

BAY MILLS NEWS

Serving the Eastern Upper Peninsula

“Gnoozhekaaning Bidajimowin”

APRIL 2026

Bear Creek brings home a Juno Award

HAMILTON, Ont. — Indigenous musicians Bear Creek were honored at the Juno Awards held in Hamilton on March 29.

The drum received their first major award for “Traditional Artist or Group of the Year.” The award stems from their latest work, “On the Move” – Powwow songs recorded live at Apache Gold.

Members of the group are familiar faces to many in the local community as two of the drummers— Mike Willis and Mzzhickkekahbah Thomas — teach at Bay Mills Community College.

Willis is the department chair for BMCC’s Native American Studies Department, and Thomas works as a TRiO SSS Academic Success Coach and teaches as an adjunct in the Native Studies program.

Founded in 1998, the group has been

traversing the United States and Canada with their music for more than 30 years. The group includes: Joe Syrette (Batchewana First Nation), John Syrette (Batchewana First Nation), Mike Willis (Bay Mills Indian Community), Mzzhickkekahbah Thomas (Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation), Cameron Bear (Big River First Nation), Jordan Mowat, (Alderville First Nation), Lateachia Pemma (Forest County Potawatomi), Selese Syrette (Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians), Rodney Stanger (Timiskaming First Nation), Herwin Begay (Navajo Nation), Dylon Begay (Navajo), Nathan Roy (Wikwemikong Unceded Territory), Brock Lewis (Wikwemikong Unceded Territory), Jayden Wemigwans (Wikwemikong Unceded Territory)

A Juno is Canada’s highest musical



CARAS/Fuze Reps/ O’shane Howard

honor and is considered the equivalent of a Grammy Award. The drum was previously nominated in 2011.

Bear Creek is currently signed with Hidden Lake Recordings, a label focused on supporting Indigenous artists.

BMIC takes Enbridge case to MI Hall of Justice

Attorneys ask Supreme Court to overturn Michigan Public Service Commission’s approval for a tunnel beneath the Straits of Mackinac

LANSING – On March 11 attorneys representing a coalition of environmental groups and Tribal Nations made arguments before the Michigan Supreme Court challenging Enbridge Energy’s efforts to bore a tunnel beneath the Straits of Mackinac to house its Line 5 oil pipeline. Attorneys asked the Court to overturn a lower court decision that upheld the Michigan Public Service Commission’s (MPSC) approval for the tunnel. They argued that the lower court applied the incorrect legal standard and overlooked significant flaws in the Commission’s application of the landmark Michigan Environmental Protection Act (“MEPA”). The MPSC’s approval for the Line 5 tunnel would extend the risks of pumping oil across the Great Lakes for another 99 years.

The Environmental Law & Policy Center (ELPC) and Michigan Climate Action Network (MiCAN) argued alongside the Bay Mills Indian Community, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, represented by Earthjustice and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF). In a separate challenge, Flow Water Advocates argued that the MPSC should have rejected the tunnel under common-law public trust doctrine.

“Michigan law is clear: Projects that threaten our waters must meet the standards of the Michigan Environmental Protection Act and the public trust doctrine. The Straits of Mackinac belong to all of us, and the State has a duty to protect them,” said Bay Mills Indian Community President Whitney Gravelle. “Tribal Nations have treaty-protected rights to fish, hunt, and gather in these waters, rights that cannot exist if the resources they depend on are put at risk. We are asking the Michigan Supreme Court to ensure those legal protections are fully respected before this project moves forward.”

ELPC, MiCAN, the Tribal Nations, and Flow urged the Supreme Court to reverse the lower court decision. The parties want to ensure that Enbridge’s tunnel project is subject to the rigorous and rational review that is required by MEPA to protect the public’s “paramount” interest under the Michigan Constitution to safeguard the state’s natural resources.

A decision in the MPSC case is expected later this summer.

Enbridge is facing litigation on several fronts from tribal nations in Michigan and Wisconsin, and Michigan Attorney General Nessel. Earlier this year the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in Enbridge Energy v. Nessel, stemming from the State of Michigan’s fight to shut down the 72-year-old Line 5 oil pipeline. That decision is also pending.



Chairperson's Report: Many projects in the works

By **BMIC President Whitney Gravelle**

As Spring has begun, we are entering our major construction period for Bay Mills Indian Community, which we still has a lot of projects that are underway which will be completed over the next several months. Of considerable note, we will starting the expansion of Bay Mills Community College, re-developing Kings Club, building additional apartments and homes, as well as completing the Firekeeper's Lodge at the Cultural Center, the solar farm on M-221, and the Materials Management Facility.

In more recent news, there have been many conversations with the Executive Council about loss of language and the impact this has had on culture and traditions in Bay Mills Indian Community. Data from linguistics, public health, and Indigenous studies all show that language loss is not just about communication; it directly impacts identity, knowledge systems, and community well-being. For example, prior to colonization more than 300 languages were spoken in the United States, but now most of the languages are endangered and projections suggest fewer than 20 languages survive by 2050 without intervention.

As such, work has begun on developing a broader language revitalization strategy for the Bay Mills Indian Community. This long-term effort is focused on strengthening the use of Anishinaabemowin throughout the community and building sustainable systems that support language learning for all ages. As part of this planning process, visits are being scheduled with the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Both tribes have made significant progress in developing immersion-based language programs, and these visits will provide an opportunity to learn more about their approaches, successes, and lessons learned. Observing their immersion schools and speaking with educators and language leaders will help inform how a similar model could be adapted for Bay Mills.

The goal of this work is to develop a comprehensive language revitalization plan that builds multiple cohorts of fluent speakers over time. The vision is to create immersion opportunities that support learners from the earliest stages of education through adulthood. This would include integrating Anishinaabemowin beginning in Early Head Start programs and continuing through elementary school, middle school, high school, and eventually into college-level opportunities for Bay Mills Indian Community citizens. By creating a continuous learning pathway, the community can support students as they grow into confident speakers who are able to carry the language into future generations. Building these cohorts of language learners will also help ensure that the language is not only taught in classrooms but used in everyday life within tribal government, community programs, and homes. Over time, this approach can help strengthen the number of fluent speakers and create a stronger cultural foundation across the community.

Language revitalization is closely tied to cultural identity and connection. Anishinaabemowin carries traditional knowledge, teachings, and ways of understanding the world that cannot always be translated directly into English. By strengthening language use, the community is also strengthening cultural practices, values, and relationships to ancestors and future generations. As a more comprehensive action plan is developed, it will be brought to the Executive Council for review and then the General Tribal Council for action.

In other news, Bay Mills Indian Community also recently received the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation grant from the U.S. Department of Justice that will allow us to pursue special jurisdiction under the Violence Against Women Act. Special Tribal Court Jurisdiction (STCJ) is a legal authority that allows federally recognized tribes to prosecute certain crimes committed on tribal lands by non-Native offenders, particularly in cases involving domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, and violations of protection orders. This authority was expanded through the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 and later strengthened by the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, which recognized the importance of tribal sovereignty and the need for tribes to protect their citizens from violence regardless of the offender's tribal status.

Historically, tribal courts lacked criminal jurisdiction over non-Native offenders because of the *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* decision by the Supreme Court of the United States, which created a major gap in public safety on tribal lands. STCJ helps close this gap by restoring a limited but significant form of jurisdiction to tribal governments. Expanding jurisdiction strengthens tribal sovereignty, improves community safety, and ensures accountability for individuals who commit crimes in Indian Country. When tribes can prosecute offenders directly, cases can be handled more quickly and with greater cultural understanding, while also reducing reliance on outside state or federal systems that may be distant or under-resourced. Implementing STCJ also demonstrates a tribe's commitment to protecting victims and building a comprehensive tribal

justice system. Accepting the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation grant from the U.S. Department of Justice is a significant step toward achieving this goal. The CTAS program provides federal funding to help tribes strengthen public safety infrastructure, including tribal courts, law enforcement, detention, and victim services.

Finally, ongoing meetings have been scheduled to go over Destination Bay Mills initiatives for BMIC. This includes programming available for next year, which includes purchasing a water trampoline down at Riverview, hosting movie nights throughout the summer, starting tours of the EUP, providing e-bikes available to rent to visitors and other patrons, and increasing interpretive signage and cultural signage throughout Bay Mills Indian Community. This initiative will also include updates to parks and playground on Plantation Hill, improvements made at Hanks Pond, and other recreation opportunities.

We had another General Tribal Council meeting this month. At the meeting we went over updates to our tribal citizens on projects currently happening in Bay Mills Indian Community, received presentations from various Departments, and also reviewed proposals related to Expanding Tribal Court Jurisdiction, Authorizing Financing for the Long Term Care Facility and the Safe Routes to School Project.

For the first issue, the Bay Mills Tribal Court was originally established as a Code of Federal Regulations Court. On March 8, 1976, it became a Tribal Court operating under the Bay Mills Law and Order Code and Bay Mills Ordinances. This means its authority is based on these laws, not the Bay Mills Constitution. We are now requesting approval to update these Tribal Codes and Ordinances so that the Tribal Court can have the broadest authority allowed under federal Indian law. The updates would occur within multiple Ordinances, such as: Tribal Court, Juvenile, Paternity, Criminal Code, and Civil Codes. This would allow the court to handle all legal matters involving Bay Mills tribal citizens and other Native American individuals.

The expansion of the Tribal Court's jurisdiction is complementary to the expansion of criminal jurisdiction the Tribal Court will now be undertaking having received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to support implementation of special tribal criminal jurisdiction under the Violence Against Women Act.

In addition, the Bay Mills Health Center has been planning, preparing, and conducting the feasibility of building a Long Term Care Facility. After years of preparation we are ready to bring financing of the project to the General Tribal Council. As many are aware, the Bay Mills Health Center currently does not have an inpatient facility that provides long-term care or rehabilitation for the tribal community. Instead, our tribal citizens must rely on two facilities within a 50-mile radius, Medilodge and My Michigan Health Sault Ste. Marie, both of which are facing critical over-population and staffing shortages. Constructing and operating our own facility would provide 24/7 medical and non-medical support for individuals with chronic illnesses, disabilities, or recovery needs following illness, surgery, or injury. A strategic plan has been initiated to define the site, preliminary schematic designs, market demand analysis, operational budget for 10 years, and a feasibility study. If approved, proposed construction would begin in 2027.

Finally, Bay Mills Indian Community has received federal funding to improve safety along West Lakeshore Drive, from Ojibwe Charter School to the Bay Mills Health Center. The project includes a major widening of the road, which could affect nearby homeowners' properties. We would like to meet with the Tribe to discuss the potential impacts, review the proposed safety improvements, and determine whether the project should move forward. It is important to gather input from the community as part of this process. We want to ensure that all concerns are heard, carefully considered, and fully addressed before any decisions are made.

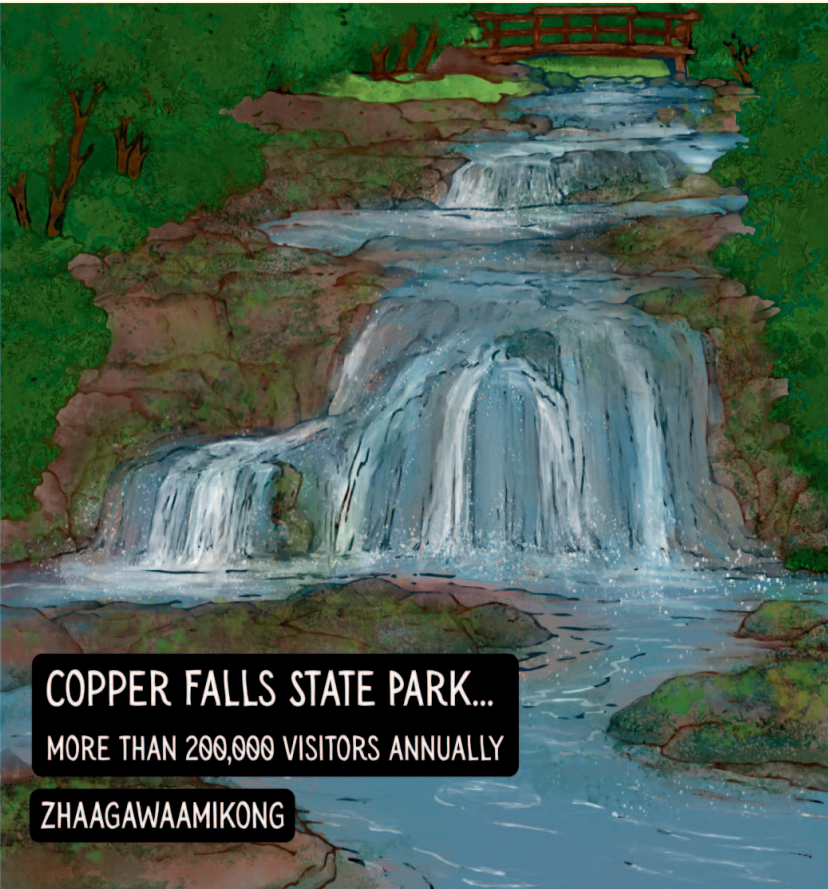
Bay Mills Indian Community has experienced significant growth in recent years, with major advancements in infrastructure and the expansion of essential services. We sincerely appreciate the community's patience and support as we've managed an extensive list of ongoing projects.

In the months ahead, the Executive Council remains focused on continuing this progress by expanding government services, strengthening business operations, and enhancing benefits for our employees. Our teams are also actively working on key initiatives, including improving access to childcare, exploring new energy and broadband opportunities, protecting treaty resources, and updating tribal laws to better serve our citizens and future generations.

Our teams will continue to strive for the success of Bay Mills Indian Community. Please check out our tribal website or the official Tribal Chairperson Facebook Page for regular updates about what is going on here at Bay Mills. Please don't hesitate to call, email, or stop by for a visit to share your thoughts, questions, and concerns with me.



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Progress Michigan*

Waaskone Giizis - Flower Moon - May 2026

Niizhwaaso Giizhigad	Ntam Giizhigad	Niizho Giizhigad	Nswo Giizhigad	Niiwo Giizhigad	Naano Giizhigad	Ngodwaaswo Giizhigad
	To hear the pronunciation of these words, please scan this QR code for our videos:				1 giizis (the sun)	2 dibiki-giizis (the moon)
3 Dakeyaa. (It is cool weather.)	4 Awanabiisaa. (It is misty/sprinkling rain.)	5 Msko-goodaas Giizhigad (MMIW Red Dress Day) 	6 Zaagaate. (The sun is coming out.)	7 Waaseyaa. (It is sunny/bright.)	8 Aabawaasige. (The sun warms things up.)	9 Aabitawaabikizi. (It is a half moon.)
10 Gashi Giizhigad (Mother's Day)	11 waaskonenyin (flowers)	12 namebagoniin (a trout lily)	13 baashknjibagwaan (a white trillium)	14 ogitebag (a marsh marigold)	15 bgoji-zhigaagawanzhiik (wild leeks)	16 N'wii-gitige. (I am going to plant/garden.)
17 N'wii-bashwashkibijige n'gitigaan. (I'm going to weed my garden.)	18 ginii (a rose)	19 waaskone-gitigaan (a flower garden)	20 Baashkaabigwanii. (It blossoms.)	21 maanwangin (fruits)	22 netaawging (vegetables)	23 N'gichinendam. (I am happy.)
24 mitig (a tree)	25 Mikwenmagaazook Giizhigad (Memorial Day)	26 mitigoons (a tree branch)	27 amik (beaver)	28 bineshiinh (a bird)	29 pichi (an American robin)	30 nika (a Canada goose)
31						

Bay Mills Language and Culture - Gnoozhekaaning Anishinaabemowin miinwaa Anishinaabe Bimaadziwin



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Chat online at www.strongheartshelpline.org

Executive Council discusses business at regular meeting

President Whitney Gravelle

— Executive Council met the BMCC Board of Regents. BMCC is having their largest commencement in history. The meeting also discussed the expansion and addition of the Allied Health Facility.

— Brimley development is being discussed. The tribe is working to get land into trust and build apartments and a retail facility for the local area.

— EGLE held a consultation for Line 5. One permit being sought must be approved by July 17 for the proposed tunnel. The US Army Corps must determine if another permit is to be given as well. We are working to have teams on site for cultural surveys being done on resources in the Straits.

— Sacy's has been gutted and is being prepped for renovations. We have been working with insurance adjusters to fund this reconstruction.. It could be as late as January before it is up and running.

— Tribal IDs: If the the SAVE Act were to pass, they would have to be adjusted, even if we do not get enhanced IDs in time. This requires several steps working with the federal agencies.

— Language revitalization is progressing. We will bring this to the General Tribal Council.

— Tribal website updates are still being done. We are renovating this to streamline communication and documents. A portal is being created to share information with members.

Tribal Manager Rachel Lyons

— Several new positions have started. Lisa Kennedy will be serving as project manager. Kevin Titus is the governmental facilities manager.

— Looking at placement for new light poles.

— Materials Management Facility site prep being reviewed.

Chief Financial Officer Crystal Wilcox

— NLCC is working on insurance claim with the adjuster.

— ACH training has not yet taken place in accounting.

— IT is assessing computer costs and equipment.

— Internal candidates have filled accounting positions.

Health Director Lucy DeWildt

— Long term care planning is on the agenda for the GTC.

— Pharmacy software has been updated and deployed.

— A meeting was held with MyMichigan for collabora-

tion.

— Acquiring new computer equipment, working with IT.

— MDHHS is discussing Medicaid changes. Federal cuts are impacting state funding. The state is looking at how to reduce their budget. We have no information at this time.

— We are working with other ambulances in the area to help with transfers, as their vehicles need repair.

Human Resources Director Stacey Walden

— The payroll system demo is almost complete. We will select a system after that.

— Reviewing wage data with the health center.

— Working on an employee satisfaction survey.

Cultural Director Allyn Cameron

— Working on programming at the cultural center.

— Working on sugar bush taps.

— Biology offered a field trip to share some knowledge.

— The museum display is coming along well.

— Would like to build a better relationship USFS.

Bay Mills Gaming Authority Richard LeBlanc

— Hair service will be added to the salon. We have staff to do this service.

— There was some furniture damaged from a child with a pen. Pool banishments are coming down as well as poor supervision has had an impact on services. Discussing a pool attendant. The arcade is doing well. Prize kiosk is arriving.

Bay Mills Business Holdings

Jesse Smith, NLCC

— Big sales planned for 420. New staff hired.

— Ice dam caused roof damage. Waiting on quotes.

Justin LeBlanc, Four Seasons & Bay Mart

— Looking at septic issues and possible grant funding.

— Met with Aunt Millie's rep and they are cutting our account because they want larger accounts. We are looking at options from other suppliers.

— Will partner with Bay Mart for Spirit Walk.

— Working on establishing inventory via tablet.

— Sales are up at Four Seasons. Bay Mart report is still being done. They are up as well, considering the gas prices.

New Business: Approved.

1. Resolution No. 26-04-13A: Residential Lease & Application – Daisy Walden

2. Resolution No. 26-04-13B: Residential Lease Termination – Paula Carrick

3. Resolution No. 26-04-13C: Legal Services Agreement – Sadie Elizabeth Harris. This is for the open attorney position.

4. Resolution No. 26-04-13D: Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity – Tribal Data Resources. This is for tribal enrollment software.

5. Resolution No. 26-04-13E: Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity – Soils & Structures, Inc.

6. Resolution No. 26-04-13F: Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity – MyMichigan Laboratory Services

7. Resolution No. 26-04-13G: Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity for Land Purchase – M221. This is for the land behind Bay Mart.

8. Resolution No. 26-04-13H: Approval to Submit State Highwater Infrastructure Application - \$127,892. There is a \$31k match. Four Seasons has budgeted these funds for match.

9. Approval to Submit Grant Application – Stop Violence Victim Services - \$150,000 (Tabled)

10. Approval to Accept Funds – DHHS Title VI Grants for Native Americans - \$158,482. These are funds for elder's programming.

11. Donation Request: Grand Rapids Public Museum request for funds for the "Anishnabek: The People of This Place" exhibit. A \$1,000 donation was approved. Sault Theatre sponsorship of \$1,000 approved — same as last year. State Social Studies Competition request for tribal members who did presentation on boarding schools. They will compete for National History Day. Transportation cost and lodging request of \$600 approved. EUP Hazard Mitigation Plan: This is from Central Dispatch to update the plan every five years. There has been a struggle to get participants. The request is to cover the funds to cater at Bay Mills Resort & Casino. The goal is to increase stakeholder attendance. Request for services approved at \$750. The event takes place April 22.

12. Reaffirmation of Poll Votes:

i. Emergency Medical Donations

ii. Submission of Braided Pathways: Youth Wellness & Prevention Initiative - \$375,000

iii. Cottingham Buttler Fee Agreement for Insurance - \$65,000

iv. Letter of Intent for Kings Club Redevelopment.



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New book reveals the unknown political, legal stories as a result of the Edmund Fitzgerald sinking

By Joshua Kim

Capital News Service

LANSING – A new book, “Wrecked: The Edmund Fitzgerald and the Sinking of the American Economy” (Michigan State University Press, \$29.95), uncovers more of the political and legal aspects of the legendary Edmund Fitzgerald shipwreck.

Thomas Nelson, a Wisconsin public administrator and one of the authors of the book, said that while the Edmund Fitzgerald’s story is well known, there is more context behind the event that most people aren’t familiar with.

“This is something more than just a maritime shipwreck,” Nelson said. “The Fitzgerald was a vehicle that literally and figuratively carried the U.S. economy. I looked at this as a way to study the U.S. political economy.”

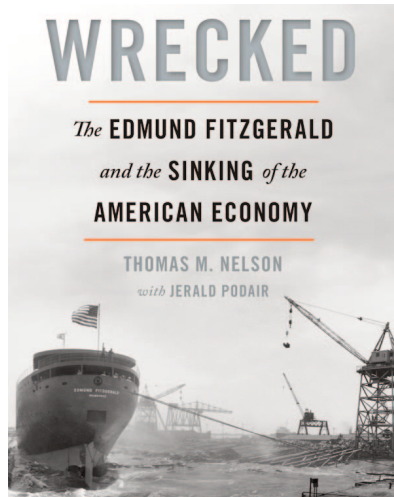
The Edmund Fitzgerald sank on Nov. 10, 1975, while transporting taconite to Detroit in a storm in Lake Superior.

The author said the Edmund Fitzgerald was one of the ships that played a major role in the U.S. economy, transporting taconite and iron ore around the Great Lakes to be made into steel, which was then used to produce automobiles and machinery.

The book delves deeply into the corporate culture of America at the time of the sinking and Nelson’s theory of how the economic side of that culture contributed to the event.

In the book, Nelson and co-author Jerald Podair discuss the regulatory processes for maritime safety and labor laws and argue that the lack of adequate regulations at the time contributed to the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald and, as a result, the “sinking of the American economy.”

Podair is a history professor at



Lawrence University.

“I had learned about how [the Edmund Fitzgerald] was emblematic of the manufacturing economy in the 1960s and 1970s because it carried taconite ore,” Nelson said.

“But there’s also the human element of the story. I found myself going in many different directions, looking at not just the economics, but also politics, government regulation, environmental issues and other businesses that were connected to it.”

Nelson said the “heart of all this” is the 29 families that lost loved ones and the need to prevent another maritime or transportation catastrophe.

He explained that one reason many people are drawn to the story is that they identify with the working-class crew members and their families.

“They can relate to the families themselves. They come from small towns. So in my example, here in Outagamie [Wisconsin] County, our largest economy was manufacturing and the paper industry. When I got to learn the backstories of these crew members and their families, it reminded me a lot of friends and families that grew up in my neighborhood.”

Nelson went on to say how one rela-

tive told him the book has become “her bible,” and that it’s answered a lot of her questions that have lingered.

“She said the only regret she had was that this book wasn’t written decades earlier,” said Nelson.

He hopes readers will be able to read a “unique and compelling” theory of why the ship sank and learn more about the political economy aspects of the event.

“You know if you’re looking at a bookshelf, or maybe searching on Ama-

zon or someplace else, you look at all these different titles, you’ll look, ‘same, same, same, ah, this one’s different.’”

His work is a culmination of an enormous amount of research not previously discussed.

“I call attention to facts, to events related to the sinking that no one has talked about for 50 years. Instead of just looking at graphs and statistics, and other boring books, you are reading a fun story that, in the process, helps animate these issues,” Nelson concluded.

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8am - 3pm

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Cultural Activities
Physical Activities

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IHS Model Agreement CY 2025 - Annual Report

An annual contract was entered into by the Bay Mills Indian Community and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service.

The following Programs, Functions, Services and Activities were performed:

A. Health Management: Provide overall administrative services for Tribal Health and Human Services Programs. Services included overall supervision, coordination, management, and monitoring of all Tribal Health and Human Services Programs.

B. Primary Medical and Dental Services: In 2025, the Medical Clinic served 2,467 patients with 9,776 visits; staffed by 4.1 FTE medical providers (Medical Doctor, Nurse Practitioners). The Dental Clinic served 1,949 patients with 8,532 visits; staffed with 6.75 FTE dental providers (Dentists, Dental Hygienists, and Dental Therapist). The Medical and Dental Services were staffed in accordance with tribal priorities, availability of funds, and demand for services. The Health Center maintains accreditation through the Joint Commission in Ambulatory Health Care, Behavioral Health Care and Patient Centered Medical Home. The Patient Centered Medical Home is both a designation through the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and The Joint Commission. Services were also available to non-Native Americans, and services continued to be provided on Fee for Service and Value Based Care. Efforts are made to capture all possible third-party revenue through insurance companies and other reimbursement parties. Revenue generated by clinic services is reprogrammed into operating expenses, service expansion, employee retention efforts, and savings & investment accounts are used for future planning.

C. Purchased/Referred Care (PRC): In order to provide comprehensive health services to eligible individuals, a Purchased/Referred Care Program was maintained. Health services as defined in this section may be purchased through other health providers when the Bay Mills Health Clinic cannot provide such services. Purchased health services may include hospitalization, specialized physician and dental care, pharmacy, and patient transportation. Services procured will be in accordance with IHS regulations and tribal priorities. Approximately \$1,105,034.19 was expended for PRC purchased services, including \$415,986.07 in prescription purchases for tribal members. Bay Mills Health Center has continued their efforts to sponsor tribal elders and purchase Medicare Part D prescription coverage.

D. Substance Abuses Services: Substance abuse services were provided to eligible individuals and consists of intensive outpatient, outpatient counseling, relapse prevention, youth prevention, crisis and referral services and medication assisted treatment. The Substance Abuse Program served 203 clients, totaling 1458 visits in 2025. Sessions were conducted through in person service and/or telehealth service.

E. Mental Health Services: Mental health services consisted of outpatient therapy, psychological testing, psychiatry, counseling, family therapy, play therapy, prevention. The full time Behavioral Health Coordinator works closely with our medical clinic staff to integrate behavioral health and primary care. This program served 509 patients and had 6,414 visits. Sessions were conducted through in person service or telehealth service.

F. Community Health Services: Community Health Services operated many programs in 2025 including: Special Diabetes Program, farmer's market, food sovereignty programs, patient health education, Tribal Home Visiting, Healthy Start, Healing for those Creating Life, patient transportation for medical appointments and medication delivery were active services all throughout the year. The farmer's market was celebrated as it reached its ten year anniversary this year.

G. Environmental Health Program (Sanitarian): Field Environmental Health Sanitarian Services are provided in accordance with IHS criteria through a subcontract arrangement with Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan. These services provide various inspections/surveys of tribal facilities and training. Copies of these inspections may be viewed in the Human Resources Department. The total of this contract is \$39,000 annually.

H. Emergency Medical Services: Twenty-four hour emergency medical services are available, including advanced life support. There were 358 ambulance runs. Our service area includes Chippewa Township, Bay Mills Township and Superior Township.

I. Targeted Case Management for Direct Services: Case management is done across the various departments, especially in the case of more complex patient needs.

J. Optometry Services: In 2025 we served 670 patients with 877 visits.

K. Radiology: There were a total of 246 mammograms and 596 x-rays completed in 2025.

L. Pharmacy: On-site pharmacy services are provided to the Native American and non-Native American patients of the Health Center. Bay Mills Health Center Pharmacy maintains a 340b program and discounted prescriptions. There were 31,186 prescriptions filled at the Bay Mills Pharmacy and 5,397 prescriptions filled at Mitigoons Pharmacy.

M. School Based Services: In 2024, we finished our renovation construction project at the Brimley Area School to create a clinic space with two exam rooms, triage area, waiting space, bathroom, workroom with storage and desk area. Additionally, we renovated an additional office space for a mental health therapist counseling room. A medical provider provided medical care to school based children and adolescents aged 5 to 21 years old in our satellite clinic named Zaagigi. A School Wellness Program is operated in this space as well and has a registered nurse providing nursing services to the school and a mental health therapist providing therapy during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school year.

Base funding amounts available in Calendar Year 2025 were \$3,027,928.91 with \$324,140.37 going towards tribal indirect costs. Overall, the funding pays for 12.5 FTE positions throughout the health center. Additionally, money is used for Purchased/Referred Care, supplies, training, travel, and professional fees. Bay Mills Health Center spent down all money allocated by Indian Health Service in 2025. We supplement this funding for operations with Medical Revenue funds to ensure that patients receive the care they need.

Respectfully Submitted by: Lucy P. DeWildt, Pharm D
Health & Human Services Director

Partnerships work to tackle housing shortage in Michigan

By **JUSTIN FOX CLAUSEN**
Capital News Service

LANSING – While a lack of affordable housing remains a top issue, there are “bright spots” in the state’s housing situation, according to Kelley Kuhn, the president of the Michigan Nonprofit Association.

“If a community is looking to build housing or do economic development improvements in the community, they may be working in partnership with a local unit of government, like a city or a county,” Kuhn said.

“But likely they are also partnering somewhere with a nonprofit organization focused on economic development as well,” she said.

Kuhn said public-private partnerships between state and local government institutions, such as the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), and private entities like local nonprofits can help solve housing shortages.

With government support, these nonprofits can also target the specific needs of the communities they assist as priorities.

“They are going to refurbish buildings and communities and repurpose land, but they’re going to center people who are going to be using that housing, and what they need and what that looks like,” Kuhn said.

A lack of affordable housing is not unique to Michigan.

Proposed solutions have received bipartisan support in many states, according to an article by Stateline, a national nonprofit news service.

In 2022, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation intended to reduce housing costs and solve shortages.

The bills included the establishment of tax-exempt residential housing districts, as well as funding for building new homes and repurposing existing buildings and land.

In the same year, MSHDA released a statewide housing development plan, which included goals for the following five years.

Those goals would be implemented by private partnerships receiving state support, including 15 regional partnership agencies.

Nearly four years later, Lisa McKenzie, a regional planner for the Western U.P Planning & Development Region based in Hancock, says progress since has made many happy homeowners.

The projects completed in the region so far include 54 single-family home rehabs, with 10 more on the way.

Current projects include homes in Houghton, Hancock and Iron County.

McKenzie said the partnerships have had economic impact and improved stability.

Michele Wildman, the senior vice president of community planning & development readiness of the Michigan Economic Development Corp. (MEDC), said that growing vibrant and resilient places is an integral part of the agency’s economic development work, including housing that is affordable for Michigan’s workforce.

In each of its 10 regions, the MEDC

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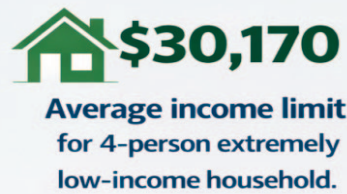
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Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition

has community development managers who accept applications from local partners.

“Through our placemaking tools, the MEDC, in partnership with communities and developers, then makes investments in vacant and underutilized properties across the state,” Wildman said.

Notable recent projects from the MEDC include Preserve on Ash in Detroit, Lofts at Lumber Square in Petoskey and Sawmill Lofts in Grayling.

Wildman said that the affordability of housing in MEDC’s projects is en-

ured differently based on the project and community.

“Sometimes projects may include funding from other public partners that monitor for affordability. Other times, there may be a local municipal partner, such as a local unit of government or local housing authority, working with onsite property management to help connect families with differing affordability needs,” Wildman said.

“These investments help communities revitalize key corridors, create more inclusive economic opportunities and build places where people want to live, work, and grow,” Wildman said.



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Proposed legislation that would alter state's K-12 school choice law faces criticism

By LILLIAN WILLIAMS
Capital News Service

LANSING – Legislation proposed in the House would allow students to attend any public K-12 school in the state for free and require all public schools to let children from outside the district apply for admission.

Rep. Pat Outman, R-Six Lakes, said the proposal would lead students to enroll based on need, rather than location.

But critics say the legislation is a way to avoid proper funding of public education.

Under current law, districts can choose to participate in schools of choice and decisions about transfers within intermediate districts are made locally.

“Michigan’s approach to schools of choice is a good system overall, but it’s still applied inconsistently and unevenly from district to district,” Outman said at an Education and Workforce Committee hearing. He’s one of the chief sponsors of the legislation.

“Whether a family has access to options often depends more on where they live than on what their child needs,” he said.

The legislation also would remove legal penalties for parents who use false information – such as a false address – to enroll their children in a school district.

That provision sparked criticism from Rep. Matt Kolezsar, D-Plymouth Township.

“Why are we removing the penalty for intentionally enrolling a student with false or incomplete information?” Kolezsar said during the hearing. “We’re basically saying ‘no penalty for lying.’”

The sponsor of that piece of the package, Rep. Tullio Liberati, D-Allen Park, said some parents lie because it’s more convenient if they work closer to a certain district or if their student is being taken care of by a relative who lives nearby.

“It’s convenient for them – that’s how their kids go there,” Liberati said at the hearing. “They know the district. To criminalize that, I just think it’s excessive.”

Liberati said, however, that the bill would not decriminalize such falsifications.

“You’re not making it legal,” Liberati said. “There are going to be repercussions

that the child will not be able to go there unless they’re accepted there,” he said.

Another bill in the package would prohibit schools from charging tuition to out-of-district students. Public districts including Bloomfield Hills Schools and Birmingham Public Schools currently charge tuition for out-of-district students, according to their websites.

Rep. Angela Rigas, R-Caledonia, is that bill’s primary sponsor. She said that prohibition would help with access to education.

The bill “closes the statutory caps so that every child in Michigan, regardless of ZIP code, can access the public school that works best for them,” Rigas said.

Opponents of the legislation argue that it would do little to alter the current system. Molly Sweeney is the organizing director of 482Forward, a Detroit-based organization focused on educational change. She said the legislation would increase access primarily for students with a certain amount of privilege.

“It serves kids who can access other districts, the same that it is now,” Sweeney said. “Kids who have more resources to travel and parents with more resources.” Sweeney said she thinks the legislation is a way to avoid increasing school funding.

“This is just a workaround to say, ‘Some communities can have great schools, but we’re not willing to do what it takes to make sure every community has a great school,’” she said.

Some districts that have opted out of optional schools of choice, like Grosse Pointe, have spoken out against the bills.

Sweeney said she thinks there are two reasons for that.

“They don’t necessarily want to disrupt the current systems they have,” she said. “They don’t want students from Detroit. They don’t want students from other places.”

Other critics, like John Severson, the executive director of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, said the schools of choice law is fine as-is.

“It strikes the delicate balance between parent choice and the receiving district’s ability to properly educate the student,” Severson said. “Any change in the law will upset this balance to the negative.”

The legislation is still pending in the committee.

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Brian Alan Pepler

Brian Alan Pepler, 76, of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, passed away peacefully on April 3, 2026, surrounded by family at home. He was born on Feb. 20, 1950, in Lima, Ohio, to William and Lenora (Stilwell) Pepler.

Brian grew up in Ohio and Michigan, the son of a reporter-turned-lawyer father and an artist mother. After graduating from law school at Ohio Northern University, he returned to Sault Ste. Marie to join his father, William, and his sister, Diane, in private law practice. Over the course of his career, Brian also served in the public defender's office and was elected to multiple terms as Chippewa County Prosecutor. He was deeply committed to his community, lending his time and leadership to victim advocacy, mental health boards, senior programs, the Great Start program, and efforts to combat prescription drug abuse.

Brian will be remembered most by family and friends for his kindness to all, his pure joy of being in the woods, and his many passions, which he loved to share with others. He was a fixer of mechanical and wooden things as well as personal problems, injustices, and inequalities. He was an educator and mentor, willingly sharing his many passions and interests with others and guiding many younger people with a firm and loving hand. He was a "gatherer" of people, connecting with others every chance he had, including generations of fraternity brothers, Laker hockey players, and former school friends.

Above all, Brian was a family man. He was a brother, uncle, loving partner, supportive father, and Papa Bear to the grandchildren he adored.

His legacy includes his devoted partner, Camela Yeck; son, Cory (Beth) Pepler of Mukwonago, Wisconsin; daughter, Niki (Brent) Rudolph of Mason, Michigan; step-son, Anthony (Lori) Fenlon of Rockford, Michigan; grandchildren, Zachary Pepler, Alex Pepler, Amelia Rudolph, Tess Rudolph, Riley Fenlon, and Zoe Fenlon; brother, William (Patricia) Pepler of Mackinaw City, Michigan; nieces, Kortney (Paul) Pepler and Kelsey Pepler; mother-in-law, Phyllis Yeck; sisters-in-law, Annette Eustice, Leah Kling, Lynne Yeck, Alice McPherson, Carole Yeck, and their families; many cousins; and many, many friends.

A Celebration of Brian's Life will be held in the Superior Room of the Cisler Center on the LSSU campus on Saturday, May 30, 2026. Visitation will be held at 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., with the Memorial Service beginning at 2 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Brian's honor may be made to the Diane Pepler Resource Center, P.O. Box 698, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783.

Family Life Funeral Homes – Sault Ste. Marie assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be given to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

Arlo David Hamel

Arlo David Hamel, 69, of Dafter, Michigan, died on April 5, 2026, at his home. He was born on Feb. 25, 1957, in Sault Ste. Marie Michigan, to Arlo M. and Fern (Carrick) Hamel.

Arlo grew up in Cedarville and Taylor, Michigan, and attended Cedarville High School. He began working with his father at the young age of 12. Over the years, he worked for his dad at Snows Dock in Cedarville. When his father sold the family business to him, he ran it for several years before retiring due to illness in his 50s.

Arlo was a proud member of the Trappers' Association. He had a deep love for the outdoors, especially trapping, a passion that began when his mother started taking him along to run trap lines when he was just two years old. He also enjoyed building traps and lures, as well as woodworking, camping, and hunting with friends and family. A natural storyteller, Arlo loved sharing stories and memories, often bringing laughter to those around him. He could almost always be found in the woods, doing what he loved most.

Arlo is survived by his wife, Vicki Hamel of Dafter; daughter, Christina (Dan) Burby of Reedsville, Wisconsin; sons, Richard Ward III of Pickford, Michigan, and Tim (Kimi) Ward of Hessel, Michigan; sister, Alana Kemper of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; brother-in-law, Rob Visnaw of Acworth, Georgia; numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and cousins; best friends, Danny Gilbert of Detroit, Michigan, and Dutchy Chandonais of Lake Linden, Michigan; and dog, Haylie.

Arlo was preceded in death by his parents, Arlo M. and Fern; sisters, Gertrude Visnaw and Hamel and Rose Ann McMillian; brother-in-law, Mick Kemper; and mother and father-in-law, Barbara and John Durish.

Visitation and the Funeral Service will be held on May 30, 2026, at Family Life Funeral Homes, 24549 S. M-129, Pickford, Michigan. Time will be announced at a later date.

Arlo's final resting place will be at Cedar Cemetery in Cedarville, Michigan. Condolences may be given to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

Michael "Mike" Bryce Winnick

Michael "Mike" Bryce Winnick, 61, of Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, passed away on March 28, 2026. He was born on May 9, 1964, in Far Rockaway, Queens, New York, to Kenneth and Sayrell Winnick.

Mike graduated from Canoga Park High School in 1982, went on to earn his undergraduate degree from Cal State Northridge in 1986, and later graduated from Cooley Law School in 1990. He was a respected and prominent practicing attorney in Sault Sainte Marie, where he took great pride in serving his community with dedication, compassion, and integrity.

Outside of his profession, Mike embraced life with energy and enthusiasm. He had a passion for restoring old cars and enjoyed riding motorcycles and dirt bikes. Much of his time was happily spent in his garage, working on projects. He especially cherished riding with Jake, Jacob, and Caleb, and found great joy in giving "Baby Claire" rides around the yard. Mike was adventurous and driven. By the age of 40, he had visited every Major League Baseball stadium in the United States and completed several marathons, accomplishments that reflected his determination and love of experience. He also looked forward to annual motorcycle rides with the boys to Halo Burger, as well as relaxing at his cabin and taking peaceful rides on the pontoon.

Above all, Mike loved his family deeply. His grandchildren were the light of his life and brought him immeasurable joy. He shared a special and loving bond with his devoted partner, Cynthia "Cindy" Lewis, and was often happiest simply spending time by her side. Mike was also an avid animal lover, especially devoted to his dog, Gus.

Mike is survived by his devoted partner, Cindy Lewis; her children, Jake (Vicki) Lewis and Shannon (Bob Atkinson) Lewis; his beloved grandchildren, Jacob Lewis, Caleb Lewis, and Claire Atkinson; brother, Brett (Monica) Winnick; nephew, Caymon Winnick; aunt, Sue Flaxman; uncle, Gary (Stephanie) Winnick; and several cousins.

Mike was preceded in death by his parents, Kenneth and Sayrell Winnick; brother, Russell Winnick; and uncles, Ron Flaxman, Harvey Flaxman, and Tony (Lucille) Verganalis.

Mike was of the Jewish faith and will be remembered for his larger-than-life personality, his sense of humor, and his ability to bring laughter and light to those around him.

Services have taken place.

Mike's final resting place will be at Oaklawn Chapel Gardens in Bruce Township, Michigan.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Mike's honor to the Chippewa County Animal Shelter, 3660 S. Mackinac Trail, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783..

Mike will be deeply missed and forever remembered by all who knew and loved him.

Condolences may be left at familylifefh.com.

Ronald Joseph Daniels

Ronald Joseph Daniels, 90, of Brimley, Michigan, died on March 28, 2026, at the Ball Hospice House in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. He was born on April 10, 1935, in Racoon, Michigan, to Clifford and Mary (LaBrequé) Daniels.

Ron was raised in Racoon and on Sept. 1, 1956, he married Christina (Nelson) Daniels. Together, they shared sixty-nine wonderful years of marriage. Shortly after their wedding, Ron moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he worked as a millwright for National Gypsum Paper Company. In 1972, he returned to Brimley to be closer to family and friends. In 1998, he retired from the Department of Corrections.

Ron enjoyed camping, hunting, playing softball, and spending time playing cards.

Ron is survived by his wife, Christina; children, Renee Daniels of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Tim (Betty) Daniels of Barbeau, Michigan, and Ron (Tammy) of Sault Ste. Marie; grandchildren, Trevor Daniels, Jade Daniels, Danielle Parish, Jerome Daniels, Sean Daniels, and Shelby Setera; and great-grandchildren, Everleigh, Bennett, Walker, Crew, Stella, and Keaton.

Ron was preceded in death by his parents, Clifford and Ruth; and siblings, Elaine, Lois, Lona, Claude, Melvin, and Randy.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

Ron's final resting place will be Hillcrest Cemetery in Racoon, Michigan.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in memory of Ron to the Ball Hospice House, 308 W. 12th Avenue, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783.

Condolences may be given to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

BMCC & LSSU sign new articulation agreement

BRIMLEY — Bay Mills Community College and Lake Superior State University have announced a new articulation agreement for the early childhood education program. The agreement was signed in a ceremony on Tuesday, Jan. 13. The partnership creates a seamless “3+1” pathway for students to earn a bachelor’s degree and Michigan’s Birth-to-Kindergarten teaching certification, addressing a critical need for highly qualified educators in the region and beyond.

“This partnership between Bay Mills Community College and Lake Superior State University demonstrates our unwavering commitment to the communities we serve,” said Dr. Duane Bedell, president of Bay Mills Community College. “By working together, we are creating opportunities that strengthen education and support families across the region. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the dedicated team whose hard work and collaboration made this initiative possible.”

This agreement marks the first formal ECE-specific articulation between the two institutions. While previous transfer options existed, this program is uniquely designed to culminate in teacher certification. This is a significant advancement that responds to both student aspirations and statewide educational priorities.

“This articulation agreement in early childhood education strengthens pathways for Bay Mills students to advance their studies at LSSU, while building bridges between our institutions that will benefit families, communities, and the regional workforce,” said Dr. David Travis, president of Lake Superior State University.

The “3+1” structure allows students to complete three years of coursework primarily online through BMCC before finishing their fourth year through LSSU’s online and hybrid formats, which are scheduled to accommodate working professionals.

“The ECE department prides itself on a strong culture, high-quality curricu-

lum, individualized learning, and meaningful relationships between students and staff,” said Heather Stelzer, BMCC Early Childhood Education faculty & department chair. “From the beginning of this partnership, LSSU has honored these values. This articulation was developed through extensive collaboration and thoughtful planning to ensure students receive the highest level of support.”

A cornerstone of the program is its dual advising model, where advisors from both BMCC and LSSU will guide students from day one, ensuring a coordinated and supportive journey.

“Michigan has moved beyond the outdated divide between qualified and certified early childhood teachers,” said Becky Davis, LSSU faculty member with expertise in early childhood education. “The Michigan Department of Education now recognizes that young children need educators who are both. Teachers trained in early childhood development and developmentally appropriate practice - especially for children with special needs - provide the strong social, emotional, and academic foundation children need to succeed.”

Graduates of the pathway will be eligible for Michigan teacher certification in birth-to-kindergarten general and special education, a credential that enhances professional recognition, improves pay scales, and opens doors to expanded career opportunities within tribal communities, across Michigan, and in other states through licensure transfer. The program’s design allows the required student teaching experience to be completed in Michigan or another state convenient for the student.

“We hope this creative and unique program will serve as a catalyst for other teacher preparation programs,” said Jennifer Fager, PhD, chair of the LSSU School of Education and associate dean. “It is a model for collaborative partnerships that address teacher shortages, particularly in rural communities, by preparing educators where they live.”



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Changes announced to 2026 Engineer's Day events

SAULT STE. MARIE — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District in conjunction with the City of Sault Ste. Marie, the Sault Ste. Marie Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Lake Superior State University Center for Freshwater Research and Education, Hospice of the Eastern Upper Peninsula, and Superior Health Systems are hosting open house events for the 2026 Soo Locks Engineers Day on June 26.

"Visitors will not be able to cross the locks this year due to increased construction activity and evolving security protocols," said LeighAnn Ryckeghem, Soo Project Office operations manager. "There will be a variety of unique exhibits in the park for visitors to learn about the Soo Locks as well as several stakeholder and partner missions."

This year, visitors are welcome into Soo Locks Canal Park from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Friday, June 26 for Engineers Day activities and new Corps of Engineers vessel dedications. Following the Engineers Day events, the viewing platform will remain open until 10 p.m., and the Soo Locks Visitor Center will be open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

"The first Soo Locks Engineers Day took place on June 16, 1975," said Soo Locks Archivist Natalie Humphrey. "Then mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, Frank Pingatore, declared the day as Army Corps of Engineers Day and urged all good people of the community to give recognition to the people who comprise the Corps of Engineers. Since 1975, the Soo Locks have hosted Engineers Day, except for 2020, welcoming all visitors to share in the Soo Locks history and mission."

We are continuing the requirement

for all bags coming into the Soo Locks Park to be clear. Clear bags will allow park security to quickly inspect bags and assist with making this a fun and safe event for everyone.

For visitors bringing bags, the Engineers Day policy for the Soo Locks follows:

- * Clear bags cannot be larger than 12 inches long, 6 inches deep and 12 inches wide.

- * Diaper bags are not allowed.

- * Medical bags are exempt.

- * Wallets must not have a strap and cannot exceed 4.5 inches by 6.5 inches.

All people entering the Soo Locks are subject to a security search. Firearms, weapons - including knives of any size, drugs, pets (except service animals), skateboards and bicycles are not permitted.

Officials will be continuing one-way entry into the park through the main gate for security screening.

The Sault Ste. Marie Convention and Visitors Bureau are closing a portion of Portage Avenue to focus on downtown city merchants and vendors. Downtown Portage Avenue will close to vehicle traffic and open for pedes-

trians and vendors between Ferris Street and Osborn Boulevard from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., June 26.

"The Soo Locks have long been a cornerstone of our community's history," said Linda Hoath, executive director of the Sault Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Engineers Day gives us the opportunity to honor both their legacy and the innovation behind them. In recent years, we've worked to expand Engineers Day into a celebration that engages the entire downtown. We're excited to welcome both residents and visitors to join us downtown for this special event."

Along with welcoming visitors to the Soo Locks Park, several other events will take place:

- * Hospice of the Eastern Upper Peninsula and Superior Health Systems Arts, Crafts and Family Fun Fair at the City Hall grounds from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- * Lake Superior State University Center for Freshwater Research and Education will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- * Tour the M/V State of Michigan docked at the Museum Ship Valley Camp throughout the day

- * Annual BookFest will take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. outside of Island Books & Crafts on Portage Ave.

- * Carbide Dock Ribbon Cutting. Celebrate the completion of the dock with an opening ceremony and ribbon cutting. The ceremony will be at 10 a.m. at 98 Salmon Run Way.

To register as a vendor for the event, (no-cost) on Portage Avenue, please contact the Sault Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at 906-632-3366 or send an email to: admin@saultstemarie.com.



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Pure Michigan Conference packed with surprises

TRAVERSE CITY — More than 500 tourism and hospitality leaders, industry partners, meeting planners, and economic development professionals from across Michigan gathered in Traverse City from April 7-9 for the 2026 Pure Michigan Governor’s Conference on Tourism.

Attendees participated in conference programming focused on the latest industry trends and best practices, destination development, sustainability, and integrating AI technologies into tourism marketing strategies, among other educational opportunities. Bay Mills sent their own team members to attend, including Social Media & Event Coordinator Brianna Bowen, Bay Mills Resort & Casino Marketing Communications Manager Shelly Deuman-LeBlanc, and BMRC Social Media Specialist Delaney Walden.

“Attending this conference made me realize we are part of a much bigger network of likeminded individuals who all have the goal of sharing our beautiful state with the world,” said Bowen. “Many international travelers are interested in slow-travel in 2026 — driving around the state to see different cultures and places. Travelers view Michigan as a very safe state to visit. I am extremely grateful and honored that I had the opportunity to represent Bay Mills at this conference.”

Bowen began her position last September and hit the ground running to build the Destination Bay Mills brand.

While the Governor was expected to make an appearance, British social media influencer Jase (from the duo Josh & Jase) appeared as a special guest at the event, taking the stage to share his insight and meet with attendees. The influencers came to Michigan just a few months ago — in the dead of winter — and documented their travels. And while they didn’t make it to the Brimley area on the last trip, Deuman-LeBlanc and Bowen made their case to Jase, encouraging and inviting him to return to the area this summer. And it appears from their social media posts, a second visit is on the horizon, although their itinerary has not been announced.

But that wasn’t the only surprise for guests of the event.

During the conference, travel industry leaders recognized individuals, businesses, and organizations for their contributions to Michigan’s tourism industry through the Governor’s Awards for Innovative Tourism Collaboration, Legacy Award, and Pure Award.

The 2026 Legacy Award was awarded to a familiar face — Linda Hoath, executive director of the Sault Ste. Marie Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The annual Legacy Award honors leaders and visionaries in the Michigan tourism industry and is presented to a person or organization that has positively impacted the industry in a transformative way.

For nearly 25 years, Hoath has championed her community - not just Sault Ste. Marie and the Upper Peninsula, but all of Michigan, helping shape it as the most welcoming destination in the entire United States.

Throughout her career, Hoath has ushered in multi-million-dollar projects, helped niche events grow, and never shied away from creating some serious community impact.



who were not aware of the campaign stayed 3.9 nights. Above, Jase (Jason Riley) is shown with Bowen and their cameraman, only known as “James.”

For her latest achievement, she led the renovation of Sault Ste. Marie’s historic I-500 snowmobile track, helping secure a \$2.5 million federal grant to transform it into a year-round attraction.

Hoath was among a handful of participants honored for their work in the industry.

According to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, a large part of the state’s economy is derived from travelers.

The Pure Michigan campaign continues to drive increased visitation across all metrics. In 2025, fresh creative, innovative tactics, and a multi-channel approach generated \$10.78 in state tax revenue for every dollar invested in paid media.

The campaign also successfully encouraged visitors to stay longer and do more during their visits. Travelers who were exposed to the Pure Michigan campaign stayed 4.4 nights and participated in 4 more activities, while travelers

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LSSU announces plan to invest in excess of \$10 million in campus infrastructure improvements

SAULT STE. MARIE – Lake Superior State University is investing in its campus to better serve students and maintain a vibrant, welcoming environment for decades to come. The multi-phase infrastructure efforts will utilize significant new donor support to update facilities, enhance campus spaces, and create a safer, more engaging experience for students, faculty, and visitors alike.

Campus-wide projects will include major roof repairs, repairs to sidewalks, roads, and parking lots, refreshed landscaping and campus-wide signage. Several buildings on campus will also receive significant upgrades in heating and cooling systems, improved electrical support, and energy efficiency. At its most recent meeting, LSSU’s Board of Trustees approved initial planning for major work in the Norris Center. This work begins with an engineering study that would lead to comprehensive updates to the Taffy Abel Ice Arena. Additional improvement plans will be brought forward for approval at future board meetings.

Infrastructure improvement efforts will focus on improving the comfort and safety of student housing and learning

spaces, upgrading recreational facilities, and enhancing the overall campus footprint.

LSSU President Dr. David Travis said the planned infrastructure investment reflects the university’s commitment to its students and community.

“Investing in our campus means that we are investing in our students, employees, and community. We look forward to the

positive impact these significant improvements will have on our learning environment, student and staff pride, and the evolving needs of our community. We are excited about the future of Lake Superior State University,” said Travis.

Although support for this work comes from a wide range of sources, Travis said it would not be possible

without the help of generous donors that care greatly about the future of LSSU.

“I cannot express enough my appreciation for the support we are getting from our donors. Since I joined Lake State, I have made it clear that our students, staff, and the surrounding community deserve a better campus infrastructure, and many individuals have stepped up to help.”

Michigan to continue to offer free summer food programs for children

LANSING – Michigan children will continue to benefit from free, healthy and nutritious meals during the summer months in 2026, the Michigan Department of Education has announced.

MDE will offer meals through two programs that are part of the Summer Food Service Program. Meet Up and Eat Up (SUN Meals) Children 18 and under can get free meals at Meet Up and Eat Up sites in areas qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Meals must be eaten at the site.

“We want to put all Students First and make sure they have access to the healthy meals that they need to learn and grow—whether it’s during the school year or the summer,” said State Superintendent Dr. Glenn Maleyko. “The Summer Food Service Program advances Goal 3 of Michigan’s Top 10 Strategic Education Plan by improving the health, safety and wellness of all learners.”

SUN Meals to Go (Rural Non-Congregate) In rural low-income areas, families can pick up meals to take home. Up to seven days of meals can be given at once and taken home. This program is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and run by MDE’s Office of Nutrition Services.

Last summer, Michigan served nearly 9 million meals to children—almost 2 million more than the year before. MDE is committed to helping families stay healthy and to reducing hunger.

Anyone who wants to learn more, or groups that would like to sponsor meal sites by providing food for children during the summer, may email MDE-SFSP@Michigan.gov, call 517-241-5374, or visit the Summer Food Service Program webpage for details. Information about locations and days and hours of operations for sites will be available for families to view on the webpage in late spring and updated daily after finalization of the schedule.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brunch and Learn Opportunity

Pyro Dendrochronology- Trees Share Memories of fire and Anishinaabe — guest speakers will be Logan Johnson and Evan Larson from University of Platteville, Wisconsin. The meal will be blueberry pancakes & maple syrup. This event is scheduled to take place on Saturday, April 18, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Bay Mills Cultural Center. This event is open to the public.

Commodities Notice

Due to recent changes with the distributor, delivery schedule, and ordering system for the USDA Food Program (Commodities), restocking certain items may take up to two months. TO HELP ENSURE AVAILABILITY, HOUSEHOLDS OF THREE OR MORE ARE ENCOURAGED TO COMPLETE THE MAJORITY OF THEIR SHOPPING BEFORE THE 18TH OF EACH MONTH. Questions? You can contact Kris or Jason: (906) 248-2527 or (906)248-2528.

Pharmacy Update

Bay Mills Health Center has launched new pharmacy software, which means the previous mobile app and text messaging system are no longer active. A new app and text messaging system have been set up. Text messaging is expected to be available soon and may depend on your phone carrier for activation. To download the new app, text RXLOCAL to 64890.

BMIC Members reminded about Purchased Referred Care

If you or a family member seek emergency medical care you must inform the office within 72 hours of your care by calling them to get help with payment. Elders have up to 30 days to contact PRC. This includes visits to the emergency room or use of an ambulance. You can reach them by contacting 906-248-8326.

Have you moved? Update your address!

Bay Mills Tribal Enrollment office asks all tribal citizens to maintain a current address with their office. An online form can be found at www.baymills.org.

Walking path is closed to motorized vehicles

BMIC has developed a pedestrian/bicycle path connecting both sides of the Reservation. This path is for pedestrians and bicyclists only, and our existing tribal ordinances prohibit motorized vehicles from using this path. Signs have been posted. Please be aware that BMPD has been directed to strictly enforce this rule along that pathway to protect walkers, runners, cyclists, and the path itself. If you ride an ATV, ORV, dirt bike, motorcycle, golf cart, etc on this path, you should expect to receive a ticket and pay a fine.



BASKETBALL DAY CAMP

JOIN BAY MILLS POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR A DAY OF BASKETBALL FUN!

**LOCATED @ OJIBWE CHARTER SCHOOL
12099 W LAKESHORE DR**

 MAY 2 2026	AGES 8-12 FROM 11AM-1:00PM PIZZA WILL BE PROVIDED AFTER SESSION IS COMPLETE
	AGES 13-17 FROM 1:00PM-3PM PIZZA WILL BE PROVIDED AFTER SESSION IS COMPLETE

FREE ENTRY & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
 WAIVER WILL NEED TO BE SIGNED BEFORE PARTICIPATING

ANY QUESTIONS? CONTACT OFFICER GEORGE @ 906-248-3244

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BAY MILLS PD & OJIBWE CHARTER SCHOOL
 WITH SUPPORT FROM THE BAY MILLS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION EVENT

Bay Mills Indian Community's Biological Services Department is hosting a FREE household hazardous waste collection event for BMIC members

**MAY 13: 3PM - 6PM
FARMER'S MARKET PAVILION
ON PLANTATION RD
(NO RESERVATION REQUIRED)**

Contact the BMIC Environmental Coordinator, at wastecollection@baymills.org or (906) 248-8655 for info or questions.

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Give Your Child a Good Start ... with Head Start!

The Bay Mills Child Development Center is currently accepting applications for the upcoming school year.

For more information, please call Andrea Shaw at 248-8700.


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