

# Building Bridges

2022/2023 Annual Research Report



Emphasizing the importance of collaboration and partnerships in addressing complex challenges and fostering unity

Northern Ontario Research, Development, Ideas and Knowledge

**N·O·R·D·I·K**  
INSTITUTE



## About NORDIK Institute

NORDIK Institute is a community-based research organization affiliated with Algoma University. Incorporated in 2006, NORDIK grew out of AU's Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) program due to the demand for localized data, research and place-based solutions. It serves as a mechanism for university-community partnerships. We undertake diverse initiatives with foci on northern, Indigenous, rural and smaller urban communities in Ontario and around the world. Our mission is to promote more vibrant, caring and sustainable communities through research, dialogue, analysis and reflection dedicated to the practice of holistic community development. NORDIK's approach to community development and research emphasizes the interconnectedness and mutual importance of four pillars of resilience that support healthy, vibrant and fulfilling places: cultural vitality, social equity, environmental sustainability and economic diversity and growth.

### VISION

Northern Ontario is a sustainable, inclusive, and self-sufficient region at the forefront of reconciliation and community development.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- + Advance Partnerships for Indigenous Research Sovereignty
- + Foster Local & Regional Evidence-Based Dialogues on Issues Critical to Northern and Indigenous Communities
- + Cultivate Northern Research Talent with a Supportive, Inclusive Team-Based Atmosphere
- + Connect Students, Researchers and Community in Projects that Contribute to Social, Economic & Environmental Sustainability & Justice for Northern and Indigenous Communities

## Board of Directors

Lauren Doxtater (Chair)

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Mitch Case

Steven McCoy

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Pedro Antunes (former Chair)

Dawn White (former Director-at-Large)

## NORDIK Team

### Director of Research

Dr. Sean Meades (Until Dec 2, 2022)

Dr. Tamanna Rimi (April 1, 2023 to present)

**Director of Operations** – Dr. Elaine Ho-Tassone

**Research Coordinator** – Dr. Jude Ortiz

**Manager of Communications** – Amy Boyer

### RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Dr. Pedro Antunes (Algoma University)

Dr. Nusrate Aziz (Algoma University)

Dr. Gayle Broad (Algoma University)

Michael Burtch (Artist, Art Historian)

Dr. Sue Chiblow (University of Guelph)

Elizabeth Garcia (Colombian Ambassador, Bolivia)

Dr. Aaron Gordon (Algoma University)

Dr. Sheila Gurner (Algoma University)

Dr. Elaine Ho-Tassone (Algoma University)

Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada (Algoma University)

Haley MacLeod (Aki Kikinomakaywin)

Dr. Sean Meades (Algoma University)

Prof. Andrea Pinheiro (Algoma University)

Dr. Jody-Lynn Rebek (Algoma University)

Dr. Tamanna Rimi (Algoma University)

Dr. Linda Savory-Gordon (Algoma University)

Dr. Ushnish Sengupta (Algoma University)

David Thompson (RAIN-Algoma)

Dr. Laura Wyper (Algoma University)

### RESEARCH AND PROJECT STAFF

Emma Caicco

Laura Howson

Katja Karhi

Zachary Low

Amanda Matthews

Hayley McLeod

Kendall Mitchell

Zeel Patel

Ani Ramos

Samantha Recollet

Tyler Sayers

Annika Sonntag

Xuechen Yuan

### SHINGWAUK RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SITE SEARCH TEAM

Sarah Blackwell

Amanda Debassige

Monique Levesque

Miranda Moffatt

Cynthia Tribe

### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Gabrielle Louttit, Provisional RGD

Carmen Misasi Design – Carmelo Misasi

## Executive Summary



### Tamanna Rimi, Director of Research

**Collaboration and partnerships lie at the heart of everything we do at NORDIK. Over the past year, we have worked closely with nearly 60 partners and collaborators across 19 projects, demonstrating our commitment to collective action in addressing complex challenges and fostering unity.**

This year's theme, 'Building Bridges' highlights the pivotal role of collaboration in advancing knowledge and driving impactful change. From interdisciplinary initiatives to cross-sectoral partnerships, we have endeavoured to build bridges to tackle multifaceted issues. For instance, NORDIK, in partnership with Ontario Library Service developed a Social Return on Investment (SROI) toolkit to measure the social impact of public libraries ([p.10](#)). Northern Ontario Labour project ([p.15](#)) is another example of a collaborative research initiative across Northern Ontario's five largest cities and four universities to address the issues of outmigration from the region, reflecting our commitment to local economic development. Other highlights include collaborative initiatives like the Columbian Ethnic Forum ([p.16](#)); National Community Engagement on Long-Term Care ([p.18](#)); Building Capacity to Justice for Indigenous Youth ([p.11](#)); and the Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network ([p.20](#)), which promotes social and economic justice in Northern Ontario.

As we reflect on our accomplishments, we are proud to report significant progress in aligning our research and development projects with our 2022-2027 strategic goals.

Out of the 19 active projects this year:

- ✦ 32% were initiated by Indigenous communities, reinforcing our commitment to indigenous research sovereignty.
- ✦ 47% advanced partnerships aimed at supporting indigenous research sovereignty, aligning with our strategic objectives.
- ✦ 42% of projects nurtured Northern research talent within a supportive and inclusive environment, in line with our goal of fostering local expertise.
- ✦ Nearly all projects facilitated connections between students, researchers, and communities, promoting social, economic, and environmental sustainability and justice.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the dedication and support of our NORDIK team—our research associates, researchers, research assistants, and staff—along with our board and partners, including Algoma University. We invite you all to explore our annual research report to learn more about NORDIK’s impactful collaborations and partnerships.



### **Elaine Ho-Tassone, Director of Operations**

The 2022-2023 year was an exciting one for NORDIK operations! We have a brand-new team structure and, with it, considerable new capacity. This year, I am privileged to serve as NORDIK’s first Director of Operations, focusing on finance and our people. Our first Communications Manager, Amy Boyer, helped increase our exposure within our community and beyond, building our repertoire of impactful community projects.

Several of our strategic objectives are close to achievement in the first year of our 5-year plan, e.g., 53% of our projects involved community-based researchers (target: 60% over five years), and we are rapidly building our team members and operational capacity. Our five-year goal to achieve an average of one third of our staff identifying as Indigenous was exceeded in our first year (at 50% of our staff). We also hit a new economic milestone this year: our projects contributed a record 1.6 million dollars to the communities we work in! All these achievements were made possible by the increased capacity provided by our partnership with Algoma University, as well as the incredible efforts from nearly 60 community champions and collaborators. I am excited to see what the 2023-2024 year brings, and I am grateful to be part of such a dynamic organization at this important time in its history.

## Farewell from Dr. Meades



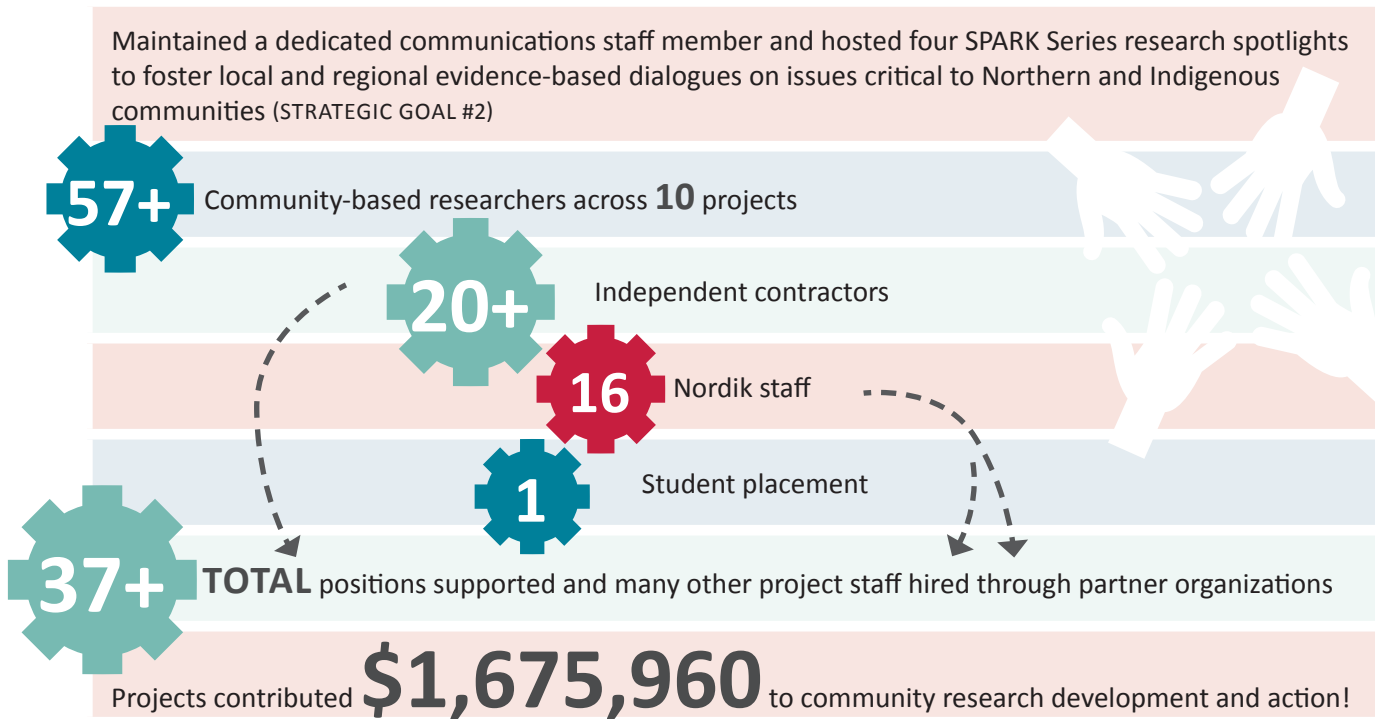
### **Dr. Sean Meades, former Director of Research**

While I shared my farewells in the previous year's report, I continued to occupy the role of Director of Research until our new research lead was selected in 2023, Dr. Tamanna Rimi. In my final months, the talent and dedication of NORDIK's team, from long standing veterans to new managers, research associates, and interns was inspiring, with many of the projects described in this year's report driving important conversations and community work critical to northern and Indigenous communities. The mentorship exhibited by project leads and the drive exemplified by our staff gives me great hope at a time when our world is so wanting for people to come together in the face of growing crises. It's both an honour and humbling to be leaving NORDIK in the capable hands of its new leadership team. But I am privileged to be able to continue learning from them, as well as our colleagues and community members, as I shift into a role as one of NORDIK's Research Associates.

## Executive Summary – By the Numbers



## Operations Report



## PROJECTS ACTIVE FROM MAY 2022 TO APRIL 2023

TITLE	PROJECT LEAD(S)
Aki Kikinomakaywin (Learning on the Land)	Haley MacLeod ( <a href="mailto:haley.macleod@algomau.ca">haley.macleod@algomau.ca</a> )
Algoma Central Railway Heritage Designation	Dr. Linda Savory-Gordon ( <a href="mailto:linda.savory-gordon@algomau.ca">linda.savory-gordon@algomau.ca</a> )
Building Capacity for a New Approach to Justice for Indigenous Youth	Dr. Sean Meades ( <a href="mailto:sean.meades@algomau.ca">sean.meades@algomau.ca</a> ) and Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada ( <a href="mailto:vivian.jimenez-estrada@algomau.ca">vivian.jimenez-estrada@algomau.ca</a> )
Colombian Ethnic People's Forum	Dr. Sheila Gruner ( <a href="mailto:sheila.gruner@algomau.ca">sheila.gruner@algomau.ca</a> )
Gendered and Colonial Violence Indigenous Research	Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada ( <a href="mailto:vivian.jimenez-estrada@algomau.ca">vivian.jimenez-estrada@algomau.ca</a> )
IN SITU: Place-based Innovation in Rural Cultural and Creative Industries	Dr. Jude Ortiz ( <a href="mailto:jude.ortiz@algomau.ca">jude.ortiz@algomau.ca</a> )
Investing in Women Entrepreneurship	Dr. Jude Ortiz ( <a href="mailto:jude.ortiz@algomau.ca">jude.ortiz@algomau.ca</a> )
National Community Engagement in First Nation Long Term and Continuing Care	Dr. Gayle Broad ( <a href="mailto:gayle.broad@algomau.ca">gayle.broad@algomau.ca</a> ), Amy Boyer ( <a href="mailto:amy.boyer@algomau.ca">amy.boyer@algomau.ca</a> ), and Dr. Elaine Ho-Tassone ( <a href="mailto:elaine.ho-tassone@algomau.ca">elaine.ho-tassone@algomau.ca</a> )
Northern Ontario Labour Force Retention and Attraction in a Post-Pandemic, Digital Economy	Dr. Nusrate Aziz ( <a href="mailto:nusrate.aziz@algomau.ca">nusrate.aziz@algomau.ca</a> ), Dr. Sean Meades ( <a href="mailto:sean.meades@algomau.ca">sean.meades@algomau.ca</a> )
Revitalizing Canada's Blue Economy	Dr. Jody-Lynn Rebek ( <a href="mailto:jody.rebek@algomau.ca">jody.rebek@algomau.ca</a> ) and Dr. Ahmed Aziz ( <a href="mailto:ahmed.aziz@algomau.ca">ahmed.aziz@algomau.ca</a> )
SPARK Series (research showcase events)	Amy Boyer ( <a href="mailto:amy.boyer@algomau.ca">amy.boyer@algomau.ca</a> )
The Journey Home	Jay Jones ( <a href="mailto:ndnrnr13@gmail.com">ndnrnr13@gmail.com</a> ), Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association
The Packsack Project: Podcasts Exploring Resilience	Dr. Gayle Broad ( <a href="mailto:gayle.broad@algomau.ca">gayle.broad@algomau.ca</a> ), David Thompson ( <a href="mailto:dthompson@ssmic.com">dthompson@ssmic.com</a> ), Amy Boyer ( <a href="mailto:amy.boyer@algomau.ca">amy.boyer@algomau.ca</a> )
V.O.L.T.: Capturing the Energy of Public Libraries Across Ontario	Sean Meades ( <a href="mailto:sean.meades@algomau.ca">sean.meades@algomau.ca</a> ), Dr. Tamanna Rimi ( <a href="mailto:tamanna.rimi@algomau.ca">tamanna.rimi@algomau.ca</a> ), Dr. Jude Ortiz ( <a href="mailto:jude.ortiz@algomau.ca">jude.ortiz@algomau.ca</a> )

Feel free to connect with the project lead(s) to find out more!

Follow our social media and/or sign up for our newsletter to keep up to date on current and future community projects.





## NORDIK Welcomes New Research Associates



### **Elizabeth Garcia**

Elizabeth Garcia is Arhuaca from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, exiled in Canada since 2009. An international humanitarian law specialist with extensive experience as an activist of ethnic feminism and working with people in exile. Just appointed Colombian Ambassador in Bolivia. During the past 3-4 years, Elizabeth has worked with NORDIK Institute on the Truth Commission and the Ethnic Peoples and Peace Global Network projects, and she recently visited Colombia with Algoma University as a member of the Colombian delegation of the Ethnic Commission for Peace and Defense of Territorial Rights.



### **Dr. Ushnish Sengupta**

Dr. Ushnish Sengupta is an Assistant Professor in Community Economic and Social Development at Algoma University. He has a PhD from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, an MBA from the Rotman School of Management, and a degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Toronto. Ushnish Sengupta's PhD focused on data governance theory for social economy organizations. Dr. Sengupta is an award winning teacher and has taught courses at post-secondary institutions and at community based organizations. In addition to his academic experience, he has worked in various private sector, public sector, and social sector organizations. Dr. Sengupta's research interests include Nonprofits, Cooperatives, Entrepreneurship, Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, Open Data, Diversity, and the Social and Environmental impact of technology projects. He is currently researching the social and environmental impacts of the adoption of technology in Smart City projects, and underrepresented groups in social economy organizations.

# Research



## V.O.L.T.: Capturing the Energy of Public Libraries Across Ontario

NORDIK's work continued throughout the year with the Ontario Library Service to develop a Social Return on Investment (SROI) toolkit for public libraries across all of Ontario.

Developing the framework for the new toolkit was informed by nine engagements organized by OLS. Six engagements were organized by the size of the communities served by the public libraries, ranging from communities of under 5,000 people; between 5,000 and 9,999 people; between 10,000 and 19,999; between 20,000 and 39,999; between 40,000 and 74,999; and communities of more than 75,000 people. There were also dedicated engagement sessions with First Nation libraries, libraries serving majority-Francophone communities, and libraries that had been frequent users of the Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit.

The framework that emerged built on much of the foundation of the Northern Toolkit (developed by NORDIK in 2017 in partnership with the Ontario Library Service North), with a revised broader range of domains of impact, namely: Education, culture, inclusion and wellbeing, entertainment and leisure, economic development, civic engagement, and space. The steering committee for the project met an additional five times over the course of the year to offer feedback and refinement of the new framework. Some of the innovations incorporated into the new framework include counterfactual conditions in the SROI calculations that adjust value estimates to account for factors like what may have occurred

regardless of the library's involvement, displacement of value from other sources, and situations where there are many contributors to the value that is produced. Additionally the toolkit now also includes methods for valuing the impact of unique spaces offered by public libraries, the value of the community partnerships in which they are engaged, and ways that the libraries are supporting the delivery of municipal and other public services. A new SROI calculation spreadsheet was also developed to streamline the user-experience in producing the calculations, while other toolkit components help users through the process of assembling their own Library Value Report with as little additional work or data collection as possible.

Train-the-trainer workshops will begin for consultants working with the Ontario Library Service in September 2023, followed by direct training with public library staff in November. The expected public launch date for the new Valuing Ontario Libraries Toolkit (or VOLT, as it is now affectionately called) will be December 2023. NORDIK will also engage in further research throughout 2024 to update cost estimates, and collect provincial data to better refine the counterfactual adjustments to SROI calculations.

The project team included Dr. Sean Meades, Dr. Jude Ortiz, Dr. Tamanna Rimi, and Dr. Gayle Broad, with support from OLS provided by Director of Training and Consulting Steven Kraus, Consultant Jesse Roberts, and CEO Melissa D'Onofrio-Jones. Technical support was provided by Frank Coccimiglio and Glenn Driver of Algoma University.

## IN SITU: Place-based Innovation in Rural Cultural and Creative Industries

Dr. Jude Ortiz of NORDIK Institute is a member of the International Advisory Board investigating cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas in Europe. [IN SITU](#) seeks to provide in-depth knowledge on the effects of cross-sectoral connections, innovative strategies and systems, and the needs of practitioners, complementing this with proposals for cultural and innovation policies and frameworks. The core defining aspect of IN SITU is the interlinking of research and practice through place-based IN SITU Labs - hubs for networking, capacity building, and monitoring case studies in six non-urban regions across Europe, located in Portugal, Ireland, Iceland, Finland, Latvia, and Croatia.

The project brings together 13 institutional partners in 12 countries and is accompanied by an array of Outreach Partners within Europe and internationally. It is a four-year initiative (2022-26) coordinated by the [Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra](#), Portugal, the €4 million project is funded by the European Commission under the Horizon Europe programme.



## Building Capacity for a New Approach to Justice for Indigenous Youth

In 2020, NORDIK supported an application on behalf of the Indigenous Women’s Anti-Violence Task Force from Heritage Canada’s Anti-Racism Action Program to lead community dialogues in the potential creation of a community-based justice model that embraces restorative justice principles for Indigenous Youth in Baawating (Sault Ste. Marie). The Restorative Justice: Indigenous Youth Diversion project was overseen by a voluntary committee of Indigenous service providers and other stakeholders known as the Baawating Justice Committee (BJC). Project Coordinator, Zachary Low, and Indigenous Youth Liaison, Samantha Recollet advanced the project with guidance and expertise from then-Director of Research, Dr. Sean Meades, and Research Associate Dr. Vivian Jiménez-Estrada.

The project identified an inventory of alternative justice programs in the region and while it initially sought to develop training programs, the emergence of a growing number of local cultural competency and provincial restorative justice training programs led the BJC to refocus priorities on building local capacity and understanding the local context.

As noted in last year's report, Low and Recollet undertook an extensive research project under the advisement of the BJC on the experiences of Indigenous persons with the justice system and the local level. Participants included Indigenous youth aged 12-29 with interactions with the justice system; Relevant social service providers; police and legal professionals; and Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers. The research, including 22 interviews, has since emphasized a number of themes, namely:

- + The need for more holistic support, including supports for their family and accessing relevant services;
- + Greater awareness and accessibility of existing services as well as opportunities to connect with the Indigenous culture(s), learn from safe mentors, and have access to opportunities to practice their culture;
- + Access to positive mentorship and role modelling to promote healthy relationships, particularly with Elders or peers who have shared experiences, interests or goals;
- + Decolonization of the justice system, namely through the incorporation of Indigenous values and approaches to justice, such as through restorative justice programs, and including advocates to achieve more equitable treatment of Indigenous youth within the justice system;
- + The need for sustained, coordinated efforts around anti-racism and cultural sensitivity training and education among non-Indigenous community justice partners.

The research also included an environmental scan of different approaches to restorative justice across Ontario, culminating in the BJC recommending an approach based on the Circle model. Rooted in local Anishinaabe ceremony and practice, the Circle approach invites participants to take turns discussing and ultimately proposing ways to resolve an issue. This approach to restorative justice typically involves a more diverse group of individuals than other models and can often include participation from families, community members, councillors, Elders, justice-related professionals, trained volunteers, and others. Elders also often play a crucial role in the circle by being able to connect youth to the prayers, ceremonies, and teachings of their ancestors.

Members of the BJC who attended the culminating forum in December 2022 voted to extend the committee's terms of reference and to reach consensus on factors such as client eligibility, what types of offences will be considered for the diversion initiative, defining potential diversion outcomes, and determining the staffing resources necessary for the initial phases of a prospective program.

NORDIK's role in supporting the project came to an end in December 2022 with the completion of the research and identification of the next steps; however, the Indigenous Women's Anti-Violence Task Force and several groups involved with the BJC continue to move efforts to reform the justice system forward.

## Revitalizing Canada's Blue Economy

Canada's innovative Blue Economy (BE) strategy that is currently being developed primarily focuses on oceans, overlooking the critical component of freshwater, which is particularly concerning given that the Great Lakes hold a substantial amount of North America's freshwater. Additionally, the BE has not been highlighted as a focus amongst local governments or a priority within economic development in the Algoma (Canada) or Chippewa (USA) regions. To address this gap, the Blue Economy research initiative was launched. This multidisciplinary, community-based participatory research project has a mission to raise awareness about the abundance of invaluable freshwater resources that surround us in the nexus of the upper Great Lakes and to form collaborative strategies and projects that align interests and develop opportunities that are cognizant of freshwater health and honour Indigenous relationships and worldviews.

The research investigated community members' perspectives related to freshwater, the challenges and opportunities of freshwater health, along with social, economic, and cultural skills; and fostered cooperative actions to boost the blue economy while rejuvenating the health of our freshwater ecosystems.

Respectful, collaborative relationships with Indigenous peoples were integral to this project, being that they are the original stewards and have been for thousands of years. Indigenous relationships helped us to understand Indigenous worldviews and the significance of water and helped to identify lessons through a "learn-by-doing" approach. Input from the Indigenous

population helped determine gaps that are present in the local freshwater BE and to align actions with the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

Phase 1 concentrated on building a network and relationships with freshwater stewards and understanding freshwater perspectives and culture. Survey respondents in the Algoma and Chippewa regions showed optimism for the potential growth of the recreation and tourism industry, water management, agriculture, clean growth, and fishing under the Blue Economy concept. However, they raised concerns about health and water quality, invasive species, plastics/microplastics, financial limitations, and transportation difficulties as potential obstacles to achieve sustainability and regenerative freshwater resources in the region. The project also initiated and continues to support annual World Water Day and Shoreline Clean-ups to heighten awareness of the importance of freshwater. Phase 2 (on hold) will develop a Blue Economy freshwater strategy locally, honouring Indigenous culture/principles and blending Western approaches while also collaborating with international partners.

The research team included Dr. Jody-lynn Rebeck, Dr. Ahmed Aziz, Hannah Caicco (Research Intern), Alejandra Pacasqua (MITACS Graduate Research Intern), Thomas Barber (Research Intern), Jordan Barone (AU student) and other students of Algoma University. In addition, Cheryl Jamieson, and other members of Shingwauk Kinoomaag Gamig also supported this project.

## Gendered and Colonial Violence Indigenous Research

Indigenous Women Storying and Interweaving their Experiences of Gendered and Colonial Violence in Mexico and Canada is a collaborative and partner-led research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) with the Indigenous Women’s Anti-Violence Task Force (IWAVTF) in Baawaating and Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas (CONAMI) in Mexico.

Since 2015, a group of allied and Indigenous scholars have engaged in discussions about addressing gendered and colonial violence that culminated in a SSHRC funded virtual forum in 2017 that led to a visit to Algoma University in 2018. Building on this, the primary goal of the project is to strengthen the collaboration between the two aforementioned organizations as they engage in their own advocacy and research efforts to document and challenge various forms of systemic oppression as identified by the Indigenous communities that make up their networks through the development of a governance structure that ensures the multiple needs and voices of the communities served are heard, and comprise the decision-making body advancing the project. This collaboration ensures that researchers remain committed to working together through decolonizing research processes.

Methodologically, this collaborative and Indigenous-led project encompasses a community-based research element in each region. In Baawaating, the IWAVTF research advisory committee and affiliated members

of the network recommended identifying the various forms of violence affecting local Indigenous communities as seen through the perspectives of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous social service providers to understand the gaps in aligning their work with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, 2-Spirit and LGBTQQIAP+ (MMIWG2S+) [Calls for Justice](#). After months of community engagement and recruitment, the project has gathered nearly 30 survey responses and 20 individual interviews with a few more planned in the next month. We are currently wrapping up this research through the sharing circles that will be used to produce a policy brief for local communities that critically depicts the condition under which community agencies operate in order to advocate for change.

In Mexico, CONAMI stakeholders are also engaged in an environmental scan regarding the relevance of their work in support of the communities they serve. They are currently implementing their surveys and are engaging in sharing opportunities during their National Gathering taking place at the end of October.

After the completion of both studies and the finalization of their outputs, the research team, under the leadership of Dr. Vivian Jimenez Estrada, will conduct a comparative analysis. This analysis aims to formulate a comprehensive international strategy for advancing this crucial work. Xuechen Yuan contributed as a Research Intern to this project.

# Northern Ontario Labour Force Retention and Attraction in a Post-pandemic, Digital Economy

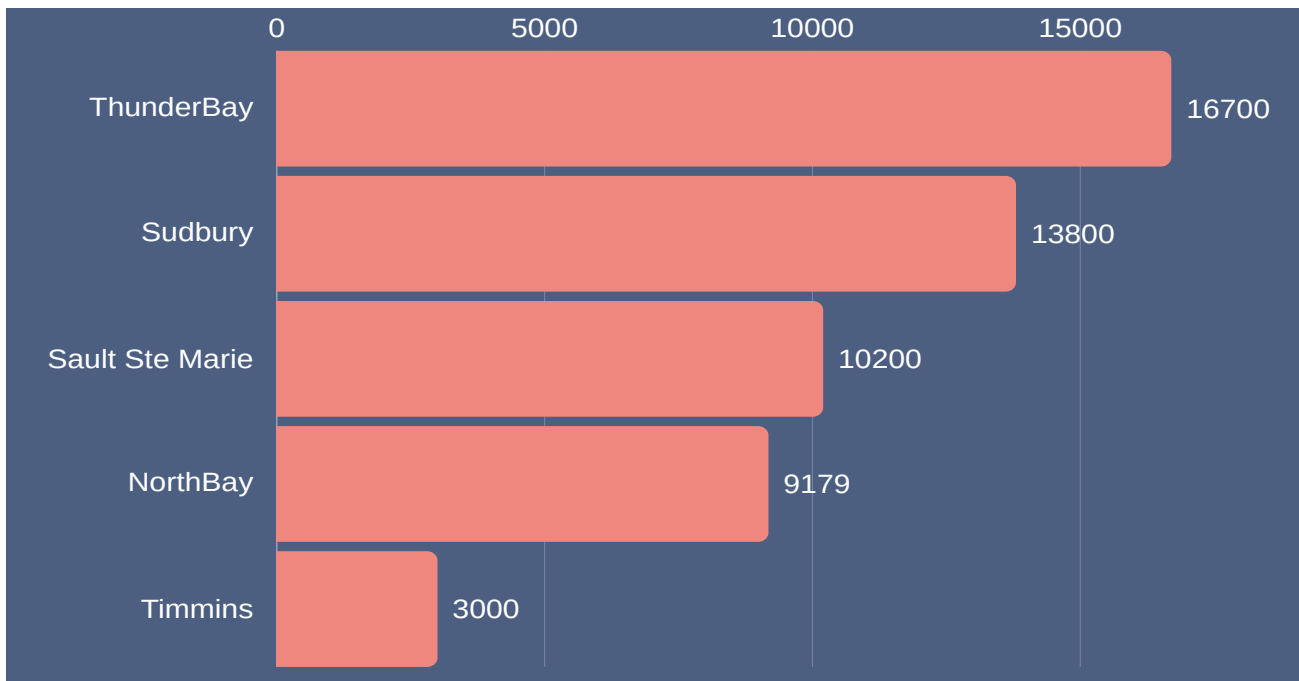
NORDIK Research Associate, Dr. Nusrate Aziz, led the development of a collaborative research initiative across Northern Ontario’s five largest cities and four universities, including co-investigators Dr. Sean Meades (NORDIK/ Algoma University), Dr. Natalya Brown (Nipissing), Dr. Livio Di Matteo (Lakehead), and Dr. Sadequl Islam (Laurentian).

Building on a pilot study conducted at Algoma University, this research will investigate post-secondary graduate retention and the factors that contribute to outmigration in Northern Ontario. The research involves a survey of graduates and near-graduates of all of Northern Ontario’s post-secondary institutions to identify the factors that are contributing most to retention or outmigration, combined with focus groups with key stakeholders at the region’s colleges and universities to identify local policies impacting recruitment, labour market preparation, and labour market access for post-secondary students

and graduates. These findings will then inform policy analysis of labour market and immigration measures taken by various levels of government, such as the Rural-Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP).

Thanks to support from NOHFC’s People and Talent program, Zeel Patel joined the project as a research assistant in November 2022, contributing to the completion of Research Ethics Board submissions at each of Northern Ontario’s universities and colleges, and supporting the preparation of the survey and focus group questions. Data collection is expected to commence in the summer of 2023.

The team also prepared a submission to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada’s Insight Development Grants in February to support the hiring of additional research assistants in each of the partner institutions.



Total Number of Domestic and International students in five Northern Ontario Regions In the year 2021-2022.



## Colombian Ethnic People’s Forum

Six Indigenous and Afro-Colombian members of Colombia’s Ethnic Commission for Peace and Defense of Territorial Rights travelled to Canada to participate in the “Ethnic Commission of Colombia in Canada: Weaving Peace” as part of the SSHRC Connections project. Between June 7-13th, the delegation visited Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, and Wawa, Ontario, where they met with members of parliament, senators, Global Affairs Canada, human rights groups, academics, NGOs, and with Colombian-Canadians, African-Canadians, and Indigenous groups, leaders, and community members. The delegation aimed to raise awareness and strategize with counterparts in the face of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in ethnic communities in Colombia, to foster awareness and support for the implementation of the Ethnic Chapter of the 2016 Colombian Peace Accords, and to deepen commitments to peace-building in Colombia. Coinciding with the delegation’s presence, a forum related to the international implications of the Ethnic Chapter was held in Ottawa, emphasizing the perspectives and proposals of Indigenous and Black organizations and women in particular.

In June, Dr. Gruner co-organized a Delegation from Canada to travel to Colombia as a follow-up to the Colombian delegation in Canada and in response to the invitation by the incoming Colombian Vice President Francia Marquez Mina. The activities included the inauguration of the incoming President Gustavo Petro and Vice President Francia Marquez, an international gathering related to historical reparations, and meetings with the Canadian Embassy and government officials in Canada and Colombia. There were activities related to historical reparations for Black and Indigenous peoples as well as a meeting directed at building international solidarity hosted by both The Global Network - Ethnic People’s and Peace and The Black Alliance for Peace. These meetings centred on

how Black and Indigenous peoples globally can work together to strengthen direct governance and economic relationships among peoples, address critical issues such as poverty, land rights, and climate change, and broaden spaces for dialogue and action in order to support efforts of the incoming government.

The Canadian delegation was comprised of Indigenous people, Afro-Canadians, and groups representing victims of the Colombian armed conflict exiled in Canada, and included: (former) Chief Dean Sayers of Batchewana First Nation, President of the African Canadian Association of Ottawa John Adeyafa, and Secretary General of the Global Center for Pluralism Meredith Preston-McGhie.



**ETHNIC PEOPLES AND PEACE - GLOBAL NETWORK WELCOMES THE DELEGATION:**

**THE ETHNIC COMMISSION FROM COLOMBIA IN CANADA: WEAVING PEACE**

**JUNE 9, 10AM-12PM EST (9AM-11AM COL)**

*Indigenous and Afro-Colombian representatives of the Ethnic Commission for Peace and Defense of Territorial Rights will discuss the humanitarian crisis, peace-building in Colombia, and international considerations related to the Ethnic Chapter of the 2016 Peace Accords.*

Public Event at the  
**Global Center for Pluralism**  
350 Sussex Dr, Ottawa  
+via Zoom  
June 9 10AM-12PM EST  
English/Spanish interpretation  
Register for zoom at:  
[shorturl.at/epyB5](https://shorturl.at/epyB5)

**Panelists:**  
Armando Valbuena  
Charo Mina Rojas  
Helmer Quiñones Mendoza  
Albeniz Tique  
Yobana Bustos

**Moderator:** Sheila Gruner, Algoma/Carleton

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [HTTPS://NORDIKINSTITUTE.COM/RESEARCH/ETHNIC-PEOPLES-PEACE-GLOBAL-NETWORK/](https://nordikinstitute.com/research/ethnic-peoples-peace-global-network/)





The Global Network – Ethnic Peoples and Peace & The Ethnic Commission for Peace and Defensive Territorial Rights

Invites you to a breakfast discussion with the Canadian Delegation to Colombia, the Canadian Embassy in Colombia, Members of the Ethnic Commission, and invited Members of the Incoming Government

Monday, August 8th, 2022 from 7:30-9 AM  
at the Tequendama Hotel Bolívar 1

Please RSVP to Kendall Mitchell by Sunday, August 7th at Noon via WhatsApp +1 (705) 206-1523 or [kendall.mitchell@algomau.ca](mailto:kendall.mitchell@algomau.ca)

**By Invitation Only - Limited Spots Available**

Additionally, Dr. Sheila Gruner attended a variety of conferences and events in association with both the SSHRC Connections project and the Truth Commission project including the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS), a hybrid conference on “Latin America and the Caribbean in Times of Covid-19: Responses, Adaptations, and Recoveries”. The CALACS conference took place between August 23-26, 2022 at the University of Toronto. During the conference, on August 24, Dr. Sheila Gruner presented in a roundtable discussion on the Work of the Colombian Commission for the Clarification



The Black Alliance for Peace & The Global Network – Ethnic Peoples and Peace  
**La Alianza Negra por la Paz & La Red Global - Pueblos Étnicos y Paz**

Invite you to a meeting on International Solidarity  
**Te invitamos a un encuentro sobre solidaridad internacional**

Monday, August 8th, 2022 from 9 AM - 11 AM  
at the Tequendama Hotel Bolívar 2  
**El lunes 8 de agosto de 2022 de 9 AM - 11 AM en el Tequendama Hotel Bolívar 2**

Please RSVP to Kendall Mitchell by Sunday, August 7th at Noon via WhatsApp (705) 206-1523 or [kendall.mitchell@algomau.ca](mailto:kendall.mitchell@algomau.ca)  
**Por favor, confirme su asistencia a Kendall Mitchell antes del domingo 7 de agosto al mediodía via WhatsApp (705) 206-1523 o [kendall.mitchell@algomau.ca](mailto:kendall.mitchell@algomau.ca)**

**By Invitation Only - Sólo con invitación**

of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition in Canada. Then, on the 26th, she chaired a panel session entitled, Power: Persistence and Resilience where she also presented a paper called, [Six Years Since the Colombia Peace Accords –Mobilizing the Unfulfilled Promises of the Ethnic Chapter](#).

This year, the SSHRC Connections project and the Truth Commission project were supported by Ani Ramos, Translation and later Administrative and Research Assistant (2022; NOHFC and civil society funders) and Kendall Mitchell, Administrative and Research Assistant (2022-23; SSHRC and NOHFC).

# National Community Engagement in First Nation Long Term and Continuing Care



NORDIK Institute was invited by the Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA) to partner in compiling a report on Long Term and Continuing Care (LTCC) that summarized community engagements that took place in First Nations during 2019-22. The report was intended to inform the co-development of a new framework for LTCC by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

Thirty-three (33) regional community engagement reports, together with four organizational and/or governmental reports, were provided and reviewed by the writing team of this final summary report. The community engagement reports documented the insights, experience, and knowledge of over 700 First Nation participants engaged in the delivery of in-community long-term and continuing care in over 300 First Nations in culturally and geographically diverse regions of the country.

A draft report was circulated to community engagement participants for their review, and in

February 2023 a ‘validation’ gathering was held at Algoma University with 107 participants. Of those participants, 74 were representing First Nation communities and organizations across Canada (both in-person and online). They provided feedback including gaps, clarifications, errors and omissions, in breakout groups. 33 ISC personnel were also present at this validation gathering. Representatives from ISC shared and gathered information at the workshop, but they did not participate or provide feedback in the breakout groups.

The final summary report incorporated the feedback from the 74 First Nation participants and 33 community engagement reports to shed light on the numerous challenges and strengths, as well as provide recommendations for transforming long-term and continuing care in First Nations.

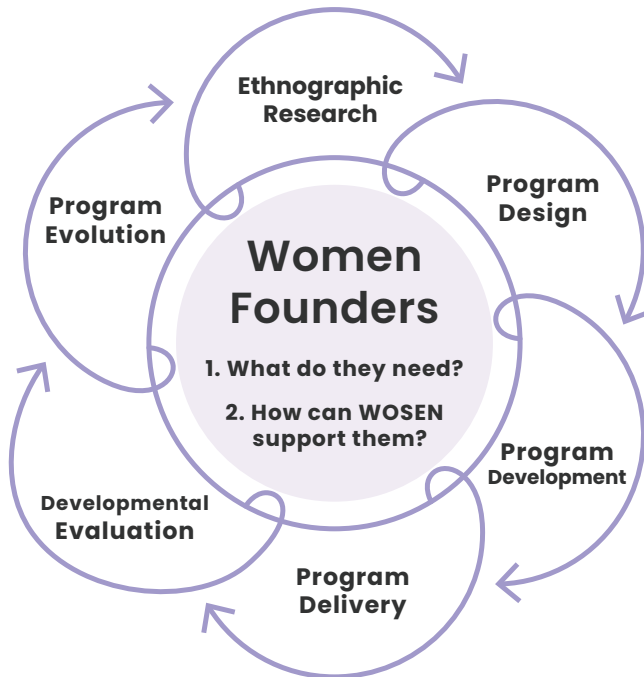
At the time of the February 2023 gathering, ISC officials advised that it was expected that the 2024 federal budget would reflect significant improvements to LTCC for First Nations as a result, in part, of community participants’ engagement and participation.

NORDIK Research Associate Dr. Gayle Broad led ONWAA’s writing team with technical support provided by Rafael Medina Cruz, while Operations Director Elaine Ho-Tassone and Communications Coordinator Amy Boyer provided substantial coordination for the validation gathering. It was a privilege and honour to partner with ONWAA in this important initiative.

# Development



## Investing in Women Entrepreneurship



© Dr. Jude Ortiz, NORDIK Institute (2023)

The Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network (WOSEN), a collaborative of five social change organizations, focused on developing and delivering effective entrepreneurial supports to meet the regional needs of women and non-binary founders from diverse, equity-seeking groups who have business solutions that put people and the planet first (i.e., social enterprises). Between 2019-2023, the province-wide initiative supported 1,175 participants, residing in over 142 urban, rural and First Nation communities across Ontario and assisted women founders in unlocking \$8.8 million dollars.

WOSEN's approach moved away from current services that are of limited relevance for diverse women, choosing instead to intentionally centre founders and engage them and ecosystem supporters (e.g., business developers, coaches, funders/investors) in emergent,

collaborative and co-creative practices, providing space for knowledge sharing and co-generating innovative pathways that holistically support diverse entrepreneurs' learning journeys and aspirations.

NORDIK Institute/ Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (SEE) engaged northern residents in entrepreneurship development courses, and collaborated with the Northwest Business Centre in Kenora to deliver two online workshops. Both facilitated connecting successful northern entrepreneurs with those interested in sparking meaningful change within their locales.

WOSEN's work reveals co-creative processes that contribute to supporting organizations in moving towards centring equity and developing effective entrepreneurial supports. Specifically, it identifies how to:

1. Collaborate to surface what founders needed to participate and prosper in business;
2. Build an ecosystem of trust to co-create effective programming;
3. Assess the progress and impact of this work; and,
4. Increase the effectiveness of investment in women's entrepreneurship.

NORDIK also led the Developmental Evaluation (DE) aspect of this large-scale project, authoring reports including the final report, [Investing in Women Entrepreneurs: A case study for co-creating effective supports](#) (May 2023). The project was led by Pillar NonProfit in partnership with the Centre for Social Innovation, SVX, Lean4Flourishing and NORDIK and funded in part by FedDev Ontario. SEE staff: Dr. Jude Ortiz, Elizabeth MacMillan and Tamara Gagnon.

## Aki Kikinomakaywin (Learning on the Land) Summer Camp



Indigenous youth face multiple barriers to education. Aki Kikinomakaywin (Learning on the Land) aims to address these barriers by supporting Indigenous youth from across northern Ontario in gaining confidence to attend post-secondary institutions. The week-long land-and water-based camp is grounded in Anishinaabe teachings, stories, and ceremony that weave Indigenous and Western ways of knowing into science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) curricula.

This year, the program ran from July 16th – 22nd where approximately 17 Indigenous youth travelled to Lakehead University from communities across the region. A total of 15 unique community affiliations were developed between Indigenous youth, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and guests participating in the program. Anonymous post-camp survey responses indicated youth left with a greater interest in their culture, in pursuing a future career in a STEAM field and in attending a post-secondary institution than before the camp. Feedback from youth and staff was overwhelmingly positive, with one youth stating in their post-camp survey, “[Camp] made me feel closer to my culture.”

Aki Kikinomakaywin is led by Research Associate Haley MacLeod, Project Lead Lydia Johnson, and Elders Sheila DeCorte and Sharon Maniowabi. The program is overseen by an advisory committee of Indigenous leaders that includes Marnie Yourchuk, Mary Wabano-McKay, Carolyn Hepburn, Lisa Harris, and Amanda Misnakoshkang. Thanks to funding from NSERC PromoScience, NOHFC and The Laidlaw Foundation, six core staff were hired this year, including Assistant Coordinator Aden Johnson, Mental Wellness Lead Clifford Mushquash, Mental Wellness Team Member Tyler Goode, chaperones Amber Jones and Michelle Jones, in addition to Indigenous artists and Knowledge Keepers Shelby Gagnon, Betty Carpick, and Sara Kae. We were also grateful to have support from our partners and collaborators from The School of Indigenous Learning, Canadian Geographic, Water First, Confederation College, and Let’s Talk Science.

We would like to extend a heartfelt *chi miigwetch* to everyone who made Aki Kikinomakaywin 2023 a success! To read and watch some stories from camp, please see the following links below!

[CBC video and write up](#)

[The Walleye Pre-Camp](#)

[The Walleye Post-Camp](#)

[Anishinabek News](#)

# Upper Great Lakes Community Ecosystem Monitoring

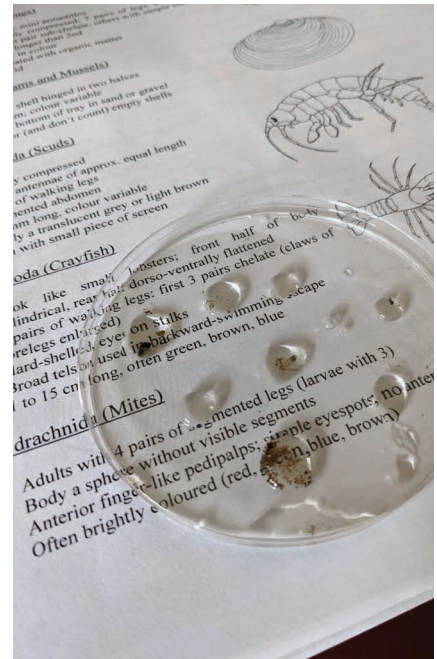
This two-year (Dec 2022-Dec 2024) project builds on our previous work in collaboration with Garden River First Nation to increase regional capacity to collect and share local surface water quality data. The current project contributes to ground work that is intended to grow geographically and in scope (to incorporate other, non-water data) over the next decade. Objectives of the two-year project, funded by the Great Lakes Local Action Fund, are:

1. Increase the managing capacities of the Missanabie Cree First Nation and Sault Ste. Marie Region Conservation Authority to monitor and manage the state and health of local waters.
2. Build on the relationships and approaches implemented during the pilot project at Garden River First Nation to increase and coordinate water quality monitoring efforts across the

lower Lake Superior and into the St. Marys River Area of Concern.

3. Determine what opportunities exist for community-derived data to provide multiple benefits (e.g., related to multiple issues: water quality, invasive species, plastics/shoreline pollution) in a strategic way.
4. Innovate public engagement approaches that leverage community efforts to support the tracking freshwater impacts at the land-water interface.

Although our first field season is not planned until the 23-24 fiscal year, we are excited to have hired our first staff member – a Water Guardian at Missanabie Cree First Nation – and to have developed partnerships with 15 organizations leading up to the execution of this project.



## The Journey Home

Across Canada, many formal Indian Residential Schools' (IRS) property, including Algoma University (AU), is being searched for unmarked graves. AU's Site Search Team is undertaking the work in collaboration with the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA) to address key issues related to the site search and community engagement processes.

The Site Search Team researched other IRS Site Search Work and technologies, including Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), historic detection dogs, Lidar, soil sampling, and aerial photography. The team provided logistics support for the GPR scanning on site in the Fall of 2022 and Spring of 2023.

The initial process of creating a community engagement and support plan was conducive to becoming familiarized with the developed Shingwauk Student List and Impacted Community List. A map was created to help visually understand the vast geographic range from which children were taken and brought to Shingwauk Residential School.

To ensure that culturally appropriate supports, protocols and ceremonies were in place the team networked with Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services to access local Knowledge Keepers and Elders to support this work. Members of the Cultural Services Team, Lorrie Boissoneau, Mike Tegosh and Ashley Bell were present when GPR scanning began in the Fall of 2023. They provided morning prayer and song and led the group to make a tobacco offering.

Events during the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA) 2023 Gathering led to an application to the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs of Ontario for Mino Bimaadiziwin: A Pilot Project to

Support the Journey to Health and Well-Being for the Survivors of the Shingwauk Residential School Site". The project aims to address the need for Indigenous led survivor centered supports within the cultural context of each community that has connections to the Shingwauk Site.

## Algoma Central Railway Heritage Designation



A committee led by Mask-wa Transportation Association Inc. (Linda Savory Gordon and Johnathan Lalonde) submitted a 30-page complete nomination application in the spring of 2023 to the Canadian Heritage Ministry to have the Algoma Central Rail corridor receive a heritage designation. This rail corridor is not sufficiently valued, and as a consequence, the federal government has cancelled passenger train service along it. It is possible that if it receives an official heritage designation that may increase the possibility of passenger train service being funded and it would attract more passengers to use the restored service.



The Heritage Ministry acknowledged receipt of the application and replied that it would take approximately 4 to 6 months before any preliminary response would be sent. It normally takes about 2 years for the researchers with Heritage Canada to conduct research to determine if the ACR would be designated. The Canadian government heritage designation would make it possible to apply for UNESCO heritage designation.

The Mask-wa Transportation Association Inc. collaborated with the following organizations which all sent representatives to the committee: NORDIK (Linda Savory Gordon), Sault Ste. Marie Museum (William Hollingshead), Geography Dept of Algoma U (Dr. Nairne Cameron and student Megan McGuire), Missanabie Cree First Nation (Shirley Horn), Painted Land: In Search of the Group of Seven film researchers (Michael Burtch, Joanie and Gary McGuffin), Métis Nation of Ontario (Steve Gjos), Sault Ste. Marie Heritage Committee (Jami Van Haaften).

# Ideas, Analysis and Dialogue





## The Packsack Project: Podcasts Exploring Resilience

This collaborative podcast, between the Rural Agri-Innovation Network (RAIN) and NORDIK Institute, interviews people, businesses, and organizations who are adapting to change in ways that are reflective of Northern Ontario’s culture and geography. They share real life stories, experiences, and examples that build resilience and may require a change in perspective, attitude, partnerships, and alliances along the way.

Topics range from innovations to rural and Northern medical training at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (now NOSM U) to entrepreneurial First Nations – and many topics in between. To date, 14 episodes that showcase researchers, social enterprises, organizations, and communities across Northern Ontario are available on the Packsack Project YouTube Channel and through a local podcast network.

In the upcoming 2023-24 year, the partners have teamed up with the Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA) to explore how social finance may be able to support greater food security and food access for First Nations.

## SPARK Series

This virtual series is designed to foster awareness between research and community activism that contribute to social, economic, environmental and cultural justice by profiling the work of community actors and researchers. Each month, Spark hosts passionate individuals who are interested in sharing their knowledge and experiences with the larger community. The presentations this year were as follows:

- ✚ Ramping Up Northern Meat Processing with David Thompson
- ✚ Anti-Asian Racisms with Dr. Rose Ann Torres
- ✚ Celebrating 10 years of Thinking Rock Community Arts with Miranda Bouchard

**NORDIK INSTITUTE'S SPARK SERIES**

Join us at **12:00 PM - 1:00 PM EST**

**Nov. 30<sup>TH</sup>**

**Ramping Up Northern Meat Processing**  
with David Thompson

The Spark Series aims to break down communication silos and foster awareness between research and community activism that contribute to social, economic, environmental and cultural justice by profiling the work of community actors and researchers in Northern Ontario.

NORDIK INSTITUTE

For more information about this series, or to be a part of the next series, please contact: Amy Boyer at amy.boyer@oigomau.ca

**July 27<sup>TH</sup>**

**Anti-Asian Racisms**

with Dr. Rose Torres  
Director and Assistant Professor  
School of Social Work,  
Algonia University

**June 29<sup>TH</sup>**

**Celebrating 10 Years of Thinking Rock Community Arts**

with Miranda Bouchard

# Building Bridges

Thank you to our partners and funders:



**Algoma University's Community Development and Research Institute**

1520 Queen Street East Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 2G4

[nordikinstitute.com](http://nordikinstitute.com)