venture*, organized and funded jointly by SERDC, Shawenim Abinoojii Inc., and Southeast Child and Family Services. The purpose was to begin to identify what community-based holistic/traditional model each Southeast community would like to see for addictions treatment and aftercare, and what community programming and support is most beneficial to recovery.

Lastly, I wish to express gratitude to two long-standing SERDC employees who are retiring - Richard Grisdale, Education/PSE Counsellor and Sandy Kubik, Director of Finance. All the best Richard and Sandy!

I'm excited to continue visiting communities and speaking Anishinaabemowin more often.

*Linklater*



# Poplar River Receives Emergency Medical Response Unit



Poplar River First Nation has taken delivery of their Emergency Medical Response unit. This project was started over a year ago with the community wanting a vehicle that could respond to medical emergencies, provide emergency medical care, and transport patients to nursing stations. It was decided that a typical ambulance would not work so another option would need to be found.

**A 3/4 tonne truck with a separate medical unit mounted in the box was completed, which has full 4x4 capabilities, emergency and scene lighting and siren, with independent heat and air conditioning. The medical unit is stocked with oxygen, suction, trauma bags, stretcher, mechanical CPR, and all first aid supplies needed, including enough extra stock to support a year of use.**

Custom reflective decals were chosen for the truck with striping down the side that uses the colors of the medicine wheel. The traditional EMS symbol was

changed to use the EMS star but colored with the four colors of the medicine wheel, with the Poplar River First Nation Logo inside it.

We have been working with Manitoba Health Licensing and Compliance Branch to use this unit to create a new standard for remote emergency medical response for remote First Nation Communities.

This project was only possible with the hard work of Poplar River staff. We would also like to thank Master Truck Bodies, Mory Inc., and St. John Ambulance for all of their hard work in creating the unit and assisting with equipment and supplies.

**Poplar River's  
Emergency Medical  
Response unit is the  
first of its  
kind in  
Manitoba.**

# SERDC has obtained two new specialized trailers to assist communities in emergencies -

**One is a flood  
protection trailer  
custom-built and filled  
with flood protection  
equipment including  
orange tiger dam tube  
dikes to protect against  
rising flood waters.**



SERDC received funding through the Emergency Management Assistance Program for two specialized trailers to assist communities in emergencies.

- ◆ **Flood Protection Trailer** (see previous page)
- ◆ **Wildland Urban Interface & Value Protection Trailer**

The Wildland Urban Interface and Value Protection Trailer is a custom-built trailer filled with wildland firefighting equipment and value protection equipment. The equipment can be set up in communities to protect critical infrastructure from the threat of approaching wildfire. The trailer is self-contained and includes a generator, pumps, sprinklers, fuel cans, hose, adapters, nozzles, etc.

Along with the trailer there are six separate kits that can be loaded into aircraft and delivered into remote communities. Everything inside the trailer can be flown into fly-in communities.



**The funding proposals included community training. We hope to be in communities soon to provide training on both trailer units.**



**The two emergency trailers will be stored and maintained at the Southeast Wellness Lodge and kept in a state of operational readiness to be deployed into community if needed.**

## Flood Mapping is on the way to determine the affect of rising flood water on Southeast communities

SERDC's Emergency Response Program along with the Advisory Services department submitted a proposal for flood mapping for Southeast communities. This will involve each community being flown over with a drone this spring to provide us with accurate data about land contour and flood risk mapping.

All data that is gathered will be shared with the respective communities. We will then use this data to demonstrate the affect of rising water levels on rivers and lakes which will assist with long-term community housing and infrastructure planning.

Funding for this project comes through the Emergency Management Assistance Program and the data collection will begin once the snow melts.

October 2024, six Southeast communities were represented at the National Indigenous Fire Safety Conference in Richmond BC. This is an annual conference that brings together First Nations Fire Departments and Emergency Coordinators. 13 members from Southeast communities attended and spent the first two days of the conference in accredited courses, including Wildland Firefighting, Fire and Life Safety Educator, Building Codes, and others. The following two days were spent between the tradeshow, keynote speakers, and breakout sessions. Evenings were for networking and building connections.

**On the last day of the conference participants watched the National Firefighting Competition where Team Manitoba from Cross Lake First Nation took first place for the second year in a row.**

It is our plan to make this an annual event, and we will be applying for funding to take the group back to the 2025 conference which will be held in Calgary.



# New Firefighting Equipment + Capacity Building

## Indigenous Services Canada funds basic firefighter and pump operations training

The fire protection program on-reserve forms an integral part in promoting community wellbeing and safety by identifying and mitigating fire hazards and teaching membership good fire safety practices through prevention initiatives.

SERDC Advisory Services continues to support our communities with fire prevention awareness and increasing fire department capacity through investment in new equipment and firefighter training.

Funding was secured through Indigenous Services Canada to purchase additional firefighting equipment and provide Basic Firefighter and Pump Operations training.



Pauingassi



Black River



Having working smoke alarms in the home reduces the risk of dying in a fire by more than half (54%). However, roughly three out of five fire deaths occur in homes with either no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. More than one-third (38%) of home fire deaths result from fires in which no smoke alarms are present.

*Pictured central and in the background are members of Hollow Water First Nation.*



Fire Safety Presentations - K-5 at Pauingassi Omiishosh Memorial School



# SMOKE ALARMS

Make Them **WORK** For You!™

Learn more at [fpw.org](http://fpw.org)

**Fire Prevention Week is Oct 5-11, 2025**

Key messages for this year's Fire Prevention Week theme, "Smoke Alarms: Make Them Work for You!" include the following:

1. Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area (like a hallway), and on each level (including the basement) of the home.
2. Make sure smoke alarms meet the needs of all family members, including those with sensory or physical disabilities.
3. Test smoke alarms at least once a month by pushing the test button.
4. Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old or don't respond when tested.

# Primetime Programming

## Plan your week with the SECFS Family Preservation Unit

The Family Preservation and Post Majority Units became operational in 2024. The programs develop and facilitate culturally informed programming, healthy lifestyles and life skills enhancing workshops, parenting, and therapeutic groups for families in the Southeast communities. We incorporate a wide range of presentation methods and techniques to engage families and build trust. Many programs, workshops and support groups are provided in-person for families in the communities we serve.

We also offer regular opportunities for land-based learning (fishing, hunting, survival skills), sweat lodges, traditional parenting, beading, and sewing.

### Our weekly programs include:

- \* Together We're Stronger Recovery Support Group
- \* Spirit Circle Support Group (for our Two-Spirit Relatives)
- \* Gidochige Acoustic Music Program
- \* Future Leaders: our new 20-week pre-employment training program
- \* Men's and Women's Wellness Groups
- \* Maawandobiwag- our Prenatal program
- \* Drumming and Craft night



Through wellness gatherings, life skills development, family fun day events and programs, we restore ancestral knowledge and support the healthy growth of the family unit. Our goal is to equip parents with the tools needed to maintain stability, reduce social isolation, and nurture their family relationships with connections to their culture.

Email [family.preservation@secfs.ca](mailto:family.preservation@secfs.ca) to find out more information about Family Preservation Unit programming and how to sign up.



AFFILIATE SUBMISSION - SECFS

# Congrats GRADUATES 2024



## SECFS Graduates

In July 2024, our *Honouring Gifts* High School Graduation was held at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. It was a beautiful event that honoured 42 high school graduates from Southeast communities.

## Yellowquill Cohort Grads

We are excited to share that our very first Yellowquill cohort successfully graduated in June 2024, marking a significant milestone for everyone. We honoured 14 Yellowquill University College First Nations Child Welfare Worker graduates.

Building on this success, we launched our second Yellowquill cohort this fall. This new group is already diving into their learning journey and is set to graduate in 2026. We are looking into the Bachelor of Social Work Cohort with the University of Manitoba and hope to launch it in September 2025.

We look forward to continuing our tradition of honouring the accomplishments of our high school graduates this summer.

# YOU DID IT

## Congratulations on your outstanding accomplishment

## Children's Special Allowance Settlement Application Assistance with Ka Wijiat Abinoojiaak - The Children's Helper

SECFS has created a team, **Ka Wijiat Abinoojiaak - The Children's Helper**, to support our community members with the process of applying for Children's Special Allowance (CSA) settlement payouts.

Eligible applicants are individuals who were Provincially funded children who were in care from 2005-2019.

Matthew Bouchey and Courtney Fernandes visited Southeast communities in February and March 2025, and set up at SECFS in-community offices to assist eligible individuals with the CSA settlement application process.

If you are residing off-reserve, our team is available to you. Please call or email them about their availability. If you have any questions regarding eligibility, refer to the contact information listed on the poster.

**Note: A valid ID and direct deposit info are required to complete the CSA forms.**

**PROVINCIAL CHILDREN'S SPECIAL ALLOWANCE SETTLEMENT (CSA)**

If you believe you are eligible to apply for the Provincial Children's Special Allowance (CSA) settlement payouts and have questions or require assistance with the applications process, please call Matthew Bouchey at 204-260-9048

APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN

Eligible applicants are individuals who were Provincially funded children who were in care from 2005-2019

Applications and settlement payouts are administered by The Exchange Group. No funds will be dispersed at the time of application.

Matthew - 204-260-9048  
or  
Courtney - 204-947-0011

matthew.bouchey@secfs.ca  
or  
courtney.fernandes@secfs.ca

Matthew & Courtney will be visiting each Southeast community to provide assistance with filling out applications for eligible recipients. Please bring valid ID and direct deposit information. If you have any questions please call or email.

Scan this QR Code for your Community schedule

Matthew is our Ka Wijiat Abinoojiaak - The Children's Helper





# JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE: Opportunities for sport participation & creative expression

## SERDC's off-reserve program supports 1,251 children from Southeast communities

Our program currently has 1,251 registered children, the majority of whom come from SERDC communities. We also have over 1,900 SERDC members who engaged with us through Facebook.

To help meet the needs of families without access to a doctor, we have established a Jordan's Principle health clinic where we continue to identify gaps in care for families facing significant medical, physical, spiritual, and emotional challenges.

Our team supports parents and children through the often lengthy application processes required by off-reserve offices, while also providing administrative assistance, products, and services.

During application assessments, our case managers identified additional gaps in care, specifically around medical emergencies. Children without a pediatrician,

or who have not seen a doctor, are often found to have unmet health needs, which we now refer to our Nurse Practitioner for follow-up.

We continue to engage with both on and off-reserve community members. Our Recreation Coordinator continues to host seasonal events, such as the Halloween costume contest, that provides opportunities for community participation and creative expression.



## Jordan's Principle BBQ

On July 23, our SERDC Jordan's Principle team hosted a BBQ for families to come together and enjoy the beautiful weather. The event featured bouncy castles, beloved children's characters, and a captivating magic show. We had a fantastic turnout with 102 participants—68 children and 34 adults.

## 'Back to School' Event

In September, we supported families during the back-to-school season by providing gift cards, school supplies, and community resources. Each school-aged child received a \$50 gift card. The event also gave parents an opportunity to meet with their Jordan's Principle case managers to discuss their files. We welcomed 664 children and parents over the course of the event, demonstrating the growing importance and reach of our outreach efforts.

## Jordan's Birthday Celebration

On October 18, we held a heartwarming celebration for Jordan's birthday at our West St. Paul location. Despite the chilly weather, over 90 attendees came out to enjoy games, win prizes, jump in bouncy castles, share birthday cake, and sing "Happy Birthday" to Jordan. We remain committed to growing this annual event each year to continue honoring Jordan River Anderson's legacy in a meaningful way.

## Christmas Drop-In

SERDC Jordan's Principle hosted a festive Christmas Drop-In, welcoming approximately 415 visitors. Families enjoyed snacks with Santa from 2 to 6 p.m., festive music and movies, and received their Christmas meal and gift cards. The event also provided a valuable opportunity for families to meet with their case managers. Even those living far from the lodge made the trip and expressed their appreciation for being included in the celebration.

## Financial Empowerment Day

We collaborated with SEED Winnipeg, Assiniboine Credit Union, EIA, Community Financial Counselling Services, Canada Revenue Agency, Service Canada, and the Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) to host a Financial Empowerment Day. Families accessed resources to help organize their finances, including assistance with taxes, banking, and obtaining status cards. The event empowered families with tools and information to strengthen their financial well-being.



## Staff

- Kaitlyn Yurick**, Nurse Practitioner
- Nicole Strocen**, Off-Reserve Case Manager
- Lauren Edwards**, Off-Reserve Case Manager
- Madison Cole**, Off-Reserve Case Manager
- Erin Skene**, Off-Reserve Case Manager
- Curtis Garson**, Recreation/Land-based Coordinator
- Jenna Holowachuk**, Respite Coordinator

# Food Sovereignty

Food Banks Canada grant provides 400 food hampers to four SERDC communities

Photo: Pauingassi First Nation

**J**uly 2024, SERDC was the recipient of an Access Grant from Food Banks Canada which provided 400 food hampers to Brokenhead, Black River, Hollow Water and Bloodvein that do not have access to the Harvester Support Grant, which supports fly-in communities. The hampers included fresh and frozen food, vegetables and household staples. SERDC is grateful for this support from Food Banks Canada in continuing to advance food security for our members.

## Harvester Support Grant

A proposal for the next three-year Harvester Support Grant has been submitted to Nutrition North Canada. This grant supports Indigenous harvesters engage in traditional hunting, fishing, and harvesting activities in fly-in communities Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi and Poplar River.

We would like to recognize Harvester Coordinators Ray Rabliauskas (Poplar River), Jessica Crow (Pauingassi), and Naomi Moar (Little Grand Rapids) for their dedication ensuring the success of activities in their communities!

### “ Poplar River Coordinator update: Ray Rabliauskas

*This year we have focused on our garden projects. We had one full-time gardener and one full-time youth trainee from April to October. This past season, they worked with over 30 families to plant, maintain and harvest produce from their home gardens. They have also managed a one-acre community farm. In total, the garden staff have grown and delivered 1,338 lbs of fresh produce to any community members who requested it. The vegetables*

## Wiiche'iwaymagon Buying Alliance

Wiiche'iwaymagon means "friends helping friends." It is a First Nation-owned, not-for-profit organization committed to advancing food security through community-driven solutions. In December 2023, Harvester Support Grant recipients from Manitoba and Ontario came together in a landmark agreement—signing a treaty to unite with food bank organizations in both provinces. Together, this powerful coalition is working to ensure consistent access to nutritious food for our babies and elders.

Our mission is to move beyond the limitations of charity and build a sustainable future by providing communities access to wholesale food pricing. This approach allows community members to stretch their dollars further without sacrificing the quality or nutritional value that is vital for health and growth—especially for our children. In a recent milestone, the Wiiche'iwaymagon Buying Alliance partnered with one of Canada's largest grocery retailers. With added support from food bank partners, we now deliver food directly to member communities at no cost. This is just the beginning of our shared vision: a future where no baby goes hungry, and no elder is left behind.

For more information, visit: [wiicheiwaymagon.ca](http://wiicheiwaymagon.ca)

*include green and yellow beans, tomatoes, corn, carrots, onions, pumpkins, potatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, radishes and beets.*

*They will add another two acres to the community garden. We will be installing a 40' x10' AgroPod. We are also planning to build a permanent seasonal 60' by 40' greenhouse and will continue to assist individual families to grow home gardens.*

### “ Pauingassi Coordinator update: Jessica Crow

*September is always a busy month for our community as men and women prepare for their week-long wilderness camping trips. Any game caught is shared and distributed among community*



members. One of our key activities is hiring local women to teach youth and young parents the skills of butchering wild meats and filleting fish.

We recently hosted a Possession and Acquisition License (PAL) firearm safety course, which many in the community participated in. Several individuals completed the course and obtained their licenses.

Community feasts featuring wild meats have taken place for families to gather together and enjoy each other's company. We hired local cooks to prepare these meals and held cook-offs to engage the community in a shared activity.

### “ Little Grand Rapids Coordinator update: Naomi Moar



*As the LGR Harvester Coordinator my work has focused on gardening, traditional medicine, and food security initiatives. I started by reclaiming raspberry bushes and sowing seeds, and recently, we received approval for a grant from the Northern Manitoba Food, Culture & Community Collaborative to fund the purchase of a tiller and seeds. It will also help us establish a community garden in partnership with Jordan's Principle this summer.*

*In addition to gardening, I've been working with traditional herbs and crafting medicinal teas to further deepen my connection to natural healing practices. In January, I distributed sage, cedar, and chaga. These items were quickly received and appreciated by those in the community. I also receive and organize food donations regularly to ensure community members have access to fresh, nourishing food when needed.*

*Beyond the hands-on work, I've invested countless hours researching gardening techniques, irrigation systems, fertilizers, and seed-saving methods.*

*I've even explored the art of tanning—diving into various DIY videos and resources always eager to expand my knowledge and skills.*

# Water Monitors & Sampling in SERDC Communities

## Tecta-PDS machines are on their way to SERDC communities to support safe drinking water for our people.

### The role of the Community-Based Drinking Water Monitor (CBWM)

A CBWM is a designated individual within a community responsible for sampling, testing, recording, and communicating the quality of drinking water. They will take measurements through the use of monitoring equipment provided to each community which includes: a chlorine test meter, turbidity meter, and incubator - and in the future a Tecta-PDS machine (pictured).

Samples are taken to measure cloudiness in the water, chlorine levels, E.Coli and Total Coliform (types of bacteria) from specific areas along the water distribution system. If a community member's home is not along the distribution system (such as if they have a cistern), the CBWM will also take a sample of the cistern and recommend regular cleaning of the cistern as required.

The CBWM determines if the water sample contains bacteria and incubates it. The type of data collected only provides a presence or absence of the tested microorganisms. Technology has progressed to where this can now be automated. CBWMs can obtain colony counts (something that could previously only be done in a lab) through the use of the Tecta-PDS machine. This machine is scheduled to be rolled out to SERDC communities in 2025. The Tecta-PDS machine can also automatically e-mail reports to be submitted to WaterTrax.

CBWMs will take part in a yearly workshop hosted by SERDC's Environmental Public Health Officers to keep them up-to-date with the latest changes and provide training or a refresher course for water sampling.



**The Environmental Public Health Officer (EPHO) Program** identifies public health risks that could impact the health of Southeast community members. One of the Primary Roles is to work with the Community Based Water Monitor (CBWM) in each community (includes services provided to Buffalo Point FN) to review drinking water results and provide training and guidance with the Water Monitoring Program.



The intent of the program is for CBWMs to monitor each of their FN communities on a weekly basis and test for the presence of bacteria and chlorine levels for safe drinking water purposes.

Those activities produce results which are documented on provided forms by the CBWM, then sent to the Data Administrator and entered into a national water database called WaterTrax (for funding and monitoring purposes).



**The Drinking Water Safety Team** consists of: Chief & Council, Community Public Works, Water Plant Operators, Health Director, CBWM, Community Health Representative, Circuit Rider Program (provides training and assistance to the Plant Operator), EPHO and Nurse in Charge.



**EPHOs will routinely sample the water treatment system** for microbiological contaminants and chemical contaminants, such as Trihalomethanes (THMs) and Haloacetic Acids (HAAs) which are cancer-causing byproducts formed through a reaction between chlorine and organic matter.

The presence of other minerals and chemicals are tested on a yearly basis in each community through a routine "399" test for the presence of arsenic and lead. The analysis is compared to the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality and community leadership is advised on actions to take based on those results.

## Environmental Public Health Program



- SERDC's two EPHOs are:**
- **Mike Fontaine** (Buffalo Point, Hollow Water, Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi and Poplar River)
  - **Keenan Fernandes** (Brokenhead, Black River, Bloodvein and Berens River).



# Expanded Eligibility for Single Parent Allowance +

## SERDC Social Development program update

**It has been an exciting time for the Social Development program, and we want to share some significant updates to the Income Assistance Programs that will positively impact many families and individuals in our communities.**

Starting immediately, single parents with children of all ages, from birth up to and including age 17, are now eligible for the Social Category under the On-Reserve Income Assistance Program. This change, retroactive to April 2024, means that many single parents currently receiving benefits in the Economic Category will be transferred to the Social Category, allowing them to receive revised monthly basic needs rates.

### **New Supports for Persons with Disabilities**

In alignment with the Manitoba Supports for Persons with Disabilities program, ISC is introducing the new Supports for Persons with Disabilities (SPD) benefit. This program aims to provide enhanced support for individuals with severe and prolonged disabilities, helping them overcome significant barriers to daily living and full participation in their community. The Disability Impact Assessment form will be used to determine eligibility for this new benefit.

For questions about these new benefits or our social development program, contact the program advisor Jonathan Dionne at [jdionne@serdc.mb.ca](mailto:jdionne@serdc.mb.ca).



### **Tamara Desjarlais**

Income Assistance Administrator for Brokenhead Ojibway Nation

Tamara administers the income assistance program ensuring that eligible individuals and families on-reserve receive the support they need.

One of Tamara's key responsibilities is to interview those inquiring about income assistance or related services. Whether at the office or in the comfort of their homes, Tamara gathers information to assess their eligibility. Her empathetic approach helps applicants understand their financial and related needs, providing them with advice, info and counseling.

Tamara's work doesn't stop there. She plays a crucial role in referring eligible income assistance recipients to project managers, facilitating the transfer or conversion of funds to ensure recipients receive their proper living allowance or wage.

Beyond her administrative duties, Tamara provides support to community members facing personal and social challenges. She participates in meetings with other service providers to coordinate the delivery of services, ensuring a traditional approach is used.

Tamara's role is important to Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and we are proud to celebrate her contributions!



## MIHCEMI Working Group

### The Manitoba Indigenous Housing Capacity Enhancement and Mobilization Initiative (MIHCEMI) working group represents all 63 Manitoba First Nations

MIHCEMI holds quarterly meetings with representatives from 11 Independent First Nations and 7 Tribal Councils, as well as government representatives from ISC, CMHC, Efficiency Manitoba, FNHSSM, FNHPA and FNNBOA. There are three sub-committees within the working group; training, housing forum and conference, and basic home maintenance who meet on a weekly/bi-weekly basis.

This working group advises the MIHCEMI Project Coordinator (an employee of SERDC who is responsible for the administration of all MIHCEMI activities).

#### **Acronyms we use:**

- + *Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)*
- + *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CHMC)*
- + *First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba (FNHSSM)*
- + *First Nations Housing Professional Association (FNHPA)*
- + *First Nations National Building Officers Association (FNNBOA)*

MIHCEMI provides training for Housing Manager certification, which has two cohorts. The first cohort graduated in April 2025 and the second will graduate in April 2026. Housing Manager certification is a two-year program delivered by FNHPA. MIHCEMI is planning for a third cohort to begin summer 2025.

#### **MIHCEMI/FNNBOA Housing Inspectors Training**

MIHCEMI will be assisting the coordination of the training to become a certified building official delivered by FNNBOA.

#### **MIHCEMI Leadership Forum**

At the beginning of the year MIHCEMI hosted a leadership forum at the Victoria Inn for Chiefs and Councils and community housing professionals from all around Manitoba. There were approximately 152 registrants from 42 First Nations. Attendees heard presentations from ISC, CMHC, Efficiency Manitoba, FNHPA, FNNBOA, and MST Asset Management Ltd.

#### **MIHCEMI Annual Housing Conference**

MIHCEMI works with EventCamp to host the annual Housing Conference in April at the Victoria Inn. The theme for the 2025 conference was "Changing Homes for a Changing Climate". The event welcomed 200+ participants and a 36-booth trade show.



# GROWING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

## Southern Manitoba First Nations Commercial Tobacco Reduction Strategy

Program facilitator Jason Leshchyshyn and his garden assistant worked hard in the garden throughout summer 2024. They planted 2,000 traditional tobacco plants along with vegetables like tomatoes, corn, squash, beans, turnips, beets, and carrots which were shared with SERDC communities. The tobacco team was also on the move attending 33 community events including 15 workshops on smoking cessation and traditional tobacco gardening. In these workshops, folks learned how to plant, take care of, harvest, and dry tobacco as well as how to cut and roll it for ceremony use.

SERDC shared 30 pounds of traditional tobacco with cultural workers, communities, and events like seminars and conferences. We were also very honoured to have been asked to provide tobacco for the final journey for the Honourable Murray Sinclair.

We are currently helping communities grow traditional tobacco with the goal of supporting community needs and move away from using store-bought tobacco. Instead of selling the tobacco, we hope to exchange it for stories, teachings, medicines, or memories of significant events. We hope to gather these contributions to create a book that keeps our history and traditions alive. As our elders grow older, it's important we do not lose this knowledge.



Follow SMFNCTRS 



## Youth Gathering 2024 Recap

Our 8th Annual Youth Camp was a big success with approximately 90 participants. Youth had fun making ribbon skirts and shirts, beading, and enjoying a new attraction – a strong man competition (featured on the cover of this issue)! A special thank you to Nate and Charlie from Black River for making the pontoon boat rides possible, and as always, to **Varieties Camp Breerton** for hosting us.

**SAVE THE DATE:** 9th Annual Youth Gathering August 12–15, 2025



**“They were  
not just  
garbage”**

- the families of **Morgan Harris, Mercedes Myran, Rebecca Contois and Ashlee Shingoose** say they have endured a living nightmare since the four womens’ murders three years ago.

**In July 2024, Jeremy Skibicki was found guilty of murdering four Indigenous women: Morgan Harris, Mercedes Myran, Rebecca Contois and Ashlee Shingoose.**

SERDC’s MMIWG2S+ Support Worker Erica Chatelain played a crucial role throughout the Jeremy Skibicki trial in August 2024, providing support to families and survivors during one of the most painful chapters in their lives.

Erica Chatelain was present every day at the trial offering support to the families in attendance and accompanied the only known surviving victim to services and legal appointments, helped her access a therapist, and remained by her side during hospital visits. When it came time for the survivor to testify, Erica stayed with her at the hotel ensuring she never had to face any of it alone.

SERDC’s IRS Resolution Support Worker, Marie Walker, gifted the survivor a wig and a ribbon skirt—something empowering to wear as she gave her testimony in court. It was a gesture to show she was surrounded by a community that cared deeply for her healing and strength.

Our team later came together in a spirit of unity and justice—first, to celebrate when Skibicki was found responsible for his actions and his “Not Criminally Responsible” plea was rejected. And again, at Portage and Main, when the guilty verdict was delivered.

**There is a support line available for those impacted by missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people: 1-844-413-6649.**





# Water Filtration Replacement

- Advisory Services



Part of ensuring our communities have safe drinking water is regularly replacing the water filters in the water treatment plants. This is a time-consuming operation that requires coordination with contractors, Chief and Council, water treatment plant personnel, engineers and Indigenous Services Canada staff.

It includes the sourcing of new filters, related pumps, valves, controllers, and replacement of piping associated with the new filter installations, making sure the Community has water while this process is happening. This is just one example of work happening with infrastructure in our communities. We have been in all Southeast communities through the construction of water and wastewater plants and maintaining the existing ones, as new subdivisions will require new roads, water and wastewater lines, and Hydro servicing before new houses can be built.

# Building better communities ONE HOUSE AT A TIME



Advisory Services worked on several housing projects in communities over the last year. In collaboration with CMHC and Indigenous Services Canada housing programs, we have built approximately 100 houses over the last year. As we move forward with housing, we will work with the communities and members on building quality homes by ensuring we are following best practices and inspecting the homes to meet or exceed the National Building Code of Canada.



# Children's Oral Health Initiative

COHI program significantly decreases dental surgery referrals for Southeast children

COHI was launched in SERDC communities fall 2019. The program focuses on children ages 0-7 within schools, daycares, Jordan's Principle and head start programs

**Services include:** annual dental screenings, fluoride varnish every three months, silver diamine fluoride to manage cavities from growing and spreading to other teeth, dental sealants to protect deep grooves on permanent teeth, interim stabilization therapy - a temporary filling placed in small to medium cavities that releases a high amount of fluoride, prenatal related oral health education sessions, and general sessions on oral health habits.

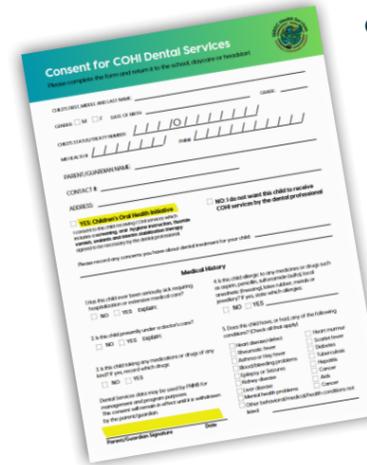
Since the introduction of COHI there has been a steady decrease in dental surgery referral rates throughout SERDC communities:

- ☺ 2019-2020, 44.1%
- ☺ 2020-2021, on hold - COVID-19
- ☺ 2021-2022, 19%
- ☺ 2022-2023, 17%
- ☺ 2023-2024, 12.4%



**So far from September 2024 to May 2025 we have seen an all time low surgery referral rate of 5.9% out of 648 children screened!**

This has proven the introduction of preventative dental services is a tremendous benefit to the children within SERDC communities and their overall oral health.



COHI encourages and welcomes new children into the program anytime throughout the year. In order for children to be enrolled, we require parents/guardians to complete our consent form before we can provide any dental services to a child. The form includes the following:

- ✦ **Child's full name**
- ✦ **Birth date**
- ✦ **Treaty number for billing purposes**
- ✦ **Health and PHIN Number; 6 and 9 digits - needed for referral purposes**
- ✦ **Phone # and alternative contact person is needed for Referral appointments**
- ✦ **Your signature and date**
- ✦ **Completed medical history - health conditions, medications or allergies are important to know in case of emergencies**

Please note in the comments if your child's treaty number is in the registration process or if they are non-treaty. If living on-reserve they can still enroll.

Consent forms can be found at the schools, daycares, headstart or Jordan's Principle buildings.

For children that require a referral for dental surgery, they must be assessed and a pre-op form must be filled out by your local nurse at the nursing station or health center to ensure your child is in good health to undergo general anesthesia for dental surgery.

For children with small or minimal cavities who do well sitting in the dental chair, we will recommend a general referral where they can see the dentist at the nursing station or closest town/city which doesn't require undergoing general anesthesia.



**COHI focuses on improving oral health for community members to ensure good overall health. Oral health is important at every age.**

**A healthy mouth helps you eat and speak comfortably and can give you a confident smile. Helping your children develop healthy dental and nutritional habits early in childhood can set them up for a lifetime of good dental health.**





# National Native Alcohol Drug Abuse Program

NNADAP provides support to seven of the eight SERDC communities

The goal of NNADAP is to support First Nation and Inuit people in establishing and operating programs aimed at addressing and offsetting high levels of alcohol, drug and solvent abuse among people living on-reserve.

### Prevention & Intervention:

- Provide immediate assessment and access to counselling programs
- Network with Community support such as Baby Friendly Initiative and Building Healthy Communities Community Therapist/Counselor
- Assist and support AA Meetings, Self Development, Workshops
- Assist and support with Crisis Intervention

### Training

- Provide community education and increase awareness of the nature of mental health
- Support to individuals and families in post-treatment in a Harm Reduction approach
- Updates on research
- Education and continuous learning about drug, alcohol and inhalants, gambling and tobacco

To inquire about NNADAP or any of the mental wellness program services call Ashley Ledwos, Mental Wellness Case Manager: 431-977-0730.

# Drug Awareness & HIV Education in High Demand

SERDC's Wellness Team welcomed Lisa Currier (pictured far left) as the Harm Reduction Response Coordinator.



### October 2024

The Mental Wellness Team attended the Indigenous Mental Health and Wellness Conference in Calgary, Alberta, an event that proved to be both inspiring and motivating, highlighting the efforts of other Indigenous people and organizations engaged in similar work to SERDC. The team valued the opportunity to network and exchange knowledge with new peers.



### November 29, 2024

Tribal Health Educator Cheryl Prince was invited to present on Drug Awareness during Brokenhead Addictions Week. Her hour-long presentation addressed specific community concerns and successfully initiated meaningful discussions—something she always anticipates and welcomes. Brokenhead Ojibway Nation continues to lead among Southeast communities in adopting Harm Reduction practices.

### March 13, 2025

The Harm Reduction Team delivered an evening presentation on HIV/AIDS in Poplar River, led by Cheryl Prince and supported by Lisa Currier. The session attracted 18 participants. Community feedback emphasized the need for more Harm Reduction presentations in the area.

### March 18, 2025

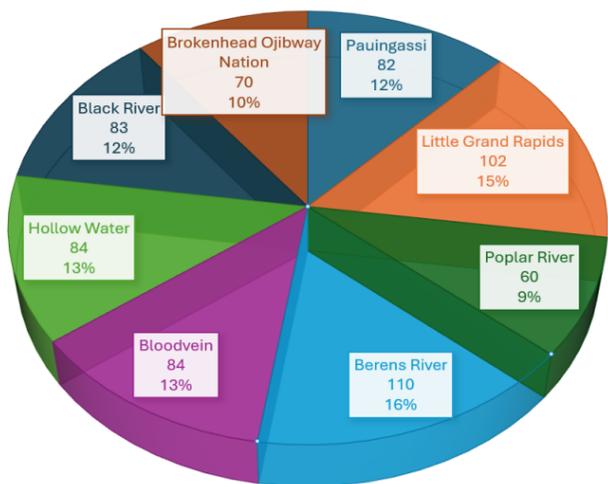
Students in grades 6 to 9 participated in an interactive HIV workshop in Pauingassi, which featured the Hershey Kiss game to demonstrate how HIV is spread. The session was engaging yet informative, with feedback indicating it was considered appropriate by participants.

# Nonjudgmental long-term support for women in our communities

SERDC's STAR team continues to provide one-on-one, home-visiting support to women and their families in Southeast communities.

STAR is a mentoring program that offers nonjudgmental, long-term emotional support to women in our communities.

**Summer 2024 saw a total of 675 community members at the community fruit and veggie stands, and we are aiming to break that record number this year! Here are the numbers STAR saw per community in 2024:**



Our team provides assistance with the following:

- ♥ Supporting women in their efforts to create a safe, healthy environment and improve the quality of life for themselves and their children.
- ♥ Connecting women to community resources to reduce isolation, enhance access to necessary services, and foster greater independence.
- ♥ Collaborating with mothers and community members to promote abstinence or reduce alcohol and drug use, while improving access to reliable family planning methods.
- ♥ Partnering with other community service providers to improve outcomes for both mothers and children.
- ♥ Facilitating access to FASD diagnoses and connecting community members to internal and external supports and services.
- ♥ Some staff members are trained to deliver anger management sessions in small groups. Important upcoming events to watch for (Information will be posted in the communities and on social media community pages).

STAR's 4th Annual Fruit and Veggie Stands will kick off in June, July, and August 2025. A special thanks to Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries for their continued support making this event possible.

### Past Events

Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, STAR's Annual Brea-FASD Event was paused this fall. As a program and team, we are actively exploring options to secure funding and continue this well-received event in the future.

STAR advocates continue to strengthen relationships within Southeast communities by supporting local programs and enhancing service delivery. Each year during Treaty Days, our program sets up informational booths in every community. These booths serve as an opportunity to raise awareness about our services and how we can support women and families.





# SERDC hosts elders' gathering

## Indian Residential/Day School Program hosted an Elders' Gathering January 29-30 in Brokenhead Ojibway Nation for elders from all eight Southeast communities.

The event was preceded by an Evening Merchandise Bingo on January 28, 2025, organized in partnership with the IRS/IDS Program and Mental Wellness Program. The highlight of the evening was the Jackpot Game, where a generator was won by an Elder from Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

The gathering began with a Pipe Ceremony, followed by an Opening Prayer, Opening Remarks, and a Drum Song by the Little Buffalo Singers of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation. This led into Welcome Remarks delivered by:

- ✿ Irene Linklater, Executive Director, SERDC
- ✿ Dora Simmons, Director of Health Programs, SERDC
- ✿ Stanley Kipling, Manager, Mental Wellness Program
- ✿ Marie Walker, Lead, IRS/IDS Program

A moving Keynote Address was presented by Deborah Smith of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, who shared her experience as a Survivor of the Indian Residential School system and her journey toward healing and resilience.



Throughout the two-day event, Elders participated in a wide range of cultural, wellness, and support services:

- Reiki Healing** – Jean Bird & Tracy Bone
- Cedar Bath Ceremony** – Joyce Clarke & Charmaine Buium
- Esthetician Services** – Sandra McClure & Ashley Coates
- Bimadiziwin/Pimatisiwin Framework Workshop** – Lesley Beardy
- Dreamcatcher Making** – Sweetpea Starr
- Copper Pot Necklace Making** – Erica Chatelain, Ashley Ledwos & Serenity Bird
- Letters of Administration Assistance** – Vanessa Cook
- Foot Care Services** – Divina Del Rosario & Norisa Rumbaoa

Day one concluded with a dinner and dance, with live entertainment from the Billy Joe Green Band.

### Day Two Highlights

Chief Gordon Bluesky of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation joined the gathering to offer a warm welcome to the Elders from SERDC communities. In appreciation, Chief Bluesky was gifted a Star Blanket on behalf of the Elders and SERDC staff.

The gathering concluded with a special ceremony Honouring the Elders, which included Drum Songs by the Little Buffalo Singers and a Giveaway Ceremony.

## Our Cultural Services

The SERDC Cultural Team is composed of two Service Providers, Glenda Smith and Wesley Kent, along with three Ska-bes: Duncan Leclair, Serenity Bird, and Marlene Smith. Together, our team represents a diverse range of ages, cultural knowledge, traditional teachings, and spiritual practices.

We provide cultural and spiritual support to SERDC member nations and are often invited to participate in training programs offered by the SERDC Wellness Team. Our goal is to share, preserve, and support cultural practices through ceremony, education, and land-based activities. Our Services Include:

**Opening and Closing Prayers:** Offered at workshops, conferences, and events in collaboration with the SERDC Wellness Team.

**Smudging Ceremonies:** Using various medicines, depending on the requests of SERDC members, staff, and clients.

**Eagle Wing Fan Down:** Spiritual support using eagle feathers for those seeking guidance or cleansing.

**Sweat Lodge Ceremonies:** Currently held in Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

**Seasonal Ceremonies:** Held during the Winter and Summer Solstices, and the Spring and Fall Equinoxes.

**Individual Ceremonies:** Personalized spiritual ceremonies tailored to individual needs.

**Medicine Picking:** Guided outings and teachings on gathering traditional medicines.

**Ceremonial Teachings:** Education on selected traditional ceremonies and their meanings.

**Land-Based Activities:** Leather cleaning and tanning; Cleaning fish, ducks, geese, deer, and other animals

**Traditional Crafts:** Dreamcatcher making; Hand drum crafting; Beading and necklace making



## Reframing health promotion as *third sister work*

+ Partnership with WRENCH delivers 80 children's bikes to SERDC communities

SERDC, along with Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, Black River First Nation, and Hollow Water First Nation, is part of the Kahnawà:ke Schools Diabetes Prevention Program (KSDPP), Community to Community project.

At the June 2024 gathering, the story of *The Three Sisters and the River* was shared with us, which helped reframe how we think of health promotion. The story is credited to Mark Pullam, an Elder from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz.

When we think of health, the *Third Sister's* work includes ensuring people have access to affordable, healthy food, school nutrition programs, cooking classes, opportunities to be active, and health education.

*“Three sisters were walking near a river and noticed babies in the water. The first sister jumped in and started rescuing as many babies as she could, but there were too many, so she called her second sister. The second sister began giving instructions and teaching the babies to swim, but there were still too many to help, so she called her third sister. The third sister ran upstream. She went to stop the babies from ending up in the water.”*

- Mark Pullam

For Brokenhead, Black River and Hollow Water, Community Coalition Board meetings have been happening more regularly over the last few months. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the issues and activities in each community that support health promotion.

These meetings bring together people from around the community, including Health, Jordan's Principle, schools, leadership, lands, parents, grandparents, and all who work toward a healthier community.

**A big thank you to Tanager Abigosis and Sandy Koropas in Brokenhead, Shiniyah Simard in Black River First Nation, and Cheryl Bushie in Hollow Water First Nation for the time and commitment they have put into this project and their dedication to the Third Sister work.**

## Tribal Diabetes/Health Promotion Team ACTIVITIES

### Partnership with the WRENCH

The Winnipeg Repair Education and Cycling Hub (WRENCH) reached out to SERDC and once again donated bikes to be shared with SERDC communities. Around 80 children's bikes were donated and delivered to the communities in February 2025. We are so grateful to the volunteers who participate in the WRENCH's *Cycle of Giving*, where they repair bikes continuously over a 24-hour period to donate to organizations across the city. We look forward to seeing kids enjoying these bikes this summer.

### ADI 101

Each year, the Tribal Diabetes Coordinators from seven Tribal Councils in the province come together to host an orientation for new ADI workers. This week-long training provides new ADI workers with education and tools to explain diabetes and run various health promotion workshops in their communities. This year, SERDC hosted the regional gathering from February 24–27, 2025.

### SERDC ADI Gathering

On March 11 and 12, all ADI workers from the SERDC region and nearby independent communities gathered for two days of health promotion, education, and sharing. This gathering provided updates on diabetes and explore new opportunities for ADI programs.

### Advocating for Foot Care

In November 2024, Elizabeth Proskurnik, Health Promotion Manager, and Brikena Dibra presented at the 12th Annual First Nations Health Managers Conference on the Tribal Council's approach to foot care. Foot care has been severely underfunded in Manitoba, and this was an opportunity to share our successes and challenges, as well as advocate for the importance of foot care not only in Manitoba communities but across the country. We hope to continue sharing this message at more conferences in the future.



# Building Connections

## A look at 2024 and early 2025 career events that helped fill key roles at SERDC

In 2024, SERDC participated in the Zoongide'ewinbawaajigan: Brave Dreams Career Fair, on Nov 29 and 30, 2024. This semi-annual career fair was hosted by Southeast Child & Family Services, Shawenim Abinoojii Inc., and the Southeast Resource Development Council. This featured organizations from diverse fields, including healthcare, social services, finance, administration, and more. The event garnered vast attendance, and we connected with community attendees from Berens River, Hollow Water and Brokenhead Ojibway Nation.

Career fairs are bustling hubs of opportunity that allow employers to connect with job seekers in various fields. SERDC is continuously looking for more ways to connect our community members with meaningful job opportunities. Our goal is to foster open dialogue with attendees, looking to learn more about the organization and their future career paths.

In recent months, we have successfully filled several key roles within our organization. Our recent hires include, a STAR Advocate, Skaabes, Cultural Service Provider, NIHB Client Navigator, Nurse Practitioner, Dental Aide, Tribal Housing Advisor, Mental Health Therapist, Administrative Assistant, Executive Assistant and a new Chief Financial Officer.

**We are proud to say that of those roles recently filled, we hired community members from Black River, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation, and Hollow Water. We look forward to connecting with more of our community members. For the latest jobs, visit [serdc.mb.ca/careers](https://serdc.mb.ca/careers) and be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram @serdcmb.**



# Building a growth mindset



There have been several new initiatives at Southeast Collegiate. Our focus has been primarily on mental health, literacy, numeracy, and student expectations.

The school is attempting to focus on educational outcomes, and ensuring proper preparation for students so they have the best chance of success after graduation. We have served a full house this year starting with 158 students, and currently have 51 students on track to graduate in June!

## Supporting mental health and wellbeing

Understanding the vital role of mental health in student success, SEC offers a comprehensive support system. The mental health team includes three therapists, a mental health navigator, a mental health educator, a director, and support staff. Together, they provide individualized care for students dealing with trauma, grief, and emotional challenges.

In partnership with The Link, SEC ensures continuity of care and faster interventions for students in crisis, creating a seamless and responsive support system.



## Fostering Responsibility and Routine

SEC emphasizes life skills such as time management, professional behavior, and routine. The school is reinforcing expectations around attendance and accountability to instill habits that support success both in and after high school.

## Closing Gaps and Moving Forward

SEC is dedicated to reshaping how students engage with education. Life skills are developed not just in classrooms but through daily routines and relationships. The school is working to close educational gaps while supporting personal growth, understanding that real change takes time.

Through targeted programs, strong partnerships, and a commitment to student development, SEC prepares students not just for exams—but for life. Each initiative reflects the belief that every student has the potential to succeed, and SEC is building the foundation to help them do just that.



## Enhancing Communication and Literacy Skills

To strengthen communication skills, SEC collaborates with a speech and language pathologist, helping students build essential competencies for school and future careers.

A schoolwide literacy initiative is also underway, starting with a pilot in Grade 10 English. Students are screened at the start, midpoint, and end of the semester to track progress and adjust strategies as needed. The goal is to address literacy challenges early and expand the program to benefit more students.

## Strong Foundations

SEC believes success in life is built not only through academics but also through emotional growth, communication, and personal development. The school is committed to creating an environment where students thrive both academically and emotionally, gaining the tools needed for life beyond high school.

## Building Confidence in Math

SEC has partnered with Jump Math, a not-for-profit organization, to launch a pilot project focused on building students' confidence and skills in mathematics. The initiative provides targeted support to strengthen math foundations and improve outcomes.

# Nurse Practitioner

## Introducing Natalie Fontaine



SERDC is pleased to welcome Natalie Fontaine as our newly hired Nurse Practitioner, filling in for Ann while she is away on leave.

Natalie is an Ojibway and Cree woman from Sagkeeng and Norway House, Manitoba. She brings with her a wealth of experience, having worked in several northern First Nations communities in the areas of primary care, community health, and public health.

In her role with SERDC, Natalie will continue supporting our communities through the outpatient dispensing program and provide on-call consultation. She is committed to enhancing health service delivery and is excited to meet community members and offer much-needed care throughout the region.

Over the coming months, Natalie will focus on increasing access to primary care and reducing barriers for SERDC communities. As part of this effort, she will resume the teen clinic at Wanipigow School in Hollow Water and is exploring the possibility of expanding these services to other SERDC communities.

There is a significant need for youth-focused health care at the community level, and Natalie is eager to help address this gap.

**The goals of the teen clinics include:**

- + Providing accessible and youth-appropriate health services
- + Offering opportunities for youth to learn about health issues and strategies for maintaining wellness
- + Delivering accurate, nonjudgmental information and culturally respectful care that acknowledges gender-specific needs

**Services offered at teen clinics will include:**

- + Emergency contraception
- + Birth control
- + Pregnancy testing

Please join us in welcoming Natalie Fontaine to the SERDC health team!



# SERDC has a new Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program!

## Our program Navigator is available to:

-  Improve awareness of the NIHB program, including presentations on request
-  Assist clients on how to address denials and appeals
-  Provide advocacy and support to clients to access NIHB
-  Strengthen relationships with health providers

## NIHB program benefits include

- Eye & Vision Care
- Dental Services
- Prescription Drugs & Medication
- Mental Health counselling (22 Hours each year)
- Medical Supplies & Equipment

## To be eligible, a client must be a resident of Canada, and one of the following

- A First Nations person who is registered under the Indian Act (referred to as status)
- A child less than 2 years old whose parent is an NIHB eligible client.

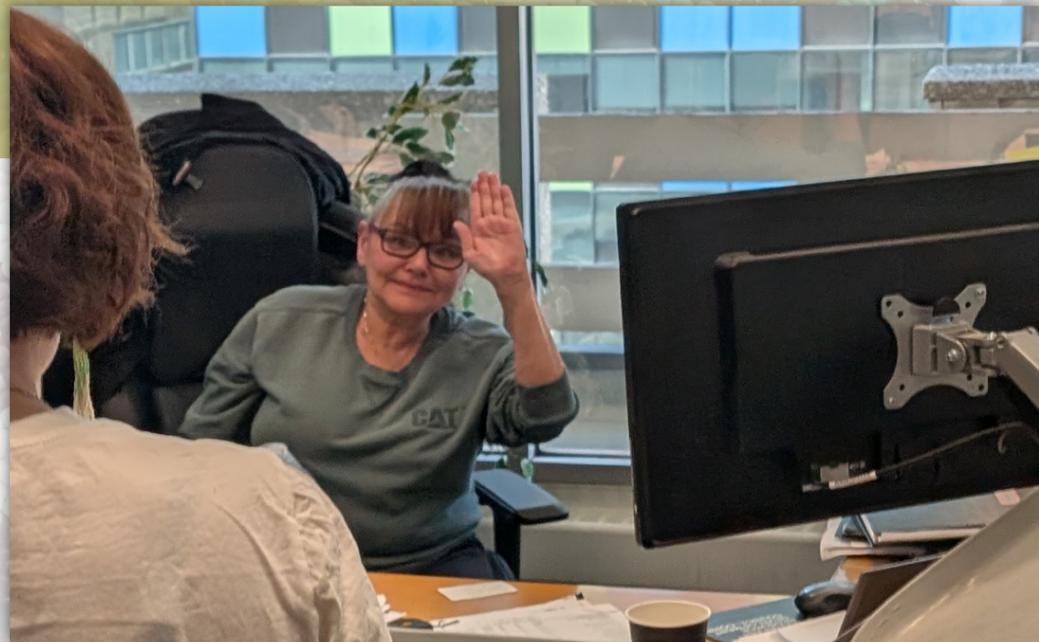
SERDC's Navigator: Jackie Pommer, 431-977-0639 / [jpommer@serdc.mb.ca](mailto:jpommer@serdc.mb.ca)



**Richard Grisdale**  
Education Manager  
& Counselor  
After 38 years

# Happy RETIREMENT

**Sandy Kubik**  
Director of  
Finance  
After 21 years



# Tribal Foot Care Program: *Caring For Our Communities*

**More than just a service, our foot care program is about connection. Our nurses truly enjoy being in the communities, getting to know their clients, and making a positive impact on their health and well-being.**

**G**ood foot health is essential to overall well-being, especially for those living with diabetes and other chronic conditions. The SERDC Foot Care Program is dedicated to supporting our communities by providing professional foot care services that help prevent serious complications, such as infections and lower limb amputations.

Currently, we have three dedicated foot care nurses who travel to SERDC communities offering expert care while building strong, trusting relationships with their clients. Regular foot care plays a vital role in early detection of issues like poor circulation, nerve damage, and wounds that could lead to more severe health concerns if left untreated. By addressing these problems early, we help individuals maintain mobility, independence, and a better quality of life.

**At SERDC, we remain committed to expanding and enhancing our foot care services to meet the growing needs of our communities. Our compassionate approach ensures that every visit is not just about care, but also about comfort and trust. Together, we are taking important steps toward healthier futures—one foot at a time.**



## Greetings from:

### Rhonda Bistyak - SERDC's NEW Chief Financial Officer



**I am a Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) with a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Manitoba. I spent over 25 years as a Public Servant working for the Manitoba government. My most recent position before coming to SERDC was working as Comptroller for Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation.**

Throughout my career I have helped organizations develop processes for budgeting and financial management, making improvements to accounting systems, developing new processes during COVID-19, and developing and administering grant agreements for First Nations communities.

In addition to my accounting and finance roles, I am an educator. I have lead several training initiatives and I teach financial and budgeting courses in the evenings at Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology college.

I am honored to be working at SERDC, where I hope to bring my accounting expertise, and my passion for teaching and mentoring to help bring meaningful change to the organization. I look forward to working with staff and Board of Directors!

### Chris Olson Director of Advisory Services

Greetings! Noongom is a great way to keep our community members informed. I learn something new each time I read the latest edition and look forward to its release. SERDC staff do amazing work throughout the year, and to be able to acknowledge their efforts by publishing activities and events is great to do.

My name is Chris Olson, and I've been with SERDC since 2016. I've had the privilege of working with our communities and being involved in several projects and programs throughout the years. I've seen our organization grow and change, and I'm excited for the direction we're heading in. The focus of Advisory Services remains on providing quality work to our communities that will offer the most benefit. The advice we offer is tailored to best practices and procedures, and is done with regular consultation with community leadership and staff.

**We believe wisdom is sacred, and that making informed decisions is one of the keys to our future successes. Our guiding principles are the 7 Sacred Teachings and it's important to reference these when making recommendations that impact our community members.**

Open communication is important to us. Feel free to drop us a line or stop by the 5th floor at 360 Broadway.

### Dora Simmons Director of Health Programs

Health Programs have been busy since the last edition of Noongom. We have coordinated various trainings, events and workshops in SERDC communities.

We've had some staff leave their positions at SERDC, however in their departure we have hired community members to fill those vacancies who have been orientated with their role and active in providing services.

April 1, 2025 was the beginning of a new fiscal year for Health Programs. **Staff are busy preparing their work plans for the fiscal year to ensure that program deliverables are a priority.** At the direction of the SERDC Board and SERDC Health Director's Advisory Circle programs will include their suggestions in their work plans to improve service delivery to communities. We are looking forward to a new fiscal year with improvements in service delivery.



# Regional STAR at a glance - Success Through Advocacy and Resources

Regional STAR is a program which offers support and training to STAR communities toward Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) prevention.

There are currently 28 First Nations in southern and northern Manitoba who are supported by STAR. They include:

- \* All SERDC communities except Sagkeeng and Buffalo Point who are independent
- \* Swampy Cree (6 communities)
- \* Ginew (Roseau River First Nation)
- \* Cross Lake
- \* Nelson House
- \* Norway House
- \* Keewatin Tribal Council (11 and 1 independent)

All sites attended regional training in September (moved from May 2024 due to the fires in The Pas) and in November 2024. The September training focused on anger management and how to bring train the trainer program into the communities. The training was online and we learned that this group is better equipped for in person learning.

In November the training focused on communication and relationship building skills, in addition to learning how to effectively support/work with members of the Queer community. All of the facilitators were excellent and very engaging.

**Regional STAR will be evaluating the year to gauge the successes and where improvements are needed in terms of program planning, i.e. training needs, data collection, updating the standards, writing and creating a curriculum specific to STAR needs, expansion of sites, funding increases for all sites, etc.** Regional STAR continues to lobby the Federal Government about the value and importance which STAR plays in First Nations Communities and how under funded the program is as a whole.

In addition, Regional STAR continues to work with other provinces (especially the West) to

make a national strategy for FASD proclaimed, which would help with research and funding dollars.

In November, STAR travel was limited due to funding issues but was given permission in the last week of January to resume visits to all communities. Regional STAR has sent out an email to all sites about coming to do community visits.

Regional STAR applied on behalf of all STAR sites for a grant of \$55,000 from Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries (MLL). Hopefully, all sites will put their requests in ASAP so that another proposal can be sent to MLL for another grant. This money goes to the communities, not to Regional STAR.



# Leaving 2024 with smiles and laughs!

## Message from the Southeast Personal Care Home

We are very proud to be able to take the Residents out a few times a month ranging from fishing to movies, bringing entertainment in on the weekends and intergenerational programs with three different schools. We also had a fabulous holiday season with a Christmas lunch with family, Santa visits and of course lots of presents!

In addition, we have had photo contests involving our Residents dressed as sheriffs, Halloween costume contests, and so much more. Our holiday season involved visits from Santa and family, the River of Life Church and 86 students! There's never a dull moment around here, and we look forward to 2025 having just as much fun!

*“In the last six months of 2024 we were busy enjoying life! Fishing, going out for ice cream, a petting zoo, Elvis visit, held our own Olympics, and visits from students from various schools.”*



# Sha·Wa·Stan

## Introducing our new partnership: Shawano Wapunong – Stantec Consulting Ltd.

In December 2024, Shawano Wapunong–Stantec Consulting Ltd. (Sha-Wa-Stan) was established.

Sha-Wa-Stan is a partnership between Shawano Consulting Ltd. and Stantec Consulting Ltd. This new partnership leverages the strengths of both Shawano Consulting and Stantec to provide quality engineering, environmental and general consulting services while prioritizing the interests and values of the Southeast Resource Development Council (SERDC) communities. This partnership will also focus on opportunities for capacity development, employment, and subcontracting.

Sha-Wa-Stan aims to create a lasting positive impact in Manitoba that honours First Nation values and contributes to the prosperity of SERDC communities.

For more information about the Sha-Wa-Stan partnership,

*Guided by your vision, supported by our expertise—we will provide consulting services that truly serves your First Nation community, grounded in trust and partnership.*

*—Sidney Seymour, P.Eng, Director, Shawano Consulting Services*

### AFFILIATE SUBMISSION

#### About Shawano Consulting Ltd.

Shawano Consulting Services Ltd. was formed in 2003 to assist and support First Nations in managing capital projects in their communities. Shawano Consulting is a wholly-owned subsidiary of SWIC.

The operational and management strategy is driven by basic principles; respect for clients and working in partnership towards a common goal. The company works together with the client to identify opportunities and maximize benefits for the community. Shawano offers services in the following areas:

- ❶ Capital building projects
- ❷ Project management
- ❸ Engineering
- ❹ CMHC program consulting
- ❺ Contract administration

#### About Stantec

Sustainability isn't just what we do. It's who we are. At Stantec, sustainability is the catalyst to our success and is embedded in our people, our projects, and our direction. Stantec is a global leader in sustainable engineering, architecture, and environmental consulting. We innovate at the intersection of community, creativity, and client relationships so that together we can redefine what's possible. Stantec has served SERDC communities through the design water treatment plants, road infrastructure, and new school designs.

For more information about Stantec, please visit [stantec.com](http://stantec.com).



## SOUTHERN MANITOBA FIRST NATION COMMERCIAL TOBACCO REDUCTION STRATEGY

# 9TH YOUTH GATHERING

## ACTIVITES

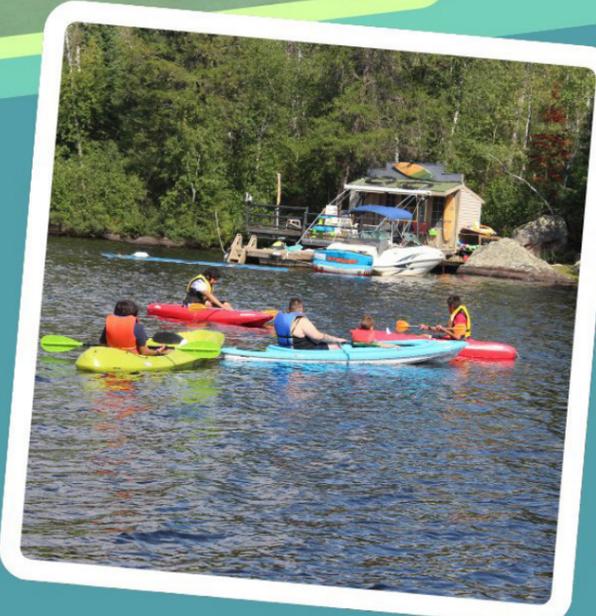
Scavenger Hunt ●

Workshop ●

Outdoor Games ●

Water Activities ●

Campfire Storytelling ●



**AUGUST 12–15TH, 2025**  
**VARIETYS CAMP BRERETON**

**SAVE THE DATE**

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