



# BIKIIWEWINIG NINDAWAASHISHIIMINAANAK

BRINGING OUR CHILDREN HOME INITIATIVE

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### MESSAGE

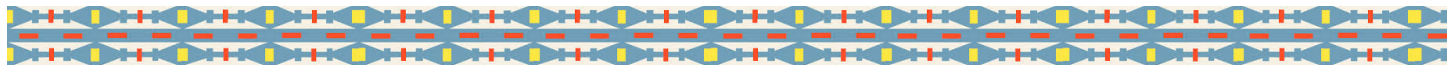
## Message from Ogiimaakaan

The mandate of BOCHI is a challenging one. It is being met and carried out by strong community leadership of Lac Seul First Nation, representing all thirty-three (33) Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority communities and partner organizations. The task undertaken will bring closure for most Survivors and descendants; the missing children were our nephews and nieces.

Chief Russell Wesley representing Cat Lake First Nation, is a member of our Survivors Working Circle. A member of the Oombash family, he is lost and without identity, having lost his childhood at Pelican Lake Indian Residential School. He has spent his entire lifetime lost and not belonging in either family grouping, and is disconnected from his community. He is the nephew of Charles and Thomas Oombash who disappeared from Pelican Lake in October 1955 and never heard from since. Chief Wesley has been seeking closure since 2013 when he and the Oombash family began the search to return them home. Just recently, he has found a home and is in the long process of finding himself.



Chief Russel Wesley of Cat Lake First Nation



## Leonard Sky

A member from our Survivor's Working Circle from Eagle Lake First Nation has passed on and began his journey onto the Spirit world on Saturday, October 15, 2022. His contribution will be remembered as an intelligent, kind, and the passion he carried to see our missing children are brought home. We won't forget you. We say Miigwetch for his input at the Survivors Working Circle, ideas on Protocols and his thoughts on bringing the Traditional Drum in sessions.



# Affirmation of Relationship Signing Ceremony

The Survivors Working Circle of Bikiiwewinig Nindawaashishiiminaanak Initiative led by Lac Seul First Nation met for the fourth time in Thunder Bay from October 18th to 20th. As part of the three-day gathering, an event was held to sign Memorandums of Understanding which represents the important work on the path to reconciliation. The first Memorandum is between the community partners: Lac Seul First Nation (LSFN), Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA), and Northern Nishnawbe Education Council (NNEC) to ensure the long-term provision of support needed for the Survivors, their families, and communities is available to uncover the truth and create a healing path so that we can Bring Our Children Home. Chief Bull, said in his opening speech that “decades’ worth of



trauma cannot be overcome in a few years,” and this memorandum declares the commitment of the partners to work together now, and long into the future. It was signed by Chief Clifford Bull (LSFN), Norma Kejick (NNEC), and Howard Meshake (SLFNHA).

The Second Memorandum is a Reaffirmation of Relationship with the Ontario and Canadian Governments. This Memorandum strengthens the ongoing relationship between the Provincial and Federal Governments and the Initiative, demonstrating the commitment towards the healing journey that has been commenced by the Initiative. Unfortunately, the signing Ministers were unable to attend, and the signing of the Reaffirmation of Relationship is scheduled for March 2023.



Although the signatory officials could not attend, Minister Michael A. Tibollo, and MPP Sol Mamakwa were in attendance and spoke at the event. Minister Tibollo emphasized the government’s work to commit significant resources to ensure the needs of the Survivors are met. He spoke about his work with people with trauma during his academic and professional pursuits in life, and the need for proper healing supports and care. Sol Mamakwa also spoke at the event, and expressed to the need for change and reconciliation and acknowledged the hard work being done by Survivors.

## Bill 7 “More Beds, Better Care Act, 2022”

The Survivors Working Group crafted a letter to be sent to the Provincial and Federal governments expressing their concerns with Bill 7 “More Beds, Better Care Act, 2022”, which seeks to amend the Fixing Long Term Care Act, 2021. The primary concern raised in their letter relates to the proposed changes to long-term care, which seeks to remove the Survivors once again from their communities. The letter expressed the Survivors’ voice on wanting to be in their own lands and with their families and communities. This ensures proper healing takes place which is important in this path to reconciliation.

The Initiative will continue to support the Survivors and for ongoing mental health support in the community which is laid out in SLFNHA Resolution #22-30. The Initiative is thus advocating for the government to work in collaboration with the Survivors and the communities on the care being provided so that Bikiiwewinig Nindawaashishiiminaanak Initiative can successfully Bring Our Children Home and promote healing to build resilient communities.



# Mental Health Support

As I listen to the survivors of the residential institutions tell their truths about the trauma and pain they experienced as children in the residential institutions I think about the 30 or so interviews I conducted with Survivors to prepare them for their adjudication hearings as part of the Independent Assessment Process and to support them in accessing “healing and reconciliation” funds. The adjudication process itself retriggered their childhood trauma by forcing a reliving of the experiences that had often sent their lives off on a trajectory of pain and attempts to escape the pain. Their “inner children” suffered-reflecting their loss of childhood happiness and trust - their parents were not there to protect and nurture them -and their adult trauma reflected feelings of childhood abandonment and loss of attachment. The Bringing Our Children Home Initiative provides an opportunity for the Survivors to understand their childhood trauma that originated in the institutions while empowering them to heal their “inner children” while directing the search for their peers who never made it home. The Initiative mental health team facilitates the emotional safety of Survivors throughout the Survivors working group meetings and will provide support throughout community engagements as well. The Initiative mental health team telephone # is 807 738 1084.

- Dr. Peter Hettinga  
Registered Psychotherapist



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Initiative Timeline

#### Upcoming Events

Jan 2023 – Sept 2023

Partner Community Meetings with Chief and Council - to begin Jan 2023

Community Engagements - to begin Jan 2023

Mapping Interviews - begin Jan 2023 - end March 2023

Survivors Working Circle #5 – March 2023

## CONTACT

A phone line was established for all Survivors of Pelican Lake Indian Residential School to share their stories, records and information.

**807-738-3282**

Please call the National Residential School Crisis Line at **1-866-925-4419** if you or someone you know is feeling distressed.



# Survivors Circle Gathering in Thunder Bay, ON October 18-20, 2022



Thank you to all of those who attended the October 18-20, 2022 Bringing Our Children Home Survivor Circle Gathering, a special thank you to the Survivors who came out to tell their stories.