



Reflections From The Editor



There is something about the 401 that makes you miss the 11 almost immediately!

Dear readers,

Last week, My wife gave me a little break from routine. We packed our bags, grabbed some essentials, and headed south to London, Ontario.

Sometimes you need to leave home for a minute to understand what home really means.

Our destination was the Grand Theatre.

If you’ve never been, it’s a gem.

Old-world charm. Warm lights. The kind of place that makes you sit up a little straighter in your seat.

We were there to see Come From Away, and from the first moments, I was completely into it.

You likely know the story.

A small town in Newfoundland opens its arms to thousands of stranded strangers and somehow turns a global tragedy into a lesson in kindness, humour, and care.

Watching it from that darkened theatre seat, I felt that deep, sudden ache that comes when something onstage feels close to your own life. Not because the stories were the same, but because the spirit was familiar.

I remember having a serious conversation with my dad the day the world stopped. We lived under the flightpath for the Hamilton Airport at the time. I remember watching the planes land and the news from the bar at Mohawk College where I was a student. My fear was for my young children who were not going to grow up in a world so different

from the one I knew.

That instinct to make room.

That habit of showing up.

That way of turning hardship into warmth.

It reminded me so much of the North.

Then, after the standing ovation, we stepped out onto the streets of London where just hours earlier the first real summer storm of the season had hit.

The air had been building toward it all day. Thick. Heavy. Restless.

Then the sky cracked open.

Rain hammered the pavement.

Cars hissed through the streets.

People ran for awnings and doorways.

In the aftermath of the storm and reletive after the emotional show we walked along the street and watched the world go by.

It was beautiful in its own way, but it felt different from home.

Southern storms arrive with drama.

Northern storms feel personal.

At home, you notice the shift before the first drop falls. The wind moves through the trees differently. The lake changes colour. The air sharpens. And when the storm finally comes, you don’t just watch it. You live inside it.

You check the yard. You check on your neighbour.

You make sure everything and everyone is alright.

Somewhere on the drive back, crossing north again, I felt the whole pace of my body change. The air got cooler. The landscape opened up in that familiar way.

The roads felt less frantic. I could breathe deeper.

That’s the strange and lovely thing about leaving.

You can enjoy the trip.

You can love the theatre.

You can stand in the middle of a summer down-pour and let it remind you that the season is turning.

But coming home to the North is its own kind of relief.

Its own kind of grounding.

Its own kind of love.

Maybe that’s because home up here is more than a place. It’s a rhythm. It’s the way the trees lean over the highway. It’s the smell after rain. It’s the quiet that never really feels empty. It’s knowing that beauty here doesn’t ask for attention. It just exists, steady and certain.

That trip south gave me a lot to think about.

About hospitality.

About weather.

About how a story set in Newfoundland could stir up such strong feelings about Northern Ontario.

About how easy it is to forget what’s special about home when you’re moving through it every day.

And maybe that’s what I wanted to share with you this month.

Not a grand lesson.

Not a dramatic revelation.
Just this:

Sometimes you have to go the long way to remember why coming back matters.

Thanks for reading.

Thanks for being here.

And if you’ve been away lately, I hope coming home gave you that same little catch in your chest. There’s nothing quite like the North.

Warmly,

Karrie O’Connor
Editor, Northern Threads Magazine
And Northerner at Heart



Welcome to Northern Threads Magazine

Our Northern Stories Woven Together

Est. 2025

In the Loop: Northern Ontario News Features

Shifting Foundations: Understanding the Canadore College Parry Sound Closure

by KARRIE O’CONNOR

May is usually the month where everything in Northern Ontario finally starts to feel alive. The ice is a distant memory, the blackflies haven't reached their full "villain arc" yet, and the smell of pine is practically intoxicating. But this year, for the West Parry Sound district, there's a bit of a chill in the air that has nothing to do with the Great Lakes breeze.

The news broke recently that Canadore College is officially pulling the plug on its Parry Sound campus. For a town that prides itself on being the gateway to the North, losing a post-secondary pillar feels like losing a piece of its modern identity. It's a heavy hit, and honestly, it's one that's left a lot of us wondering: what happens to the "threads" of a community when the local college packs its bags?

At Northern Threads, we're all about the people, the places, and the shifts that define our region. Let's dive into why this is happening, what it means for the students, and how the community is pushing back.

The Math Behind the Move: Dollars and Decimals

Let's get the uncomfortable stuff out of the way first. Why is this happening? If you guessed "money and math," you win a metaphorical butter tart.

Canadore College leadership pointed to two main culprits: plummeting enrollment and a financial landscape that's getting harder to navigate by the day. It's no secret that the 2020s have been a wild ride for education. Between the shift to remote learning and the changing demographics of Northern Ontario, smaller satellite campuses have been under the microscope for a while.

In Parry Sound, the numbers just weren't adding up. When you have a beautiful facility but not enough boots in the hallways, the "per-student" cost of keeping the lights on starts to look like a mountain that's impossible to climb. It's a cold, corporate reality, but for a college trying to stay afloat in a competitive provincial market, it was a decision they claim was inevitable.

The Human Element: What About the Students?

It's easy to talk about "enrollment trends" and "budgetary pivots," but it's a lot harder to look a first-year student in the eye and tell them their campus is closing.

If you're currently enrolled at the Parry Sound campus, don't panic just yet. Canadore has been very vocal about one thing: they aren't pulling the rug out from under the people already in the building. There is a firm commitment to a "teach-out" plan. This means if you're in the middle of your program, the college is promising to ensure you can cross that finish line and get your credentials without having to move your entire life to North Bay or West Nipissing.

That's a small comfort, but it's a vital one. The college is working on individualized plans for current students to ensure their academic journey doesn't hit a dead end. But let's be real: the "college experience" is about more than just the credits. It's about the local study groups, the quick coffee runs in town, and the feeling that your education is rooted in your home. That's the part that's harder to replace with a Zoom link or a commute up the 400.

The Local Blowback: MPP and Union Reactions

You can't close a campus in the North without making some waves, and the political response has been swift.

Local leadership, including the MPP, has voiced significant disappointment. There's a feeling that the North keeps getting asked to do more with less. When a campus closes, it's not just a school leaving; it's a talent pipeline being cut. How do we keep our young people in Parry Sound if we don't give them a place to learn? It's a question that's being shouted in community halls and shared across social media.

The union representing the staff hasn't been quiet either. They've highlighted the impact on facul-

ty and support staff who are the backbone of the institution. These aren't just employees; they are neighbors, volunteers, and local consumers. The ripple effect of these job losses or transfers will be felt at the grocery store, the gas station, and the local arts scene.

The "Great Restructuring" of Ontario Colleges

To understand why Canadore is making this move, we have to look at the bigger picture. This isn't just a "Canadore problem." Across Ontario, colleges are going through a massive period of restructuring.

The provincial government has been pushing for "efficiency" and "sustainability" for years. For many colleges, this has meant centralizing services and focusing on "hubs" rather than maintaining smaller, rural campuses. While this looks great on a spreadsheet in Toronto, it feels like a withdrawal of services to those of us living north of the GTA.

We're seeing a shift where technical trades and specialized programs are being consolidated. It's part of a contemporary trend toward massive, multi-purpose campuses that can offer high-tech labs and diverse social scenes. Unfortunately, the trade-off is often the accessibility that rural campuses provide.

The Community Sentiment: Witty Grit and Northern Resiliency

If you've ever spent a winter in Parry Sound, you know the people there are made of tough stuff. The sentiment on the ground is a mix of frustration and a "find a way" attitude.

The town isn't just taking this lying down. There are conversations happening right now about how to repurpose the space, how to partner with other institutions, or how to lean into private-sector training. The "Northern Thread" doesn't snap that easily.

"We've survived crazier things than a college moving its mailbox," one local business owner told us. And they're right. But that doesn't mean it doesn't sting. The loss of the campus is a reminder that we have to be the biggest advocates for our *(Con't On Page 3)*



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own growth. We can't wait for provincial institutions to decide we're "worth the cost."

What's Next for the Parry Sound Campus?

As the May flowers start to pop up around the Canadore sign on Joseph Street, the future remains a bit blurry. The college will likely look to divest from the physical property once the final students graduate.

Could it become a community hub? An innovation center for local startups? A boutique housing development? The possibilities are there, but they require vision and: let's be honest: some serious funding.

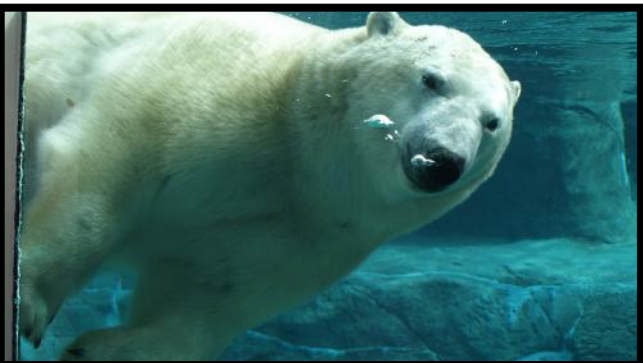
For now, the focus is on the transition. If you're a student, stay in close contact with your advisors. If you're a community member, keep the pressure on our provincial reps to ensure that post-secondary access doesn't become a luxury only available to those in the big cities.

Why This Matters to Northern Threads

You might be wondering why a magazine that usually talks about lifestyle and contemporary culture is diving so deep into college boardrooms. It's simple: our lifestyle is built on our community's strength.

Education is the thread that weaves through everything we do. It's what brings new perspectives to our towns, what keeps our local economy sharp, and what gives the next generation a reason to stay. When that thread is pulled, the whole fabric feels a little thinner.

We believe in a Northern Ontario that is vibrant, educated, and self-sustaining. We believe that Parry Sound deserves a seat at the table, not just a view from the window.



A polar bear says hello from Cochrane Ontario!

Lake Life Redefined: Contemporary Lifestyle Tips for Your First Weekend at the Cabin

by KARRIE O'CONNOR

It's finally happening! The ice has vanished from the shores of Lake Superior, the French River is flowing fast, and that distinctive scent of damp pine and fresh possibilities is hanging heavy in the air.

Welcome to the first cabin weekend of 2026.

If you're anything like us at Northern Threads Magazine, you've been staring at your calendar since March. You've been dreaming of that first morning coffee on the dock. But this year, we aren't just "opening the camp." We are redefining what it means to live the lake life.

Forget the dusty flannels of decades past and the mountain of plastic water bottles. We're moving toward a contemporary, minimalist, and deeply intentional way of experiencing Northern Ontario.

Are you ready to elevate your weekend? Let's dive in!

The Minimalist Pack: Style Meets Functionality

Packing for a weekend in the North is notoriously tricky. One minute it's 22°C and sunny; the next, a breeze off the water makes you feel like it's mid-November. The old way? Bringing your entire wardrobe "just in case."

The contemporary way? The Lake Life Capsule Wardrobe.

Focus on high-quality basics that play well together. Think of it as a uniform for the modern woodsman or woman.

The Essentials:

The Technical Knit: Swap the itchy wool for a moisture-wicking merino blend. It's breathable during the afternoon hike and warm enough for the sunset toast.

Monochrome Layers: Stick to a palette of forest green, slate grey, and cream. Everything matches,

which means you spend less time choosing outfits and more time by the water.

The Chic Beanie: Essential for "dock hair" and those chilly May nights.

One Pair of "Everything" Boots: A sleek, waterproof Chelsea boot takes you from the muddy trail to the casual dinner at the local brewery without missing a beat.

Keep it light. Keep it intentional. If you can't fit it in a single weekend bag, you're bringing too much!

Sustainable Cabin Care: Loving the Land That Hosts Us

We live in one of the most beautiful places on Earth. Our lakes are our lifeblood. This May, let's make sure our "opening" process doesn't leave a footprint.

The traditional way of cleaning the cabin often involves harsh chemicals that end up in the groundwater. It's time to edit your cleaning kit.

Eco-Friendly Opening Tips:

Biodegradable Everything: From dish soap to shampoo. If it's going down a drain at the cabin, it's likely heading toward the lake. Choose brands that are greywater-safe.

The Natural Scent: Ditch the synthetic air fresheners. Use cedar blocks or essential oil diffusers with peppermint and eucalyptus. *Bonus:* they help keep the early-season spiders away!

Septic Love: It isn't glamorous, but it's essential. Check your system early. Use septic-safe treatments to keep things running smoothly all summer.

Solar Accents: Replace old battery-powered flashlights with high-end solar lanterns. They look better on the deck and save on waste.

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The Digital Detox: Tech-Light, Vibe-Heavy

We get it. You want to post that “dock view” on your feed. But once that’s done? Put the phone in the drawer.

The modern cabin experience is about being present. It’s about the “un-hustle.”

Curate Your Soundscape:

Instead of scrolling, focus on sound. A contemporary cabin weekend needs a curated playlist that mirrors the slow pace of Northern life.

Morning: Ambient folk and soft acoustic. Think sounds that blend with the loons.

Afternoon: Up-tempo indie-soul for when you’re finally getting the boat in the water.

Evening: Minimalist jazz or just the crackle of the fire.

Slow-Living Activities:

What are you doing with all that extra time?

Analog Morning: Read a physical book. No Kindles, no tablets. Feel the paper.

Mindful Movement: Try yoga on the dock. There is no better studio than the wind off the Shield.

The Art of Observation: Grab a pair of binoculars. May is prime time for migratory birds returning to the North.

The Modern Pantry: Elevated Camp Classics

Hot dogs on a stick? They have their place. But the contemporary lake life calls for something a bit more sophisticated. We’re talking about “North-to-Table” dining.

Curated Sustenance:

The Local Board: Build a charcuterie board using only Northern Ontario ingredients. Local cheeses from the clay belt, honey from the Algoma region, and preserves from the berries we’ll be picking later this summer.

Natural Wines & Craft Spirits: Support

our local distillers and vintners. A chilled glass of something crisp feels much more “May 2026” than a case of generic lager.

The Mocktail Movement: With our focus on mental clarity and wellness this issue, why not try a botanical mocktail? Spruce tip syrup, sparkling water, and a twist of lemon. It’s the North in a glass.

Need more inspiration on who is doing great things in our region? Take a look at our spotlight section for features on local artisans.

Mental Clarity in the Wild

There is a reason we flock to the water the moment the snow melts. Northern Ontario isn’t just a place to live; it’s a place to heal.

As we navigate the stresses of 2026, the cabin serves as a sanctuary. The first weekend isn’t just about chores and cleaning the gutters. It’s about resetting your internal clock.

Take a moment. Stand on the rocks. Breathe in that cold, sharp air. That’s the feeling of your brain recalibrating. This is why we call the North home.

If you find yourself struggling with the transition into the season, remember that you aren’t alone. Our community is strong. Check out our about page to learn more about how we’re fostering connection across the region.

Your First Weekend Checklist:

1. Edit your bag. Bring half of what you think you need.
2. Swap the chemicals. Buy the eco-friendly soap today.
3. Charge the speaker, hide the phone. Set your “Out of Office” and mean it.
4. Support local. Stop at the farm stand on your way up. Breathe.
5. The lake isn’t going anywhere. Neither should you.

We want to see your redefined lake life! Tag us in your minimalist cabin setups and your “slow-living” moments.

ENJOY THE NORTH!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Cameco Blind River Charity Golf Tournament

Date: May 22, 2026
Location: Huron Pines Golf & Country Club, Blind River

BEV In-Depth Conference: Critical Minerals Value Chain

Date: May 28, 2026
Location: Cambrian College, Sudbury

The Arkells: Between Us Tour

Date: June 3, 2026
Location: GFL Memorial Gardens, Sault Ste. Marie

Armed Forces Aerobatics: Canadian SkyHawks Performance

Date: June 6, 2026
Location: Abitibi Golf Course, Iroquois Falls

Maamwi Kindaaswin Pow-Wow

Date: June 6–7, 2026
Location: Lee Park, North Bay

Stitches From The Heart Quilt Guild Summer Show

Date: June 6–7, 2026
Location: Soo Pee Wee Arena, Sault Ste. Marie

North Bay Summer Farmers’ Market

Date: June 6, 2026 (and every Saturday)
Location: Downtown North Bay

North Bay Poutine Feast

Date: June 11–14, 2026
Location: Lee Park, North Bay

Mattawa River Canoe Race

Date: June 13, 2026
Location: Olmsted Beach to Mattawa Island, North Bay/Mattawa

SSM Festival of Beer & Food Truck Festival

Date: June 13, 2026
Location: Downtown Plaza, Sault Ste. Marie

KACL Field of Dreams: Community Baseball Game

Date: May 30, 2026
Location: Kenora (Kenora Recreation Centre area)

Canadian Mining Expo (The Big Event)

Date: June 10, 2026
Location: McIntyre Community Centre, Timmins



Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews

Mind Over Mountains: Reimagining Mental Health Support in Northern Ontario

by KARRIE O’CONNOR

Let’s be real for a second, living in Northern Ontario is a vibe, but it’s not always a walk in the park (even if we have the best parks in the world).

Between the long winters, the isolation of our beautiful backroads, and the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” mentality we’ve all inherited, talking about mental health can sometimes feel like trying to start a snowmobile in -40 weather. It takes a lot of pulling, a bit of swearing, and sometimes you just need a neighbor to lend a hand.

That’s exactly what happened last week! On Thursday, May 7th, the Elks Lodge was absolutely buzzing. As part of CMHA North Bay and District’s Mental Health Education Week, nearly 100 people gathered to ditch the small talk and dive deep into what it actually means to stay well in the North.

And yes, this is an annual event, which means this wasn’t a one-off burst of good energy and coffee-fuelled community spirit. It’s a recurring reminder that CMHA North Bay and District keeps showing up, year after year, to make mental health conversations feel a whole lot more human.

It wasn’t just a meeting; it was a movement. And honestly? It was exactly what our community needed.

Loneliness: The Northern Shadow

We kicked things off with Michelle Deveau-Brock and Patricia Fontaine from the North Bay Regional Health Centre (NBRHC). They tackled a topic that hits home for many of us: *Loneliness and Connection*.

In a place where your nearest neighbor might be a twenty-minute drive away, loneliness isn’t just a feeling, it’s a health risk. Michelle and Patricia reminded us that you can be surrounded by people and still feel like you’re on an island.

The fix? Authentic connection. Not just a “double-double” through the drive-thru window, but real, messy, human interaction. They challenged us to look at how we’re checking in on each other. Are we actually listening, or just waiting for our

turn to speak?

People are the Medicine

If there was one quote that stuck to the ribs like a good poutine, it was from Dr. Sachhiko Nagasawa. Her presentation, *“People are the Medicine,”* flipped the script on traditional therapy.

While clinical support is vital, Dr. Nagasawa reminded us that our greatest healing resource is often sitting right next to us. Our friendships, our families, and our community networks are the frontline of mental health care.

When we support each other, we aren’t just being “nice”, we are literally providing the medicine that keeps our community whole. It’s about being “socially rich,” even if our bank accounts are feeling the Northern inflation. Dr. Nagasawa spoke eloquently about recognizing when we need to flip the script, admit our short comings and do better in order to show up for ourselves and others.

Growing Resilience (Literally)

Next up, Heather Quirt and Vanessa Hall from Amelia Rising took us back to the earth. They spoke about Creating a Community Garden, and no, it’s not just about growing the perfect heirloom tomato.

A community garden is a metaphor for mental health. You need good soil (a supportive environment), regular watering (self-care), and you definitely need to pull the weeds (negative influences).

More importantly, it’s a space where people who might otherwise stay indoors can come together with a common goal. There’s something deeply healing about getting your hands dirty and watching something grow from nothing. It reminds us that even after the harshest winter, things will bloom again.

Keeping the Kids Connected

We can’t talk about the future of the North without talking about our youth. Jennifer Moore and

Shannon Landry from HANDS brought the heat with their talk: *“From Referral to Relationship: Keeping Youth Connected to Care.”*

Navigating the mental health system for a child or teen shouldn’t feel like trying to find your way through a blizzard without a compass. Jennifer and Shannon emphasized that the “referral” is just the paperwork: the “relationship” is the life raft.

They’re working hard to make sure that once a kid asks for help, they don’t fall through the cracks. It’s about building a bridge from the clinic back to the classroom and the home.

The Power of Your Surroundings

Tawnia Healey and Tracey Hall from the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (NBPSD-HU) pivoted the conversation to *The Power of Relationships and Environments*.

Think about it: Does your home make you feel safe? Does your workplace make you feel valued? Does the walk down your street make you feel like you belong?

They pointed out that our mental health is a direct reflection of our environment. If we want a healthy North, we have to build healthy spaces. This means advocating for better parks, safer streets, and more inclusive community centers. Our surroundings aren’t just “background noise”: they are the foundation of our wellness.

Stronger Together: Work and Wellness

Let’s talk about the 9-to-5 (or the 7-to-7, if you’re in the trades). Tanner Jessup, Kayla Redwood, and Wendy St. John from YES Employment presented *“Stronger Together.”*

For many of us, our identity is tied to what we do. When work is stressful, life is stressful. When we’re unemployed, the mental toll is heavy. The team from YES Employment is proving that employment services aren’t just about resumes; they’re about confidence, purpose, and community integration.

They’re helping people realize that they don’t have to carry the weight of their career journey alone. There’s a whole team in your corner. *(Con’t On Page 7)*



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The Northern Chuckle

by GILLIAN HEBERT @StudioGillian
Artwork By Gillian Hebert
"Lost in translation"

Somewhere between learning the ropes at my new job and trying to seem at least mildly competent, I've also found myself brushing the dust off my high school French. Realizing just how rusty I am has been... humbling.

Now, I'm not saying I'm terrible at French. I can get by. I can greet people, ask basic questions, and generally piece together what I need to say. But what I can't always do, apparently, is trust my pronunciation.

Case in point: I recently went to say the word for "package." Simple enough, right? A harmless, everyday word. Except I managed to turn it into something that sounded a lot less workplace-appropriate and a lot more like I was trying to start a problem.

Nothing quite builds character like accidentally swearing in another language when you're just trying to do your job.

It was one of those moments where time slows down just enough for you to realize "oh no" before immediately moving on and hoping no one noticed (they super noticed).

So, lesson learned? Maybe I don't rely solely on confidence and vague memory when speaking another language. A quick pronunciation check to preserve both my small amount of dignity and my employment.

That being said, despite the occasional linguistic misfire, it's actually been really rewarding to use French more regularly again. There's something satisfying about pushing through the awkwardness, relearning what I've forgotten, and slowly getting more comfortable with it.

Even if it means a few accidental... detours in vocabulary along the way.



Exciting News! I will be drawing caricatures live at Lee Park, North Bay on Saturday July 18th from 10am - 5pm.

For more information, or if you have any general questions, please email them at enchantedfamilyfunfestnb@outlook.com or visit them on social media:
Instagram: [@enchantedfamilyfunfest.nb](https://www.instagram.com/enchantedfamilyfunfest.nb)
Facebook: [enchantedfamilyfunfest](https://www.facebook.com/enchantedfamilyfunfest)



Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews



Michelle Deveau-Brock and Patricia Fontaine present to the group.
Photo Credit: Karrie O'Connor

Connecting to the Spirit

Rounding out the day was Courtney Nelson from the Métis Nation of Ontario, speaking on *Connecting to Mental Wellness*.

Courtney brought a beautiful, holistic perspective to the event. In many Indigenous cultures, mental wellness isn't separate from physical, emotional, or spiritual health. It's all one circle.

She reminded us that connecting to our heritage, our land, and our ancestors is a powerful way to find balance. In a world that's constantly telling us to move faster, Courtney's message was a call to slow down and reconnect with the parts of ourselves that the modern world often overlooks.

Courtney tied it all together with a wonderful hands-on project where participants made faceless dolls in honor of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

Why This Matters for You

You might be reading this from your kitchen in Huntsville, a coffee shop in North Bay, or a job site in Mattawa. You might feel like you're doing just fine, or you might feel like you're barely treading water.

The takeaway from the Elks Lodge event is simple: You are not an island.

And CMHA North Bay and District isn't exactly standing still, either. Beyond hosting this annual



Corey Clouthier a Talking Together Facilitator with Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services was on-site talking about programs offered.
Photo Credit: Karrie O'Connor

event, the organization offers a lineup of programs that meet people where they're at. That includes Living Life to the Full, which gives people practical tools for handling stress and everyday challenges; Suicide Grief Support, which creates space for people carrying the kind of loss that doesn't fit into neat little sentences; and SafeTALK, which helps community members recognize when someone may be at risk and respond with confidence instead of panic.

Their work also stretches into housing and peer support. Addictions Supportive Housing (ASH) helps people stabilize with dignity, while the Peer Connections drop-in centre offers something many Northerners need just as much as formal care: a place to walk in, connect, and not have to explain everything from scratch.

They're also transitioning to a centralized campus model at 194 Main St. West, a move designed to streamline care and make services easier to access. In plain terms? Less running around, less guesswork, and more support in one place, which is how care should work in the first place.

Mental Health Education Week isn't just a box to tick on the calendar. It's a reminder that we are a "Threads" magazine for a reason: because we are all woven together. When one thread frays, the whole garment is weaker. When we support each other, we're indestructible.

Take the Next Step

Feeling inspired? Don't let that feeling fade like a summer sunset. Here's how you can get involved:



Dr. Nagasawa of Bay Psychology presents to spectators.
Photo Credit: Karrie O'Connor

1. Reach out: Call that friend you haven't spoken to in months. Don't text: call.
2. Volunteer: Look into community gardens or local youth programs. You have skills that someone else needs.
3. Educate yourself: Browse our spotlight section to read more stories about incredible Northerners making a difference.
4. Ask for help: If you're struggling, use the resources provided by the organizations mentioned above. They aren't just speakers on a stage; they are people who care.

If you have a story to share or want to tell us about a mental health hero in your town, contact us. We want to hear from you! Let's keep the conversation going. Not just this week, but every week. Because in Northern Ontario, we don't just survive the mountains: we climb them together. Stay strong, stay connected, and stay "North."



Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews

Summer’s Brief Glow: Two Iconic Northern Seasonal Staples

by KARRIE O’CONNOR

May in the North is a restless, beautiful thing! One minute you’re looking at the last stubborn patch of snow in the shade of the pines, and the next, the air smells like damp earth and possibility.

I recently took a trip down to Southern Ontario. I went to the Grand Theatre in London to see *Come From Away*. It’s a show about finding home in the middle of a storm, and honestly, it hit close to home. On the drive back, we witnessed our first real summer storm: the kind that turns the sky a bruised purple and makes the trees dance.

There’s something about leaving the North that makes you appreciate the return. As the Shield rock starts to hug the highway again, you realize that our summer isn’t just a season. It’s a high-speed, high-intensity glow.

Because our warm months are so brief, we don’t take them for granted! We have rituals. We have landmarks. We have those specific places that only exist for a few months but define our entire year.

Today, I want to talk about two of those staples. They are the gatekeepers of our Northern summer.

The Gateway: The French River Trading Post

If you’ve ever driven Highway 69, you know the feeling of anticipation as you approach Alban.



You’re scanning the horizon for a very specific sign.

The French River Trading Post isn’t just a stop; it’s a legend.

For 70 years, this spot has stood as the unofficial “Welcome Home” for anyone heading North and the final “See You Soon” for those heading South. It’s a massive piece of our regional history that started small in 1956 and grew into a sprawling destination.

What makes it so iconic?

First, it’s the “Hungry Bear.” You know the ones! The mascots that have appeared in thousands of family vacation photos over the decades. Seeing those bears is a signal to your brain: You have arrived. You are officially in the North now.

Then, there’s the Ice Dream Den.

We all have that one flavor we wait for all winter. Whether you’re a die-hard Moose Tracks fan or you go for something bright and neon, that first scoop of the season is a spiritual experience. Standing on the wooden porch, feeling the Northern breeze, and racing to finish your cone before it melts down your arm: that is the essence of a Northern summer.

The Trading Post represents the rhythm of the highway. It’s about the journey as much as the destination. It’s where you buy your first pair of real moccasins, grab a slab of maple fudge for the road, and stretch your legs on the rugged Canadian Shield.

It’s a business that understands the nostalgia of the road trip. They’ve kept that classic, welcoming vibe alive for seven decades. In a world that’s constantly changing, the Trading Post is a North Star.

The Heartbeat of the Harvest: Belluz Farm

While the Trading Post guards the highway, Belluz Farm in Thunder Bay guards the soil.

If you live in the Northwest, the name “Belluz” is



synonymous with summer. For over 50 years, this farm has been a cornerstone of the Thunder Bay community.

In the North, our growing season is a sprint, not a marathon. We have a window of time that is incredibly vibrant but also incredibly fleeting. Belluz Farm represents the absolute best of that window.

The ritual of “Pick-Your-Own” strawberries is a rite of passage for kids and adults alike. There is nothing: and I mean nothing: that tastes like a Northern-grown strawberry. They are smaller, sweeter, and redder than anything you’ll find in a grocery store in February.

When you’re out in those fields, sun on your back, knees in the dirt, you feel connected to the land in a way that’s hard to describe. It’s about more than just fruit. It’s about the legacy of a family that has committed half a century to feeding their neighbors.

The Belluz family has seen every kind of weather the North can throw at them. They’ve navigated late frosts and early snows. Their 50-year history is a testament to Northern resilience.

They remind us that summer is something to be harvested and savored. When the strawberry season ends, it’s a bit of a heartbreak, but it makes the *(Con’t On Page 9)*



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next year’s first berry taste that much better. It’s that cycle of waiting and rewarding that defines life up here.

Why We Hold On So Tight

Why are these seasonal businesses so important to us?

Because in Northern Ontario, we live by the light. When the sun stays up until 10:00 PM and the lakes finally lose their chill, we feel a collective surge of energy. We know it won’t last forever. We know the “brief glow” will eventually give way to the long blue shadows of winter.

That’s why we pull over for the ice cream.

That’s why we spend a Saturday morning picking berries until our fingers are stained red.

That’s why we celebrate the 70th anniversary of a trading post or the 50th year of a family farm.

These places are the threads that hold our summers together. They are the landmarks of our memories.

When I was driving back from Southern Ontario, watching that storm roll over the highway, I realized that I didn’t mind the rain. In the North, even the storms feel like they belong to us. The thunder over the Boreal forest sounds different than it does in the city. It’s louder, deeper, and more raw.

Coming home to the North is always a relief. It’s a return to a place where seasons actually mean something.

We don’t just “have” summer here. We earn it.

Make Your Summer Count

As we head into the heart of the season, I encourage you to visit these staples.

Take the long way home.

Stop for the fudge.

Take the photo with the bear.

Fill a basket with berries.

Support the local families who make our summers

possible.

Our businesses are the heartbeat of our communities. Whether they’ve been around for 70 years or 7 months, they deserve our love.

We are here to tell the stories of the North. Your stories.

The stories of the highway, the farm, and the brief, beautiful glow of a Northern summer.

If you have a favorite seasonal spot we missed, we want to hear about it!

Drop us a line through our email: info@northern-threadsmagazine.com

Enjoy the sun while it’s here, friends. It’s going to be a beautiful season!

Beyond the Smoke: A Message of Strength for Marie-Josée Boucher
by KARRIE O’CONNOR

Hearts are heavy in Hearst this month.

If you’ve spent any time in our community, you know the name Marie-Josée Boucher. You know her smile. You know her work ethic. And you definitely know the landmark building at 1007 Front Street.

Two weeks ago, the unthinkable happened. On a Sunday evening in May 2026, at around 6:30 PM, a devastating fire broke out at the home of Boucher Plumbing & Heating and Décor-Ific. Over the course of more than ten hours, five generations of history and decades of hard work were transformed into smoke and ash.

It’s the kind of news that stops you in your tracks. It’s the kind of loss that feels personal to everyone who has ever walked through those doors or called the Boucher team for help.

But if there is one thing we know about Marie-Josée, it’s this: she is built of stronger stuff than brick and mortar. Today, we’re looking back at the legacy she built, acknowledging the pain of this moment, and celebrating a career that has defined what it means to be a leader in Northern Ontario.



A Legacy Five Generations Deep

When we featured Marie-Josée and her business in the very first issue of Northern Threads Magazine, we were struck by the sheer weight of the history behind those walls. Boucher Plumbing & Heating wasn’t just a business. It was a family heartbeat.

Think about that for a second. Five generations.

That legacy reaches back to her great-grandfather’s plumbing business in the 1930s. And in 1971, her mother brought the Benjamin Moore franchise to Hearst, adding another layer to a family story rooted in service, craftsmanship, and home.

That means for over a century, the Boucher family has been keeping Hearst warm, keeping the water running, and building the literal foundation of our town. 1007 Front Street stood as a testament to that endurance.

Inside, Décor-Ific brought a sense of style and home to our rugged Northern landscape. It was where people went to dream about their future homes, pick out the perfect finishes, and get expert advice from a woman who knew the industry inside and out. It also carried those deeper roots forward, connecting one generation’s trade to another generation’s artistry.

The Irony and the Heartbreak



Welcome to Northern Threads Magazine

Our Northern Stories Woven Together

Est. 2025

Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews

There is a cruel irony that isn’t lost on any of us. Marie-Josée Boucher has spent the better part of 41 years fighting fires. As the Fire Chief in Hearst, she has been the person we look to when the sirens wail.

She has spent her life running toward the flames to save the homes and businesses of her neighbors. And through all of it, art was often her bubble. Her refuge. A creative space she could return to after the pressure, the calls, the heaviness of the job.

To see her own legacy succumb to the very element she spent her life battling is a weight most of us can’t imagine.

But even as the smoke hung over Front Street two weeks ago, the community saw the same Marie-Josée we’ve always known. Resilient. Calm. Thinking of others even in the face of her own profound loss.

More Than 40 Years of Service

This fire comes at a pivotal moment in Marie-Josée’s life.

We can officially share that Marie-Josée is retiring as the Fire Chief of Hearst.

Forty-one years. Let that sink in.

In a field that has historically been dominated by men, Marie-Josée carved out a path for every woman in Northern Ontario who dreamed of serving their community in the line of fire.

She proved that leadership isn’t about being the loudest person in the room: it’s about being the most reliable. It’s about the 3:00 AM wake-up calls in minus-forty-degree weather. It’s about the courage to lead a team into the unknown.

Her career is a masterclass in dedication. And woven quietly through it all was art, waiting for her at the edges of long days and hard calls, giving her somewhere soft to land. While we are heartbroken for the loss of her physical business, we are standing in awe of the career she is completing.

Tatchy: Part of a Long Legacy of Service

Tatchy was not a current shop dog, but an important part of Marie-Josée’s story. Her Dalmatian, Tatchy, worked alongside her

on school fire prevention campaigns back in the 1990s, helping her connect with children and families in a warm, memorable way. He passed away in 1994, but he remains part of the long-standing legacy of service that Marie-Josée built over the years.

That history matters here. It speaks to the kind of leader she has always been: someone who understood that public service wasn’t only about emergency calls and long nights, but also about education, trust, and showing up for her community in every season of life.

As Marie-Josée moves from business owner and Fire Chief into a well-earned retirement, memories like Tatchiys’ remind us that her impact was never limited to one building or one title. It has lived for decades in the people she helped, taught, and protected.

What happens now?

When a landmark disappears, it leaves a hole in the skyline. But a business is not just a building. A legacy is not just inventory.

The spirit of Boucher Plumbing & Heating and Décor-Ific lives on in every home in Hearst that they helped build. It lives on in the apprentices Marie-Josée mentored and the staff she treated like family.

We’ve seen the messages of support pouring in on social media. We’ve seen neighbors asking how they can help. This is the North at its best. We take care of our own.

If you want to reach out or share your own memories of the shop, you can always connect with us through email,info@northernthreadsmagazine.ca. We’d love to hear your stories about how Marie-Josée or her family business impacted your life.

Coming Soon: A Deep Dive into a Legend

While this post is a heavy one, we want you to know that the story doesn’t end here.

In our very next issue, Northern Threads Magazine will be featuring a full-length tribute to Marie-Josée Boucher’s incredible career and talking to her about what is next. Does she rebuild, truly retire or move on? Stay tuned to find out.

We’re going to dive deep into: Her early days as a pioneer for women in the fire

service. The challenges of balancing a multi-generational family business with public service. The lessons she’s learned about resilience over 40 years. Exclusive photos and stories from her time as Fire Chief.

It’s going to be a celebration of a woman who has given everything to Hearst. You won’t want to miss it.

Why This Matters to Us

She represents the grit, the heart, and the “never-give-up” attitude that defines us. The fire may have taken the building at 1007 Front Street, but it cannot touch the 40 years of service or the 100+ years of family history.

Marie-Josée, if you’re reading this: Hearst is with you. We are so proud of everything you’ve accomplished, and we are standing with you as you navigate this next chapter.

Final Thoughts

Life in the North isn’t always easy. We deal with the elements, we deal with isolation, and sometimes, we deal with profound loss.

But we also deal with incredible strength. Marie-Josée Boucher has spent her life being the strength for others. Now, it’s our turn to be the strength for her.

As the smoke clears from Front Street, we see a woman who is ready for a well-deserved retirement, a woman who is loved by her community, and a woman whose legacy is only just beginning its next phase.

And maybe this is the moment for all of us to take her advice to heart: hurry up, because fifty comes fast. If you’ve been meaning to support her, cheer her on, commission something beautiful, or simply remind her that her creative chapter matters too, this is your moment.

Beyond the smoke, there is still a wide, open space of life waiting for you, Marie-Josée. In true Invisible Threads fashion, this feels bigger than one building and bigger than one job title. It feels like the story of a woman who carried duty in one hand and art in the other, and who now deserves the chance to let that creative side breathe fully. We can’t wait to see what you do next.

We are here for you!



Frequency ‘X’

(launching May 2026)

This Story Needs to be Told: Tartan Theatre’s Piece by Piece

By HAVEN HOWARD



PHOTO CREDIT: Ms. Allison Green

March 10th, 2026. Stage manager Bailey Hunter lowers the house lights in Nipissing University’s theatre. She is with sound designer & operator Jaydenn Robinson and lighting designer & operator Holden Howard, as well as a cameraman representing Nipissing University’s Rare Dementia Support Canada, in the booth, where all the technical operations of a performance occur. Bailey calls the first two cues of the show, filling the space with music, and illuminating the actors. Piece by Piece has just begun for the very first time. And as the actors begin to speak, the importance of the show reveals itself. This story needs to be told.

In reality, the show didn’t just start there. The process of creating and sculpting the show into what it needed to be started last spring, when Almaguin Highlands Secondary School’s drama teacher and theatre director Ms. Allison Green was approached by RDS Canada. RDS Canada is an organization that provides support and resources for people living with or affected by rare dementia. They asked Allison if she was interested in writing a script about the struggles of rare dementia, and the community one finds within it. She said yes, and the script was ready for November, when rehearsals began.

RDS Canada worked closely with both Alison, the writer, and the cast to ensure accuracy and provide lived experience and professional input. The roles of adults with rare dementia and their children, loved ones, and peers were not

easy for the cast of high schoolers to portray, and representatives from RDS Canada spoke directly to the cast and crew to ensure these characters and this show would be represented in a respectful and real way.

After about 4 months, the show was ready for Nipissing University & RDS Canada’s Living Stories event on March 10th. This event consisted of public and one-on-one conversations with neuroscientists, people living with rare dementia, and their family members, an art installation from St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School students, and showcases from professionals. The night finished off with the performance of Piece by Piece, which had never yet been performed to the public.



PHOTO CREDIT: Ms. Allison Green

Piece By Piece tells the story of two adults with rare dementia: Amanda, played by Haven Howard, and Robert, played by Eric Andrews. The show also follows Amanda’s son Jordan, played by Nate Darasch, and Robert’s son Gabe, played by Jacob Jivcoff. Jordan and Gabe connect through a support group, and navigate their lives with their parents and peers, helping each other cope. Piece by Piece shows what living with rare dementia and supporting family members with it looks like and aims to leave the audience with a message of hope.

The audience of students, artists, those living with rare dementia and their loved ones, researchers, and community members was touched by the performance, which was live streamed to RDS members across Canada. Over the next week, Nipissing University and RDS Canada received many messages from the community, expressing the importance of the show and what it meant to them.

Almaguin’s Tartan Theatre accomplished what they set out to do: tell a story that needs to be told. But even when the lights went down on the stage, and the theatre was empty, the work continued. The cast and crew returned to rehearsals starting the very next day, beginning the building of a new set. Tartan Theatre had entered Piece by Piece into the National Theatre School’s Dramafest, which was holding their Northern Ontario Regional Festival from April 23rd-25th. To meet regulations on set-up and take down time, the cast and crew had to leave the original wooden attic, con-



PHOTO CREDIT: Ms. Allison Green

structed by Almaguin Highlands woodshop students, at home and travel to Chippewa Secondary School for the regional festival with a makeshift fabric attic.

With the show even more polished than before, Tartan Theatre took the stage on April 25th, performing alongside West Ferris Secondary School, Huntsville High School, and Chippewa Secondary School. Again, the audience of students, teachers, and community members were deeply moved by the performance, and the festival’s adjudicator, Mr. Rod Carley, awarded Almaguin 4 awards. An award of Excellence in Acting in a Lead Role was given to Nate Darasch, an award of Distinctive Merit for Stage Presence was given to Haven Howard, the Stage Management Award was given to Bailey Hunter, and the Spirit of Theatre Award was given to the entire cast and crew.

The competition was over, but Tartan Theatre still had one final performance. Piece by Piece held its closing night in Almaguin’s very own cafetorium on May 1st, implementing the constructive criticism Mr. Rod Carley provided the cast & crew after their April 25th performance. Once again, the viewers of this “community performance” were deeply touched and expressed their love for the story. This final performance was also emotional for the cast and crew, knowing how important the show had been to the audience, and how important it had become to everyone involved.

Now, the attic is disassembled; the props and costumes tucked away. Everything is neatly

folded and returned to where it belongs, and the stage is empty. Even though the physical evidence of the show is gone, the show itself is not gone. The importance of it, what it means to people, lives within those who supported it, and those who worked on it. Piece by Piece was a story that needed to be told, and it will not be forgotten.

An Introduction To the Youth Who Are Frequency X
By Karrie O’Connor



Welcome back to the Northern Threads Magazine!

We are beyond excited to grow our team and bring you fresh, local voices from right here in our backyard.

Today is a big day! We are officially introducing you to one of the newest mem-

bers of our Frequency X writing team. Everyone, please give a massive Northern welcome to Haven Howard!

Haven isn’t just another writer. She represents the energy, the creativity, and the rugged spirit of the next generation living in Northern Ontario. If you’ve been looking for a reason to get excited about the future of storytelling in our region, Haven is it!

Who is Haven Howard?

Haven is currently a Grade 11 student at Almaguin Highlands Secondary School. If you know the Almaguin area, you know it’s a place where the trees are tall, the lakes are deep, and the community is tight-knit. It’s the kind of place that stays with you, and Haven carries that local pride into everything she does.

Being in Grade 11 is a whirlwind. You’re right in the middle of that transition from being a kid to figure out who you want to be as an adult. For Haven, that journey involves a whole lot of creativity and a deep love for the land we call home.

A Flare for the Dramatic

One of the first things you should know about Haven is her passion for drama. In Northern Ontario, we have a rich history of storytelling. Whether it’s around a campfire or on a high school stage, we love a good narrative. Haven is right at home in the spotlight.

Drama isn’t just about acting for her. It’s about expression. It’s about understanding different perspectives and bringing characters to life. We think this background is exactly why her writing for Frequency X is going to be so engaging!

She knows how to set a scene, capture a mood, and keep you hooked from the first sentence to the last. Whether she’s writing about local issues or personal experiences, expect a little bit of that theatrical magic to shine through.

Horses and the Great Outdoors

When she’s not at school or practicing her lines, you can usually find Haven outdoors. Living in Northern Ontario means the wilderness is our playground, and Haven takes full advantage of it. She has a deep connection with horses. There is something uniquely “Northern” about the bond between a rider and their horse, especially when you’re navigating the beautiful trails of the Almaguin Highlands.



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Horses require patience, strength, and a lot of heart. These are qualities Haven brings to her writing as well.

But her love for the outdoors doesn’t stop at the stables! Haven is a true fan of the great outdoors. Whether it’s hiking through the bush or just breathing in that crisp, pine-scented air, she finds her inspiration in the natural world.

Life on the Water: Paddle Boarding

Speaking of the outdoors, we have to talk about Haven’s favorite way to spend a summer afternoon: paddle boarding. Is there anything more peaceful than being out on a glassy lake in the middle of June?

In Northern Ontario, our lakes are our lifeblood. For Haven, paddle boarding is about more than just exercise. It’s about perspective. When you’re standing on that board, balanced between the sky and the water, the world feels big and full of possibilities.

It’s this sense of calm and clarity that we hope she brings to her columns. In a world that moves way too fast, Haven knows the value of slowing down and enjoying the ripple of the water.

A Major Milestone: The G2 License!

We also have to celebrate a huge life update! Haven recently hit a major milestone that every Northern teen dreams of. She now has her G2 driver’s license!

In the city, a license might just mean a way to get to the mall. But in Northern Ontario? A license is freedom! It’s the ability to explore the backroads, visit friends in the next town over, and truly experience the vastness of our region. Congratulations, Haven! She’s enjoying exploring her newfound freedom behind the wheel, and we can’t wait to hear about her road trip adventures.

Why Frequency X?

You might be wondering, what is Frequency X all about?

Frequency X is our dedicated section for youth voices. We believe that young people in Northern Ontario have a unique perspective that often goes unheard in mainstream media.

We want to know what you’re thinking, what you’re dreaming about, and what it’s actually like to grow up in places like South River, Sundridge, or North Bay. Haven is the perfect fit for this mission. She’s

grounded in her community, yet she’s looking forward to the future with excitement. She represents the “threads” that connect our small towns together. By featuring writers like Haven, we are making sure that Northern Threads Magazine remains a true reflection of everyone who lives here: not just the adults!

Family and Roots

Despite her busy schedule with school, drama, and horses, Haven always makes time for what matters most: family.

Spending quality time with family is a core value for Haven. In the North, your family is often your strongest support system. Whether it’s a Sunday dinner or a casual afternoon at home, those connections keep us grounded. This sense of belonging is something you’ll likely feel in Haven’s writing. She isn’t just writing for herself; she’s writing for her community.

What’s Next for Haven?

As Haven joins the Frequency X team, you can expect to see her covering a variety of topics. From the challenges of high school life in a rural area to the beauty of our local landscapes, she’s going to be giving us a front-row seat to her world.

We encourage you to follow along and support her journey.

Want to learn more about our team?

Check out our About Page to see the faces behind the magazine. We will be updating these soon with great profiles.

Are you a young writer like Haven?

We are always looking for new voices to join the Frequency X movement. If you have a story to tell about life in Northern Ontario, don’t be shy!

Reach out to us through our Email at info@northrthreads magazine.ca.

Supporting Our Youth

At Northern Threads Magazine, we are committed to providing a platform for the next generation. We believe that by investing in young writers like Haven Howard, we are investing in the future of Northern Ontario. Our region is full of talent, and it’s our job to make sure that talent has a place to grow.

Let’s Welcome Haven!

We are so proud to have Haven on board. Her mix of creativity, outdoor spirit, and local Almaguin roots makes her an incredible addition to our family.

Next time you see a Frequency X post, look for her name! We know she has big things ahead of her, and we’re just happy to be a part of her story.

Welcome to the team, Haven! We can’t wait to see where your writing (and your new G2 license) takes you!

Are you ready to share your Northern story?

Northern Threads Magazine is more than just a publication; it’s a community. Whether you’re a student at Almaguin Highlands like Haven, or a business owner in Timmins, your voice matters. Let’s keep the conversation going. Follow us on social media, subscribe to our newsletter, and keep an eye out for the next Frequency X feature!

A Final Thought on the Northern Lifestyle

Haven’s interests: drama, horses, and paddle boarding: are more than just hobbies. They are a reflection of what it means to live in the North. It’s about being bold enough to take the stage. It’s about being tough enough to ride the trails. And it’s about being quiet enough to enjoy the lake.

We think Haven Howard captures that balance perfectly.

Stay tuned for hers and other youth voices coming soon to Frequency X!

You won’t want to miss them.

Keep it local. Keep it contemporary. Keep it Northern.

