



Weeneebayko Area Health Authority

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Annual **Report**





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Weeneebayko Area Health Authority
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Mission, Vision, Values

Our Mission

Weeneebayko Area Health Authority is a regional, community-focused organization, committed to providing optimum health care as close to home as possible.

Our Vision

Weeneebayko Area Health Authority will distinguish itself as a provider of quality health services with a holistic approach that reflects the distinct needs of all Peoples in the Weeneebayko region.

Our Values

Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) is committed to promoting healthier lifestyles while continuing to improve the holistic, lifelong well-being of all.

WAHA supports families and communities through health education, advocacy, and Cree language services.

WAHA is committed to providing high-quality health services that include traditional and cultural healing methods.

WAHA supports Western and Traditional approaches to medicine.



WAHA At-A-Glance

2025-2026 Fiscal Year

Caring for Our Communities Across the North

WAHA continues to provide essential care close to home for individuals and families across the region.

- Total visits across all programs: 64,799
- Emergency Room: 18,215
- Family clinic visits: 21,368
- Ambulance calls responded to: 6,052

Responding When It Matters Most

Timely access to urgent and emergency care remains a priority across all communities we serve.

- Ambulance response time: [% meeting target <8 minutes to on scene CTAS 1] 100%
- Lab results (stat): [% completed within 1 hour] 92.93%
- Lab results (urgent): [% completed within 2 hours] 94.28%

Supporting Access Across the Region

Care delivery in the North requires coordination and support beyond hospital walls.

- NIHB-supported travel (warrants): 10,814*

Our People

Our team is at the heart of everything we do, delivering compassionate and high-quality care.

- Total active staff: 579 (as of end of fiscal year)
- New staff hired this year: 128
- WAHA RNs, NPs, RPNs: 100

Expanding Access Close to Home

We are strengthening local access to services to reduce the need for travel and improve continuity of care.

- Day surgeries performed: 408 (WGH)
- Diagnostic imaging procedures: 16,854
- Community paramedicine enrollments: 20 (Moosonee only)

Quality and Safety

We are committed to continuous improvement and fostering a strong culture of safety.

- Patient safety incidents reported: 1,021
- Complaints: 177 (with an above 80% response rate within 14 days)
- Good catches identified by staff: 21.

Serving Our Communities Together

As a Board, we are guided by the voices of the people and communities we serve.

This past year, WAHA continued to make important progress in improving healthcare for the communities of the western James Bay and Hudson Bay coast. While we are proud of what has been accomplished, we know there is still work to do to ensure people can access the care they need, closer to home.

The Board remained focused on supporting initiatives that improve patient care today while helping build a stronger healthcare system for future generations. This included advancing the Redevelopment Project, supporting the development of a new Strategic Plan, and ensuring WAHA remains accountable to the communities it serves.

As someone who was born and raised in this region, I understand how important healthcare is to our families and communities. I also understand the challenges many people face when they must travel far from home to receive care. That is why the work being done at WAHA matters so much.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank our staff, physicians, leaders, Elders, patients, and community partners. Together, we are building a healthcare system that reflects our values, respects our culture, and supports healthier futures for our people.

Carman Tozer
Board Chair

Healthcare is personal.

For many of us who live in this region, the patients we serve are our family members, friends, neighbours, and community members. That connection guides everything we do at WAHA.

This year, we continued to improve services across the region through new programs, advances in digital health, and stronger partnerships with communities and healthcare organizations. We also continued important work to move the WAHA Redevelopment Project forward and began developing our next Strategic Plan.

These achievements are important, but what matters most is the impact they have on people. Every improvement we make is about helping someone receive care closer to home, reducing barriers to healthcare, and creating a better experience for patients and families.

As a First Nations leader from this region, I am proud of the work our teams are doing to strengthen culturally safe care and make sure community voices continue to guide our decisions. We know the best solutions come when we work together.

Thank you to our staff, physicians, leaders, partners, and communities for your continued trust, support, and dedication. Together, we are creating a stronger future for healthcare in our region.

Lynne Innes
President & Chief Executive Officer

Behind every patient visit, every clinic appointment, and every healthcare service is a team of people working together.

From community health programs and hospital services to recruitment, technology, finance, quality improvement, and redevelopment planning, their work helps ensure patients receive the care they need.

We continued to invest in new technology, improve processes, support recruitment efforts, and strengthen services across the organization. These improvements may happen behind the scenes, but they play an important role in helping patients and families access care.

Over the years, I have come to appreciate the strength of the communities WAHA serves and the importance of providing healthcare that reflects local needs and priorities. Working alongside community leaders, staff, patients, and partners continues to be both a privilege and a responsibility.

I want to thank every member of the WAHA team for their commitment, professionalism, and resilience. The progress highlighted in this report reflects their hard work and dedication to the people and communities we serve.

Sandra Kioke
Executive Vice President

Every day, teams of people at WAHA work to provide safe, compassionate care to patients and families across our region.

As healthcare providers, we have the privilege of caring for people during some of the most important moments in their lives. We do not take that responsibility lightly.

This year, we continued to strengthen clinical services and improve access to care; virtual care programs, specialist partnerships, and efforts to recruit and support healthcare professionals.

As a physician from this region, I understand the unique healthcare challenges our communities face. I also see the strength, resilience, and knowledge that exists within our First Nations communities. Improving health outcomes requires more than clinical care alone. It requires listening, building relationships, and delivering care that respects culture, community, and lived experience.

I am grateful to our physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and all clinical staff for their dedication and commitment to excellence. Their work helps ensure patients receive the care they need while remaining connected to their families, communities, and culture whenever possible.

Together, we continue to build a healthcare system that supports the health and wellbeing of current and future generations.

Dr. Elaine Innes
Chief of Staff

The background of the page features a photograph of a calm lake under a cloudy sky. Two small, covered boats are docked at a wooden pier in the middle ground. In the foreground, there are some bare, thin branches. A solid red banner is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the main title in white text.

2025–2026 Accomplishments

Throughout 2025–2026, WAHA continued to strengthen healthcare services, improve patient experiences, invest in its workforce, and advance major infrastructure projects, across the region. The following accomplishments highlight the progress made toward building a stronger, more connected, and culturally responsive healthcare system for the communities we serve.

Improving Patient Care

CT Scanner Expands Access to Diagnostic Imaging Closer to Home

The continued success of the CT scanner in Moose Factory reflects a meaningful advancement in access to care for the communities served by WAHA. In the 2025 calendar year, the CT scanner supported 1,691 patient scans, an increase from 1,570 in 2024 and 1,254 in 2023. This steady growth demonstrates the increasing ability to provide essential diagnostic imaging services closer to home.

By expanding local access to CT, more patients can receive timely diagnostic information without the added burden of travelling out of the community. This not only reduces avoidable travel-related costs across the northern healthcare system, but more importantly, supports faster diagnosis, earlier treatment planning, and a better patient and family experience.

Providing care close to home allows community members to remain near their families, supports, and culture while accessing high-quality diagnostic services. This achievement reflects the ongoing commitment to improving equitable access to care across the region.

In addition to diagnostic care, WAHA is working in partnership with Timmins and District Hospital and Northern Radiology Practice (NORrad) to join the Ontario Lung Screening Program, which uses low dose CT scans to screen for lung cancer in people at higher-risk. The program is anticipated to launch in late fall or early winter 2026-2027.

Indigenous Primary Care Team Connects More Patients to Ongoing Care

The Indigenous Primary Care Team (IPCT) continued expanding access to primary care services through Nurse Practitioner-led clinics, chronic disease management programs, and prevention initiatives.

During the fiscal year, three Nurse Practitioners helped connect 1,829 patients to a consistent primary care provider and supported 3,621 patient visits in Fort Albany and Attawapiskat , and developing a model of care for regional obstetrical services, and community based services to support families in the region.

The team also strengthened diabetes prevention and chronic disease management through enhanced patient tracking and follow-up processes developed in partnership with our Data Analytics team.

By improving access to ongoing care and preventive services, IPCT supports healthier communities and better long-term health outcomes.

Community Engagement Shapes Future Mobile Maternity Services

WAHA advanced plans for a new Mobile Maternity Care Initiative designed to improve access to prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal services for communities in the James and Hudson Bay region.

Community engagement was identified as the first priority, with strong participation helping shape future service planning. Feedback collected through consultations and surveys established a foundation for program development.

During the year, a perinatal nurse was hired to support education and clinical planning, and specialized maternity and newborn care equipment were purchased. Future plans include recruiting a midwife, lactation consultant, and sonographer to provide community-based care, and developing a model of care for regional obstetrical services, and community based services to support families in the region.

The initiative aims to reduce the need for expectant mothers to travel for care by bringing services closer to home and supporting healthier outcomes for families.

Community Paramedicine Expands Access to Care in Peawanuck

WAHA launched a new Community Paramedicine Program in the Weenusk First Nation community of Peawanuck to improve access to healthcare services and provide additional support for residents living with chronic illnesses and mobility challenges.

The program delivers healthcare directly in the community through home visits, wellness checks, chronic disease monitoring, health education, and follow-up care. Two full-time Community Paramedics were assigned to support the initiative.



Early activities included wellness clinics, medication compliance checks, blood pressure and blood sugar monitoring, and assistance navigating healthcare services.

By providing proactive, community-based care, the program helps reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and medical transports while improving continuity of care and overall health outcomes.

Alternative Level of Care Initiatives Improve Patient Flow

WAHA made significant progress in improving patient flow and reducing hospital pressures through targeted Alternative Level of Care (ALC) initiatives.

Supported by provincial funding and new internal policies, the organization implemented strategies that helped patients safely return home with appropriate supports while reducing unnecessary hospital stays.

These efforts improved patient flow, increased system responsiveness, and helped ensure patients received care in the most appropriate setting.

Secure Rooms Improve Safety for Patients and Staff

During 2025–2026, WAHA completed the implementation of secure rooms at its hospital sites in Moose Factory, Fort Albany and Attawapiskat, providing a safer environment for patients experiencing mental health crises and for the staff caring for them.

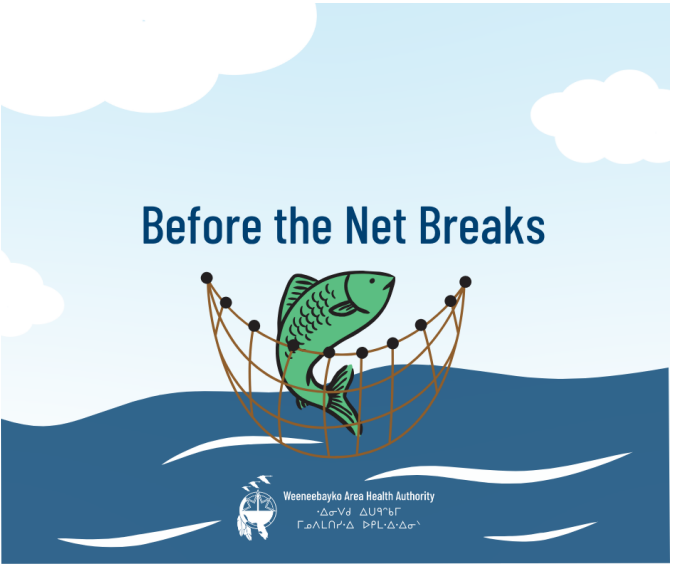
The project included construction of the rooms as well as the development of policies, protocols, and decision-support tools to guide their use. New procedures were established for restraint minimization, staff safety alarms, and secure room entry and exit processes.

Since becoming operational, the secure rooms have helped reduce incidents and strengthened staff safety while supporting more effective crisis management.

This initiative enhances WAHA's ability to provide safe, appropriate care during mental health emergencies while supporting a safer workplace for healthcare teams.

Advancing Quality, Safety and Clinical Excellence

New Patient Feedback Platform Strengthens Quality and Safety



Throughout 2025–2026, WAHA's Quality, Risk and Organizational Performance Department advanced initiatives to improve patient safety, quality of care, and the patient experience.

A key achievement was the launch of a new patient experience survey platform using Qualtrics. The system allows patients and families to provide feedback through QR-code access, anonymous surveys, and enhanced reporting tools that support continuous improvement.

The department also introduced the “Before the Net Breaks” Good Catch and Near Miss campaign, encouraging staff to identify and address potential safety concerns before incidents occur.

These initiatives strengthen WAHA's culture of continuous improvement and support the delivery of safe, culturally respectful, patient, family and Elder-centred care.

Accreditation Results Reflect Commitment to Quality Care

WAHA's Laboratory and Pharmacy teams achieved significant accreditation and regulatory milestones during 2025–2026.

The Laboratory Program improved compliance with Accreditation Canada Diagnostics standards from 82.4% to 93.2%, reflecting substantial progress in quality systems, patient safety practices, and service delivery. Surveyors recognized the team's commitment to continuous improvement and the considerable progress made since the previous assessment.

The Pharmacy Program also achieved strong results during Ontario College of Pharmacists assessments in Fort Albany and Attawapiskat. All assessment criteria were either fully met or partially met, reflecting continued progress in medication safety, regulatory compliance, and pharmacy practice standards.

Together, these achievements reinforce WAHA's commitment to delivering safe, reliable, and high-quality healthcare services across the region.

Indigenous Harm Reduction Program Expands Education and Community Safety

WAHA's Indigenous Harm Reduction Program expanded education, outreach, and naloxone access across the region during 2025–2026.

The team developed eight culturally informed educational modules addressing substance use stigma, harm reduction, and naloxone awareness. More than 100 WAHA staff participated in training sessions delivered both virtually and in person.



To improve overdose prevention and community safety, more than 480 naloxone kits and 290 Sharps Pick-Up Kits were distributed throughout the region. The program also launched the Healing for One, Healing for All social media campaign, sharing 60 educational and anti-stigma messages.

These initiatives strengthened community knowledge, increased access to life-saving resources, and supported safer communities across the region.

Building a Stronger Workforce

Clinical Expansion Strengthens Workforce Capacity

During 2025–2026, WAHA expanded clinical education and workforce development opportunities across the region.

The Education Department and Clinical Scholar Program provided bedside mentorship, onboarding support, simulation training, emergency

preparedness education, and hands-on learning opportunities across multiple communities.

Staff participated in a wide range of specialized training programs, including Basic Life Support, Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Neonatal Resuscitation Program training, emergency nursing education, violence prevention training, and emergency obstetrical skills education. WAHA also secured more than \$67,000 in external funding from Ontario Health to support emergency department education and specialty training.



These investments strengthened workforce capacity, supported staff development, and improved access to high-quality healthcare services throughout the region.

Weekly Rounds Keeps Staff Connected Across the Region

In April 2025, WAHA launched Weekly Rounds, an internal newsletter designed to strengthen communication and connection across the organization.

Since its introduction, the newsletter has become a trusted source of information for staff, sharing organizational updates, employee stories, operational news, and key achievements from across the region. Over the past year, average readership increased by 9%, demonstrating strong staff engagement and growing interest in internal communications.

Supporting Community Health and Wellness
New Health Surveillance Report Supports Community-Led Planning

The Minomathasowin Healthy Living Program completed a comprehensive regional Health Surveillance Report covering the years 2003–2018 and shared the findings with community health leaders during 2025–2026.

The report analyzed more than 20 health conditions affecting Weeneebayko area communities, highlighting important trends related to diabetes, respiratory illness, chronic disease, and other health priorities.

By providing communities with reliable, region-specific data, the report supports advocacy efforts, funding applications, program planning, evaluation activities, and long-term health system planning. Guided by OCAP® principles, this work strengthens community ownership and control of health information while supporting informed decision-making across the region.

Strengthening Digital Health & Organizational Performance
New Performance Dashboards Support Better Decision-Making

In May 2025, WAHA’s Decision Support Services team launched Site Indicator Reports that provide leadership with near real-time access to key organizational performance data.

The dashboards bring together operational, clinical, support service, and corporate indicators into a single reporting platform, allowing leaders to monitor performance, identify emerging issues, and respond more quickly to changing needs.

By improving access to timely and actionable information, the new dashboards strengthen organizational oversight and support data-informed decision-making across the organization.

Major Network Upgrades Improve Connectivity Across Northern Communities

Throughout 2025–2026, WAHA completed significant network infrastructure upgrades across sites in Moose Factory, Moosonee, Fort Albany, Attawapiskat, Kashechewan, and Peawanuck.

The initiative included replacing and standardizing network equipment, expanding wireless infrastructure, improving remote-site support capabilities, and strengthening internet redundancy. WAHA also improved internet performance in several communities through collaboration with Western James Bay Telecom and advanced fibre connectivity through the CreeCable project in Moosonee.

Together, these upgrades improved access to clinical systems, strengthened disaster recovery capabilities, and enhanced digital healthcare services across the region.

Finance Team Strengthens Processes and Supports Better Decision-Making

Throughout 2025–2026, WAHA’s finance department strengthened core processes, improved efficiency, and enhanced collaboration across key financial functions.

The accounts receivable team streamlined collection processes, while the accounts payable team advanced the implementation of a new software platform to improve payment accuracy, processing times, and vendor relationships.

The department also expanded the use of financial planning technology, improving visibility into financial and operational drivers and supporting more accurate budgeting and forecasting.

These improvements strengthened financial stewardship and enhanced the organization’s ability to support informed decision-making and long-term sustainability.

Building for the Future
Infrastructure Investments Strengthen Healthcare Facilities Across the Region

WAHA completed several major infrastructure projects during 2025–2026 to improve facility reliability, safety, and long-term sustainability. These efforts were advanced alongside progress on WAHA’s Redevelopment Project, Oshki Kiskinowacihtawin / New Beginning, which achieved several significant milestones during the year as construction continued on the future regional healthcare campus in Moosonee (further highlighted in the 2025–2026 Highlights section).



High-priority roofing projects were completed at Weeneebayko General Hospital in Moose Factory and hospitals in Fort Albany and Attawapiskat, extending the lifespan of critical infrastructure and reducing future maintenance risks.

Additional upgrades included HVAC improvements and furnace replacements in Peawanuck, heating system upgrades at the Kashechewan Nursing Station, and the installation of portable morgue units in Peawanuck and Kashechewan.

These investments strengthen healthcare infrastructure across the region and help ensure safe, reliable healthcare services for patients, families, and communities.





2025-2026 Highlights

Community Health Ambassadors Connect People to Care

WAHA's Community Health Ambassador program continued to strengthen health promotion and outreach across the region during 2025–2026. Community Health Ambassadors Rowan Cheechoo, serving Moose Factory and Moosonee, Allison Sutherland, serving Kashechewan and Fort Albany, and Gilbert Chookomolin in Peawanuck helped connect residents with healthcare information, wellness programs, and preventive services.

As trusted local voices, Rowan, Allison and Chookomolin supported community events, delivered health education, promoted cancer screening, and helped residents navigate healthcare services and resources. Through WAHA's Chronic Disease Prevention and Wellness Program, they engaged hundreds of community members in conversations about diabetes prevention, heart health, cancer screening, and healthy living.

Their work continues to strengthen community awareness, improve access to care, and support informed health decisions across the region.

Celebrating 75 Years of Care & 15 Years of Regional Partnership

In 2025, WAHA celebrated two significant milestones: the 75th anniversary of Weeneebayko General Hospital (WGH) and the 15th anniversary of the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority. Staff from across the organization worked together to coordinate commemorative events, develop anniversary branding, and create opportunities for community participation.



The main celebration in Moose Factory welcomed students, staff, Elders, and community members. Students toured WGH and explored healthcare career opportunities, while the evening celebration featured cultural performances and the premiere of a special oral history video highlighting the experiences

of long-serving staff members. Together, these celebrations honoured the people who helped shape healthcare in the region while inspiring future generations to continue building a strong and sustainable healthcare system.

Community Engagement Guides Next 10-Year Strategic Plan

WAHA formally launched the development of its next 10-year strategic plan in August 2025, beginning an important process to shape the future of healthcare across the western James Bay and Hudson Bay region.

The planning process has been grounded in meaningful engagement with community leadership, Elders, regional partners, staff, patients, and community members. Through meetings, workshops, surveys, and discussions held across the region, WAHA has gathered valuable feedback to help guide future priorities and investments.

With community engagement activities more than 40 per cent complete, themes that have been shared will help establish a shared vision for the future while supporting informed decision-making, accountability, and long-term sustainability across WAHA.

Redevelopment Project Advances Toward a Stronger Healthcare Future

WAHA's Redevelopment Project, Oshki Kiskinowacihtawin / New Beginning, reached several major construction milestones during 2025–2026 as work continued on the future regional healthcare campus in Moosonee.

During the year, crews installed 1,659 foundation piles, completed the first concrete pours, and incorporated more than 4,200 metric tonnes of steel into the project. Construction activities supported an average workforce of approximately 144 workers.

WAHA also confirmed the future location of the ambulatory care centre on Moose Factory Island and completed more than 30 community engagement sessions across the region.

These milestones represent considerable progress toward creating a modern regional healthcare campus that will support patients, families, and communities for generations to come.

Palliative Care Partnership Expands End-of-Life Care Closer to Home

WAHA secured funding through Ontario Health’s Palliative Model of Care for Indigenous Communities to advance culturally appropriate end-of-life care across the region. A key component of this work is the partnership with Moose Cree Home Health Services, which will help support long-term program success and sustainability.

The initiative includes development of a hospice unit, creation of policies and procedures to guide care delivery, and expanded palliative services in home, hospital, and community settings. Funding will also support the purchase of specialized equipment and furnishings to create a comfortable and dignified care environment.

With a palliative care coordinator and physician now supporting implementation, the project represents an important step toward providing compassionate care closer to home for patients and families.

Transportation Services Improve Access Across the Region

WAHA’s boat service continued to play a vital role in connecting Moosonee and Moose Factory during the boating season by providing transportation for patients and staff travelling between these two communities.



The service helps reduce transportation barriers, improve scheduling coordination, and support more timely access to healthcare services. It also provides a dependable and efficient transportation option that strengthens service delivery for patients from all parts of the region requiring care at Weeneebayko General Hospital in Moose Factory.

WAHA recognizes the dedication of its boat operators and deck hands, who practice a strong commitment to safety and reliability every day during boat season.

Partnership Improves Access to Psychiatry Services

WAHA’s partnership with Sinai Health continued to improve access to specialized mental health services across the James Bay and Hudson Bay region. Building on a successful pilot launched in 2021, the partnership now supports community-based psychiatric care through a team of eight psychiatrists providing both virtual and in-person services.



During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, 544 psychiatric appointments were delivered across the region. Regular community visits have helped strengthen therapeutic relationships, increase engagement with mental health and addictions services, and improve continuity of care.

In addition to direct patient care, Sinai Health psychiatrists support WAHA clinicians through consultations, collaborative care planning, and guidance for complex cases. This partnership continues to strengthen local capacity and improve access to culturally responsive mental health care closer to home.

Strengthening Wound Care to Prevent Lower-Limb Amputations

In January 2026, we received funding to strengthen wound care services and improve the prevention of diabetes- and circulation-related foot complications across the region.

Guided by the Ontario Framework for Lower-Limb Preservation, the initiative focuses on helping patients receive care earlier, improving coordination among healthcare providers, and supporting patients and families with the tools and knowledge needed to prevent serious complications.

People living with diabetes and peripheral vascular disease face a higher risk of developing wounds that can lead to infection, hospitalization, and, in some cases, lower-limb amputation. By identifying problems earlier and providing timely treatment, WAHA aims to reduce preventable amputations and improve health outcomes for community members.

The initiative also supports the development of staff expertise in skin and wound care. A group of WAHA staff have begun specialized training through Wounds Canada, including its Accredited Wound Care Champion Program and its Skin Health Program. Investment in staff training like this will strengthen specialized wound care services across our region, helping patients remain healthier, more mobile, and connected to their communities.



Our People

Joni Corston-Moore: Medical Radiation Technologist

Medical Radiation Technologist Joni Corston-Moore's career reflects the determination and commitment often seen among healthcare professionals serving northern communities.



After discovering an interest in diagnostic imaging, Joni pursued the education and training required to enter the highly competitive Medical Radiation Technology program. Her journey required perseverance, balancing academic demands and family responsibilities while remaining focused on her goal of returning home to work in our region.

Although she initially planned to spend only a few years in the North following graduation, the keen sense of community and connection to the region inspired her to stay. Today, Joni plays an important role in providing diagnostic imaging services and supporting patient care close to home.

Through compassionate care and meaningful patient interactions, she helps ensure community members have access to high-quality diagnostic services delivered by healthcare professionals who understand the region's unique needs.

Amberlyn Hutchings: Pursues a Career in Medical Imaging

After two years supporting WAHA's Communications Department, Amberlyn Hutchings is taking the next step in her career and education journey by pursuing a degree in Medical Radiation Technology at Cambrian College.



A graduate of Niagara College's Pre-Health Sciences program, Amberlyn worked diligently to gain admission to the competitive program at Cambrian while building valuable experience through her work at WAHA. Growing up in Moosonee, she witnessed the challenges northern communities face in accessing healthcare services and developed an appreciation for the important role diagnostic imaging plays in early diagnosis and treatment.

Following graduation, Amberlyn plans to return to WAHA as a certified X-ray Technologist, helping expand access to diagnostic imaging services closer to home. Her commitment reflects the importance of developing local healthcare professionals who understand the unique needs of northern communities and are dedicated to improving health outcomes across the region.

Lynne Innes: Recognized with King Charles III Coronation Medal



In May 2025, WAHA President and CEO Lynne Innes was awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal in recognition of her outstanding leadership and contributions to healthcare across the western James Bay and Hudson Bay coast communities.

Presented by Ontario Minister of Health Sylvia Jones, the honour recognizes Lynne's leadership in advancing major healthcare initiatives, including securing funding for WAHA's redevelopment project, one of the largest healthcare infrastructure investments in the region's history.

A proud member of Moose Cree First Nation, Lynne has dedicated her career to improving access to healthcare in the North. Under her leadership, WAHA has expanded access to diagnostic imaging, specialist services, and community-based care while leading one of Ontario's most ambitious rural healthcare redevelopment projects.

Presentation of the medal recognizes Canadians who have made significant contributions to their communities and country. Lynne's recognition reflects her ongoing commitment to strengthening healthcare services and improving health outcomes for future generations.

Brenda Louttit: Caring for her Home Community

For Brenda, becoming a Nurse Practitioner was never just about advancing her career—it was about returning home and giving back to her community.



Originally from Attawapiskat, Brenda spent many years working as a Registered Nurse at Weeneebayko General Hospital before returning to school to become a Nurse Practitioner. After gaining valuable experience in the Ottawa region, she returned home in October 2024 to join WAHA's Indigenous Primary Care Team.

Today, Brenda provides primary care services to community members in Attawapiskat, combining her clinical expertise with a deep understanding of the

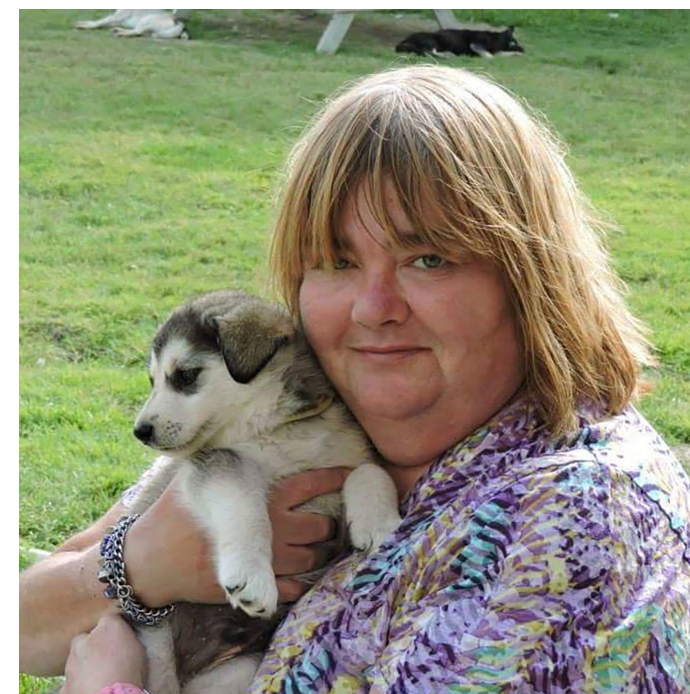
people, culture, and realities of life in the North.

As a fluent Cree speaker, Brenda can connect with patients in their own language—something that remains rare in healthcare. Her ability to communicate and build relationships helps create trust and supports culturally safe care for patients and families.

Having grown up in Attawapiskat, Brenda understands the healthcare challenges faced by remote and northern communities. Her lived experience allows her to advocate for patients while helping improve access to quality primary care close to home.

Brenda's journey reflects the importance of investing in Indigenous healthcare professionals who can bring their skills, knowledge, and experience back to the communities that helped shape them. Through her work, she is helping strengthen healthcare services and improve health outcomes for the people of Attawapiskat.

Melanie Phelps: A Lifetime of Caring, a Legacy of Service



After more than 41 years of service in the James Bay region, Melanie Phelps is retiring from a nursing career that has touched generations of families in Attawapiskat and beyond.

Melanie first arrived in Attawapiskat in November 1981 as a Registered Nursing Assistant (RNA), working at the original James Bay General Hospital. Over the years, she witnessed significant changes in healthcare, helping patients at both the old and new hospitals in Attawapiskat and later at both the old and new clinics in Moosonee.

Determined to continue growing professionally, Melanie returned to Brockville in 1988 to complete her Registered Nurse diploma before returning to Attawapiskat, where she spent most of her career. Throughout the years, she served in many roles, including Registered Nurse, Patient Care Coordinator, Director of Patient Care, Field Supervisor, Home Care Nurse, and researcher for a SickKids iron study.

A lifelong learner, Melanie earned diplomas in Health Administration, Aeromedical Transport, and Occupational Health Nursing, along with numerous advanced certifications. Despite her many accomplishments, the moments she treasures most are the obstetrical deliveries she performed or assisted with before midwifery services became available in the community.

Having spent two-thirds of her life in Attawapiskat, Melanie considers it home. She values the friendships she has built, the close-knit nature of the community, and the many people whose lives have become intertwined with hers over the decades.

As she begins retirement, Melanie looks forward to spending time with her family, tending to her garden, and enjoying life at a slower pace. Yet she hopes her connection to WAHA is not ending.

"It's not goodbye," she says. "It's see you later."

Her advice to new nurses is simple: be prepared to make a difference, learn about the culture, and embrace the unique experience of nursing in the North. "It's not the big city," she says. "It's a whole new way of nursing."

WAHA thanks Melanie for her extraordinary dedication, compassion, and service to the people of Attawapiskat and the western James Bay Region.



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