

# WABUN

Volume Twelve Issue Two

## *Sun*

### Wabun Tribal Council Working For The Future In The Spirit Of Our Ancestors

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ARCHIVE PHOTO  
Early Wabun memories  
on the land

# REFLECTIONS



**Shawn  
Batise**  
Executive  
Director

Wabun Tribal Council was created by the Chiefs of Wabun First Nations in 1989 as a means to present a strong voice with strength in numbers in mind. Previous to this the Chiefs and Councils of the founding Wabun First Nations were having a difficult time dealing with governments in terms of securing, managing and administering funding programs. The Chiefs vision at the time was to create the Wabun family as a means to better deal with governments and ensure the optimum in program funding and administration. Wabun represents its member First Nations at various forums at local and regional levels that range from police services boards to Aboriginal financial institutions. The Tribal Council also represents the communities interests in dealings with municipal, provincial and federal government programs and initiatives, such as land use planning, Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) and other issues as directed by the Chiefs of the communities. In recent years we have taken on negotiating major Impact and Benefits Agreements (IBAs) and Exploration Agreements (EAs).

Today we see a great change in our Wabun First Nations with programming over the years that has resulted in construction, infrastructure, facilities, health initiatives, economic development, financial administration and most recently resource development negotiations. I recall very well the state of our First Nations so many years ago so it gives me great pride to realize that I have been part of the Wabun team that under the direction of our Chiefs has helped to improve the quality of life for our Wabun First Nations.

I have held the position of Executive Director with Wabun for almost 22 years. There have been challenges but these pale in the satisfaction I get when I see the successes we have won for our Wabun First Nations. The wisdom, guidance and support of our Wabun Chiefs, councils and Elders over the years has been a blessing. That combination of strong guidance and hard work has paid off and when I visit

our Wabun First Nations I see the proof of our labour everywhere I turn.

It is impossible to hold a senior management position without developing a thick skin. As the Executive Director at Wabun I have had to endure a lot of ups and downs and this goes with the job. Many of the challenges we have had to deal with over the years have to do with misinformation. The problem is that often when people have complaints or concerns about some detail in terms of operations here at Wabun rather than call myself or one of my staff for clarification assumptions are made that are often completely incorrect or that with some clarification, can be better understood.

Our Chiefs and councils know what our track record is at Wabun but many of our members do not. Although we try our best to stay in touch with our members through our website, Wabun Sun, visits to the First Nations and various meetings throughout the year some people still don't know about our successes. Thinking back to where we were 20 years ago should give one an idea of the collective successes of Wabun Tribal Council and our member First Nations. Some communities only had one telephone line and there was high unemployment, water that was

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taken from a community well, very little infrastructure and most importantly, no share in the wealth of our lands. No, Wabun did not bring all of this about on its own. We worked hand-in-hand with the First Nations to bring this about. There has been quite an evolution and I want to stop the clock for a minute and just give thanks to all those who have been positive forces for change and who have contributed to producing our vibrant, modern, well serviced and well administered Wabun First Nations.

In recent years our Wabun Chiefs provided the Tribal Council with a new mandate to negotiate agreements with major resource developers and governments as a result of court decisions requiring consultation with First Nations. We were happy to become involved in this portfolio which demanded much research, organization, interaction and the development of sound IBAs and EAs. We did so with no

additional staffing and no increase in budget. I am happy to report that the results have been staggering and projects are moving ahead that are changing the lives of our First Nation members for the better. People are getting jobs, being trained, starting businesses and the quality of life on all of our First Nations is improving. All of our First Nations now have at least one agreement involving resource development in which they will share in the revenues from the resources of their traditional territories.

Recently there has been some misinformation with regards to who actually benefits from these agreements and I want to take this opportunity to set the record straight. All of the benefits, including the financial compensation for impact, accrue to the First Nation(s) signatory(s). The Wabun Tribal Council receives no monetary benefit from these agreements. Once these benefits are delivered to the communities it is up to them to determine how to best invest these resources.

It has always been our goal to build capacity in the communities by involving lands and resources personnel or leadership in the negotiation of these agreements, and contrary to the belief of some, Wabun is not increasing its staff numbers at the expense of our First Nations. In fact Wabun Tribal Council has had 18 employees in place for more than 15 years. To be sure we could use more help as more and more permits pour in because of metal prices. Funding proposals for regional positions have been developed. However, prior to submitting these proposals we always ensure it will not impact the ability of our First Nations to access funding for similar positions.

We are in very heady days indeed and there is so much going on. This is a time when we should all reflect on the spirit and vision of the Wabun Chiefs in creating Wabun Tribal Council. Now more than ever we need the support of Chiefs and Councils bolstered by the hard work of Wabun Tribal Council and our member First Nations to give our people a strong voice in dealing with governments intent on cutbacks and complex negotiations with major resource developers. Let's face it governments and industry would love to see strong Tribal Councils fall apart and individual First Nations left to deal with them on their own. We should never agree to give them that opportunity and let's remember to honour that vision of strength, family and solidarity that our Chiefs gave us many years ago.



# HEALTH MATTERS

I believe it is healthy to pause now and then and reflect. In this issue of Wabun Sun you will see that we are dedicating our coverage to take stock and inform our Wabun First Nation membership about what we provide in regards to servicing our communities. There has certainly been change for the better for all our Wabun First Nations since the establishment of Wabun Health almost 20 years ago.

Before the creation of Wabun Tribal Council and then Wabun Health by our Chiefs, our communities had little or no health care. There was very little accessibility to funding for health programs or health services as our First Nations were deemed small and did not have the capacity, staffing or expertise to deal with the bureaucracy of the government of Canada. All that changed when the Wabun Chiefs created our tribal council and then Wabun Health.

When Wabun Chiefs made the decision in 1993 to take control of health programming from the Medical Services Branch of Health Canada we made history as the first such organization in Ontario to do so. This was done through the vision of past leaders including the late Chief Joseph Saunders, Brunswick House First Nation; the late Chief Clifford Diamond, Wahgoshig First Nation; Chief Ivan McKay, Mattagami First Nation and Chief Barney Batise, Matachewan First Nation. With this Health Transfer Agreement Wabun Health created a new more self sufficient administrative body that could access more funding and programming for the Wabun First Nations.

Today our Wabun First Nations enjoy health services and programming that are among some of the best as compared to Native communities across the country. It makes me feel very proud when other First Nations political bodies and health services come to us for input.

When I visit our Wabun First Nations today I feel so much satisfaction from the work that our people have done over the years. I see the results in on site nursing services, care for our elders and youth, diabetes prevention and awareness, healing for those with addiction and societal problems and all types of programming helping to make our Wabun First Nations more healthy and positive.

As a regional Tribal Council Health

Service we make sure that our voice represents all our Wabun First Nations and that we are heard. Our staff lobbies government to access available funding to ensure our communities receive everything they are entitled to. That requires a lot of expertise, networking, research and reporting and our staff at Wabun Health and throughout our First Nations deserve a pat on the back for their professional and continuous efforts in making things happen for our members.

It pains me from time to time to have to deal with misinformed negative remarks from community members and it mostly has to do with confusion in the way some programs are delivered by Health Canada. Often people don't understand that it really is necessary to follow the criteria as set out by Health Canada when it comes to things like Patient Transportation which is part of the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program. Wabun Health is only directly involved in handling the Patient Transportation portion but also assists its membership with application for other parts of that NIHB program. In terms of Patient Transportation our members are reimbursed for expenses

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that are documented and fit the criteria of the program but they have to provide receipts for those costs and documentation to us to make sure this happens. If not then that puts our programming in jeopardy and results in an irate Wabun patient. We understand what our members have to deal with in terms of meeting these requirements and we work with them to try our best to facilitate their health care but people have to remember that if they don't abide by the rules imposed by Health Canada that puts us in a very difficult position.

The Non Insured Health Benefits program is directly handled by Health

**Jean  
Lemieux  
Health  
Director**



Canada and membership is assisted by Wabun Health in accessing related funds to meet the needs of medical and dental services not covered by federal, provincial, territorial or other third party health insurance plans. This usually includes benefits for prescription medication, dental, medical supplies and equipment, vision goods and services, crisis intervention, mental health counselling and health care premiums where applicable. Sometimes members are confused by the requirements in accessing funding assistance and we work with them to educate them on what they can and can not claim. At times members blame Wabun Health when they are not satisfied with the funding assistance they have received without realizing that we have nothing to do with setting the criteria and dealing with the funds awarded. We are simply trying to assist the client or member to make sure they understand what they can and can not access through this program and if they do not follow the criteria then we can not be held responsible. Yet, often a lot of fingers come pointing back at us when a client or member feels shortchanged by the system. It is often this type of misinformation that leads to false accusations and negative comments about Wabun Health when really it is totally unjustified.

The overall health and well being of our Wabun First Nations has improved dramatically over the past 20 years and the proof is in the services, programming and employment and training happening in all of our Wabun First Nations when it comes to health. It has taken so many years and so much effort and expertise to develop a smooth running and sophisticated first class health department at Wabun Tribal Council and although I don't expect people to stop and reflect on how good things are today it is my job to remind us all that we have much to be thankful for.

# WABUN TRIBAL COUNCIL GUIDED BY CHIEFS

Wabun Tribal Council was created by a coming together of the six First Nation (FN) Chiefs of Matachewan, Mattagami, Brunswick House, Chapleau Ojibwe, Beaverhouse and Wahgoshig in 1989. They did this as a means to produce a coordinating administrative body that would work to develop its communities in representation to the federal and provincial governments. It was decided by the chiefs at that time that several First Nations in the bond of a tribal council would have a stronger voice and produce greater opportunities in dealing with governments at all levels. Previous to the creation of the tribal council the Wabun First Nations were constantly trying to organize and deal with governments through the individual chiefs and councils and very limited administration staff.



**Chief Walter Naveau,**  
Mattagami FN

“Wabun Tribal Council is instrumental in moving our agenda forward as a group of First Nations, especially when it comes to negotiating resource development projects on our lands. Wabun is the fabric that keeps our communities together and without it we would not have as strong a voice as we do now. Working together as a brotherhood of First Nation people is a vision our Elders had a long time ago. Standing together with one voice helps us ensure that we are represented and that our rights as a First Nation people are protected,” said Chief Walter Naveau, Mattagami FN.

Chief Alex ‘Sonny’ Batisse, Matachewan FN agreed that it was important for First Nations to speak as a unified voice on major issues with government and industry.

“A unified group of communities in a tribal council is crucial to the well being of our First Nations. It is important that our communities work together on the same issues and support one another because we all have similar goals for our people. As a group we as Wabun Chiefs ensure the well being of not just an individual community but all our First Nations,” said Chief Batisse.

The vision of the founding Chiefs of Wabun included the development of a central council headquarters with a staff dedicated to proactive rather than



**Chief Alex 'Sonny' Batisse,**  
Matachewan FN

reactive interactions with government. That meant the development of detailed analysis and research to take advantage of the many different programs and their funding opportunities. It also meant the development of a staff under the guidance of the chiefs so that Wabun First Nations could lobby governments, network with other First Nation political bodies and organizations as well as interact and relate to Native and Non Native businesses.

The Chiefs were patient in providing the guidance to Wabun executive and staff and in a few years their vision was being realized with direct benefits to the First Nations in all types of services, programing and infrastructure. One of the milestones that emerged included a successful Health Transfer in 1993 with Health Canada. This transfer allowed Wabun First Nations to administer and service their own communities and develop health programing in conjunction with Health Canada. That initiative took strong lobbying from the Chiefs, Wabun executive and staff and has resulted in community based health care programing and the employment and training of First Nation members.

Another important milestone was achieved in 1998 when Wabun Tribal Council purchased its own building complex through sound financial management and the guidance of Wabun Chiefs. This was a major step to self sufficiency in terms of real estate investment and control of its financial development. Although there was no cost to Wabun First Nations they were the beneficiaries of this forward thinking financial investment.

With a dedicated executive and staff in place Wabun Chiefs provided the direction and support to pursue all opportunities available to First Nations in terms of application and lobbying for available programs and funding to improve their member communities. Wabun also provided administrative management for these programs and services. As Wabun Tribal Council evolved, funds flowed to the First Nations in terms of infrastructure projects including water treatment plants, construction projects, health programing, economic development

and programing and services dedicated to a better quality of life for Wabun First Nation members. The early days when the small individual Wabun First Nations had been largely left out of the loop and were barely existing were gone and in place these communities under the Wabun Tribal Council banner developed a strong and united voice that could not be ignored.

## WABUN CHIEFS PUSH FOR MORE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

On recognizing changes in First Nation rights as related to resource development as a result of court decisions in the 1990s, Wabun Chiefs directed its Executive and staff to actively promote relationship building and awareness to resource developers considering or moving forward with projects on Wabun First Nations. Wabun Executive arranged for meetings with governments and private sector interests to establish a process of cooperation on a host of projects involving mining, forestry, hydro-electric power and other business initiatives.

With a trend to rapid resource development in North Eastern Ontario, Wabun Executive had to hit the ground running shortly after the millennium and in a very short time an expertise was developed to liaise with, negotiate with and work with resource developers. They did so to ensure that Wabun First Nations would be part of any project happening on Wabun traditional territories.

In less than a decade Wabun Tribal Council has emerged as one of the most prominent Tribal councils in the country in terms of striking meaningful Impact and Benefits Agreements (IBAs) and Exploration Agreements (EAs) that are leading to major benefits to Wabun First Nations in successful projects. Wabun Tribal Council and its chiefs are sought after by First Nation government, agencies as well as non-Native governments and the private sector in terms of their expertise in producing agreements. It has meant jobs, training, project ownership and return on investment for Wabun First Nations and its members. In addition, the development, training and introduction of new First Nation expertise and specialized programing has contributed to the well being of the communities at large in particular to Wabun youth as well as Elders. Health concerns and healing has been a big part of Wabun First Nation development. Overall, it has meant a better quality of life for Wabun First



Nation members and the promise of more to come for future generations.

Wabun Tribal Council has moved ahead with its new responsibilities in resource development negotiations on a large scale with a lot of energy and time devoted to planning, research, lobbying, networking and promotion without adding any additional staff.

"Wabun Tribal Council was not originally mandated to be involved in resource development negotiations. As a trend developed in this area Wabun Chiefs decided that this was an important role for the tribal council executive as the potential benefits to Wabun members was great. We were more than happy to follow the direction of the Chiefs. Although this has meant an increase in our staff workload we have managed to rise to the occasion and have many successes over the years to point to with pride," said Shawn Batise, Wabun Executive Director.

In fact Batise pointed out that for the past 15 years Wabun Staff has remained at 18 employees even though programs at all levels have expanded and the new resource development portfolio has exploded.

"Sometimes people imagine that somehow Wabun Tribal Council is in some way benefiting enormously from the many agreements we are negotiating. The fact is that the agreements we have settled over recent years are worth tens of millions of dollars for our First Nations and their members. Wabun First Nations are the beneficiaries of all these agreements. We are not paid or financially rewarded in any way to work on these agreements as this has all been mandated by the Chiefs as part of our workload with the intention of benefiting Wabun First Nations," said Batise.

Wabun Chiefs and tribal council executive have entered into more than 20 EAs to date and more are coming forward. As well they have also negotiated three IBAs over the years and these have reaped many rewards for Wabun First Nations. Batise pointed out that with the recent changes to the mining act in Ontario it will mean a substantial increase in the number of EAs in the Wabun Territory.

"This increasing number of signed agreements with our First Nations, industry and government has meant a dramatic growth in the wealth of our communities and it will hopefully continue to be the trend. We have seen a positive jump in the standard of employment and living on our First Nations as never experienced before and we are looking at a future with much more to come," explained Batise.

He also noted that it should be remembered that not all Exploration Agreements result in operating mines and that only a small percentage move



**Chief Andrew Neshawabin,**  
Brunswick  
House FN



**Chief Anita Stephens,**  
Chapleau  
Ojibwe FN



**Chief Murray Ray,**  
Flying Post FN



**Chief Marcia Brown Martel,**  
Beaverhouse  
FN

forward with the potential for development. However, those that do develop do so with the inclusion of Wabun First Nations. Although nobody can predict the future in resource development value, stock markets and the economy in general, if the current trend continues and Wabun Chiefs and

Wabun executive are actively involved in the hard work negotiating these agreements, the future is bright.

Currently Wabun Tribal Council consists of the First Nations of Chapleau Ojibwe, Beaverhouse, Brunswick House, Flying Post, Matachewan and Mattagami.

## Forest Fire Threatens Mattagami FN

On May 23, 2012, community members from Mattagami First Nation were evacuated to the town of Kapuskasing due to the threat of out of control forest fires nearby. Chief Walter Naveau and members of his Council stayed in the community to monitor the situation but were ordered to evacuate the next day when the forest fires became even more unstable.

"The threat of fires and the destruction of our community was a very traumatic experience for our community. So many people did so much for our members and we are thankful for all the help they provided. We are grateful to the town of Kapuskasing for taking care of our people, for Nishnawbe-Aski Police Services, for the police services in Timmins, the Ontario Provincial Police, the fire fighters and to our community Health people and Wabun Health for implementing a safe and efficient evacuation," said Chief Naveau.

Most of the community members were cared for in an evacuation center in Kapuskasing but some also took shelter with relatives and friends in Timmins and northern Ontario. Mattagami First Nation health staff and Wabun Health Services had developed an emergency response plan several years ago to deal with events such as this. Health team members from the community and Wabun Health staff made themselves available in order to implement this plan to ensure the safety and well being of community members. A week

after the evacuation, Chief Naveau and Elder Mike Naveau, conducted a fly over by helicopter with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) to assess the forest fire situation.

"We rely on the experience of our Elders for their knowledge of the land but also for their guidance in situations like this. Elder Mike Naveau has a lot of knowledge of the land around our community and he was instrumental in helping us determine the forest fire situation. I am grateful to him for his assistance," said Chief Walter Naveau.

The forest fire was an out of control blaze that came to within four kilometres of the community of Mattagami First Nation and it was driven by 55 kilometre an hour winds. The wind driven blaze was originally heading towards the community but at the last moment, Chief Walter Naveau explained that wind directions changed and spared the community from danger.

"This was such an emotional experience for all of us. It was mostly good fortune that spared our homes from destruction. Once we were able to go home, we were grateful to all the firefighting crews who kept our community safe. Myself and my Council are also thankful to our Elders for their patience, our leadership as well as community members for working together, Wabun Tribal Council and everyone who kept our people fed and safe during this trying time," said Chief Walter Naveau.

# Wabun First Nations Developing Together



**Jason Batise,**  
Economic  
Development /  
Technical  
Services Advisor

Wabun First Nations and its members have been enjoying the successes achieved under the direction of the Wabun Chiefs. Since the creation of Wabun Tribal Council in 1989 Wabun executive has worked tirelessly in the development of the Technical Services and Economic Development department to improve the quality of life for its First Nation members. The resulting infrastructure and business developments have produced modern First Nations with services and facilities that many Native communities in Canada do not have. Funding for economic development opportunities, businesses, partnerships and training has produced growth and prosperity in Wabun First Nations with in some cases an increase in on reserve membership.

"As a Wabun First Nation member I have always found my work as part of the executive team to be very rewarding. I recall very well what our First Nations were like many years ago and in turn I have been fortunate to be part of a positive force that has assisted in making our Wabun communities modern, well serviced and ripe with opportunities," said Jason Batise, Economic Development / Technical Services Advisor.

In terms of development, Batise also has been involved under the direction of Wabun Chiefs to assist with negotiations and implementation of Exploration Agreement (EAs), Impact and Benefits Agreements (IBAs) and partnership opportunities that have come about with resource development. Although he can point to many successes in terms of mining, forestry and hydro development he is quick to point out that Wabun as a tribal council institution does not benefit directly from any of these agreements. In fact Wabun Tribal Council acts only to facilitate these agreements through networking, lobbying and representation to governments and the private sector resource developers.

"Although our Wabun staff works hard to make the best of these agreements it is all done for the benefit of the communities. When we meet with the key stakeholders involved in

resource development initiatives we do so more as administrative facilitators for our First Nations. There is a lot of expertise and effort put into representing our First Nations to get the best deal possible for our members. In any agreements we have signed off on, we have been directed to do so by the First Nation Chiefs of Wabun and as a means to legitimize our Wabun Tribal Council geographical coverage," explained Batise.

In fact all agreements signed by Wabun Tribal Council benefit only the First Nations involved in specific potential and resulting projects as directed by Wabun Chiefs. Wabun Tribal Council answers to the Chiefs who are its board of directors. No major decisions, negotiations or signings are done without the direction and involvement of the Wabun Chiefs and Councils. The tribal council does not derive any financial benefit as a result of these negotiations however some recovery of administrative and office costs are made. This cost recovery is only done if the proponent provides the resources for it. If not the Wabun Tribal Council absorbs the cost through its other programs, the cost is never recuperated from the First Nations themselves. Since Wabun Tribal Council is considered a regional organization it qualifies for funding that assists in negotiating the many agreements that individual First Nations would not otherwise qualify. The real beneficiaries of these agreements are the Wabun First Nations as funding is flowed through to the communities and resulting projects benefit them directly.

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Batise pointed out that the fact Wabun Tribal Council represents six First Nations there is strength in numbers when dealing with governments and resource developers. The original vision of the founding

Wabun Chiefs has been proven in the consistent development of Wabun First Nations on many fronts including the more recent resource development agreements. Although there have been many challenges along the way, Wabun Tribal Council has emerged as one of the most respected tribal councils in Canada. The tribal council is regularly approached by First Nation political bodies and organizations as well as governments and resource developers for its expertise and success in assisting to develop sound working relationships and partnerships through meaningful negotiations with key stakeholders in resource development.

Batise pointed out that there has been an enormous amount of work done by the Wabun Chiefs, Wabun Tribal Council executive and Wabun staff in developing three major IBAs and more than 20 EAs. He added that Wabun Tribal Council and the Chiefs have also been at the forefront in securing and negotiating a major hydro electric partnership and are currently working on negotiations for an additional hydro project.

"Our Chiefs and Wabun staff are very proud of the strong negotiations we have made across many agreements. We are currently seeing the results of these negotiated benefits with employment, training and business opportunities for many of our Wabun First Nation members. The exciting news is that many of the major projects in resource development over the coming years will be providing direct economic benefits to our Wabun First Nations far into the future," said Batise.

He added that employment has gone from almost nothing to more than 75 percent in some of the Wabun First Nations where resource development projects have resulted.

"We have made sure to negotiate agreements that provide for employment and training clauses and that will lead to jobs for our people. As a matter of fact over the years we have garnered a great expertise in negotiating these agreements and over time we have developed standardized documents that make sure everyone is treated fairly and understands the process in terms of what we require when it comes resource development agreements," said Batise.

He also pointed out that although Wabun First Nations that sign on to agreements are directly impacted by resource developers and in all fairness reap the benefits of these projects, there is a duty and willingness to share with other Wabun First Nations who are not located in the area of development. Built into these agreements are



opportunities for Wabun Tribal Council sister First Nations that are not in the localized area but are considered to benefit once the signatory agreement First Nations are satisfied that their needs have been met. This means that once an IBA has resulted in a resource development project and the Wabun First Nations immediately involved receives benefits in terms of employment, training and business opportunities, and no longer has the capacity or desire to take advantage of further opportunities, then other Wabun communities can participate. However, the First Nation(s) signatory is always the sole beneficiary of any financial compensation.

"We work for all of our communities in negotiations and every one of our Wabun First Nations has been included in some form of agreement regarding resource development. We are actively involved in providing partnership opportunities for all our communities and creating regional partnerships in business that will benefit the collective," said Batise.

He explained that because the Wabun Chiefs are directing Wabun Tribal Council to act in an administrative and coordinating function this translates to the potential for all kinds of cooperative working arrangements among the communities in terms of business developments.

"We are creating initiatives that can involve all of our First Nations as we are constantly working with our communities on multiple levels of development with governments and the private sector. We are ideally placed to make sure that all of our Wabun First Nations benefit in one way or another from programming and opportunities that arise," said Batise.

Even though most agreements involve two or three of the Wabun First Nations at times those communities who are not directly participating in a particular agreement sometimes feel they are being left out. However, as time moves on, more and more agreements are being negotiated and all Wabun First Nations have and are becoming more involved. No community has been left out of the negotiating agreements process although some are more strategically located in terms of current resource development interest.

"At times we see Wabun First Nation members question the Chiefs and Wabun Tribal Council in terms of the administrative operation but we look on this as normal as people are at times misinformed or not up to date on all of the relevant details. In these cases we urge members to contact our office directly to ensure they have all the facts before making a judgement. In some cases we cannot share the agreements directly, but we can make arrangements

for individuals to gain access through their respective First Nation," said Batise.

Governments were not very supportive when the Wabun Chiefs first started the development of Wabun Tribal Council. However, the Chiefs stood their ground and joined to make sure that these smaller First Nations in Northeastern Ontario would have a strong voice. Before the creation of Wabun Tribal Council, governments dealt with the smaller First Nations in a very colonial manner and it was difficult for individual communities to relate to, interact with and lobby governments which meant that development was very slow and a constant struggle.

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***"Our Wabun Chiefs and Councils are setting high standards in terms of leadership and development that is being noticed right across the country,"***  
***Jason Batise***

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"Now, not only are we are very aware that the strength of our Wabun First Nations is in standing together in a cooperative system under the guidance of our Wabun Chiefs and the administration and coordination of Wabun Tribal Council, but governments and resource users are as well," said Batise.

Since the inception of Wabun Tribal Council the Wabun First Nations have developed dramatically and in

particular over the past 15 years. Construction projects, new facilities and above all the important access to clean drinking water has become a reality in all of the Wabun First Nations.

"Our work over many years has resulted in developing a first rate tribal council with networking, research, planning and expertise in many areas. This has further resulted in a great relationship and understanding between governments and the tribal council and that translates into positive responses when we are applying for funding to develop our Wabun communities," said Batise.

He pointed to the fact that from 1997 to 2007 the tribal council secured funding and coordinated the development of state of the art water treatment centres for five Wabun First Nations. These types of large scale developments usually take many years to secure. Due to an excellent working relationship with government and the proven capacity to follow through on projects, Wabun Tribal Council managed to expedite the process to provide these critical treatment facilities at a cost of more than \$30 million dollars.

"I am so proud of all of the intelligent First Nation people we have working here at Wabun Tribal Council and in our Wabun First Nations. Our Wabun Chiefs and Councils are setting high standards in terms of leadership and development and that is being noticed right across the country. We have all come a long way and I am happy to report that things are only going to get better as we move forward together," said Batise.

He added that he and all the staff at Wabun Tribal Council are always ready and willing to answer any questions Wabun Members have on any issue. It has been and continues to be a priority for Wabun staff to maintain easy access to First Nation members to make sure that as a family, Wabun stays in touch and continues to grow and prosper.



**THE WABUN FIRST NATIONS OF MATACHEWAN AND MATTAGAMI SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WITH RING OF FIRE RESOURCES INC. ON JANUARY 26, 2012 AT THE WABUN OFFICE IN TIMMINS. PICTURED DURING THE SIGNING ARE FROM L-R: CHIEF ALEX BATISSE, MATACHEWAN FN; VANCE WHITE, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF RING OF FIRE RESOURCES INC. AND CHIEF WALTER NAVEAU, MATTAGAMI FN.**

# Wabun Health: A Success Story

*Wabun Health Services has played an integral role, for nearly 20 years, in the delivery of a range of health programs and services for its member First Nations.*

The health department is a shining example of how a Native organization has successfully taken over the administration of what was once a Federal government responsibility. In 1993, Wabun Health Services made history, as the first such organization in Ontario, to take control of health programming from the Medical Services Branch of Health Canada.

Jean Lemieux, Health Director for Wabun Health Services explained that prior to the health transfer agreement, health funding was provided for each of the communities at a bare minimum.

"Our community's needs were not being met and our members were not getting the best possible services they needed. On their own these small communities just did not have a strong voice," said Lemieux.

Prior to the health transfer, the changeover from Health Canada was a process driven by the Wabun Board of Director who are in fact the Chiefs of the member Wabun First Nations. During the pre-transfer phase, the Chiefs had to make a decision that involved creating individual community based services or a regional initiative under one organization. The Wabun Chiefs decided upon creating a regional initiative to best meet Health Canada's regulations as program funding is based on community membership. Since each Wabun community had small populations, it meant that there would not be enough resources to create individual community based services. It was much more economical and beneficial to the Wabun First Nations to create a regional initiative. The Chiefs' decision was also influenced by the fact that when it became a regional health service, additional funding could be accessed to manage and deliver more health care services. It was understood by all concerned that a regional health organization with centralized expertise would be better positioned in administering the health services while also lobbying and interacting with Health Canada.

"Once we established the transfer agreement with Health Canada, we also created agreements with each Wabun community, which led to the creation of Wabun Health Services. A single health organization for our Wabun communities also allowed us to

represent our people with one voice on a range of issues with Health Canada. It was much easier to negotiate and advocate for our people as a single representative organization when it came to dealing with a large federal institution like Health Canada. We had all the components and expertise available to develop this," said Lemieux.

The health transfer agreement provided the designated funding formula for the Wabun communities. Over and above that, the creation of Wabun Health Services, a regional initiative, also provided additional funds for management, administration and training. That meant that the communities would still be provided funding by Health Canada with the advantage of having a devoted health administration team at their disposal.

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## *Overall direction and approvals for programming come from the Wabun Chiefs*

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The Health Transfer agreement provides funding for Health Administration (which includes a Health Director, Program Manager and a Health Clerk), Community Health Nurses (CHNs), Nursing Supervision, Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program and training for health staff and front line workers. The agreement also provides funding for positions in each of the communities including: Community Health Representatives (CHRs) and Drug and Alcohol Abuse Workers. The majority of these funds go towards training and supporting front line health care workers in the First Nations.

The creation of Wabun Health Services has made it possible for the

Wabun communities to have access to regional wide programs including: Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, Maternal Child Health, Long Term Care, Non-Insured Health Benefits, Home and Community Care, Traditional Programming and Injury Prevention. At the community level, the Health Transfer agreement provides mandatory community health services including: communicable disease control, immunization, access to health care and environmental health as well as additional programs including: prenatal, postpartum, well baby assessment, school health, adult health and chronic disease.

Wabun Health Services provides for three CHNs. These three nursing positions were made possible because of the added resources of creating Wabun Health Services. The CHNs are able to service Wabun's communities three days a week with two days reserved for preparatory and administrative duties at the Wabun Health Services office in Timmins.

All health care programs are coordinated by Wabun Health Services for each of Wabun's communities with the assistance and support of the three CHNs and community frontline Health Care Workers including the CHRs, National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention (NNADAP) Workers and Brighter Futures representatives. Overall direction and approvals for programming come from the Wabun Chiefs and much input is provided by the Wabun First Nations councils, band administration, front line Health workers and Elders.

Twenty years ago, health services for First Nations were mainly managed by the federal government without real representation for Aboriginal people. Health care services for Aboriginal people were operated on a minimal budget as a cost cutting measure by government to the detriment of First Nations. Since then, Aboriginal organizations such as Wabun Tribal Council have taken over health services across the country in order to provide better health care services for their members and access more funding for additional servicing and programs. Once First Nations began to properly address health care concerns for their members, federal budgets for First



Nations health services rose but at the same time the government became much more strict on what was covered and what was not, as well as who received services and who did not. That put a burden on First Nations in terms of administration but Wabun Health was well positioned and had the staff and capacity to deal with this. As Aboriginal organizations became better able to advocate for their people, Health Canada developed to be more complex and strict in system requirements and thankfully that was not a problem for Wabun Health.

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***"Back then, there was no health care representation and few Aboriginal people knew their rights when it came to being a status Indian person,"***  
***Jean Lemieux***

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"Twenty years ago it was relatively easy to ask for coverage of one type or another, because in the broader picture, not many First Nation people were accessing the health care system. Back then, there was no health care representation and few Aboriginal people knew their rights when it came to being a status Indian person under the federal government. Now that has changed and as more Aboriginal people access the system, the federal government has created a very strict system of control over all aspects of health care coverage," said Lemieux.

She commented that one of the main frustrations voiced by First Nations members concerning health care funding has to do with changes to the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program.

"Whenever there is a change or a cutback on what is covered or what is not, it is not Wabun Health that makes this decision. We are following the guidelines and decisions made by Health Canada," said Lemieux.

She added that Wabun Health Services staff forward these concerns to Wabun leadership who then address these issues at the regional level with Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN), at the provincial level with Chiefs of Ontario (COO) and at the national level with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

# Keeping Our People Safe



**Mike Archer,  
Regional Crisis  
Coordinator /  
Intervention  
Worker**

The Crisis Team Program was established by Wabun Health Services through the support of Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (NAN) and the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) through the Ontario government. Crisis Teams, consisting of local First Nation members, are set up in each Wabun community to deal with community safety, security and emergency crisis situations such as family violence, abuse or suicide. In each of Wabun's communities there are teams consisting of eight to 12 individuals.

Mike Archer, acts as the Regional Crisis Coordinator / Intervention Worker for Wabun Health Services and works directly with crisis teams in each of the Wabun communities.

"The role of our crisis teams has been significant in dealing with many issues, especially concerning issues like suicide. Our teams play a big role in keeping our communities healthy because we don't just act on events that happen, we focus also on preventing negative situations from happening in the first place. Our members are always available to the community on site and they are there to help," said Archer.

Crisis team members receive regular training and ongoing upgrading through workshops on: suicide issues, intervention, debriefing, traditional values and family violence. Archer also works with the Crisis teams to assist in emergency situations, coordinate training and ensure that team members are kept up to date on protocols and procedures for emergency events.

Wabun First Nation members at times have confused the role of the Crisis Team members in their communities. Crisis team members do not operate as medical transportation drivers. Medical transportation of clients or patients requires specific training using vehicles mandated for this purpose and there are other programs that provide for this type of service.

Crisis teams also do not provide emergency medical care as they have minimal training in terms of dealing with physical treatment. Although

they receive primary training in CPR and emergency first aid, they are not paramedics that can deal with serious physical emergency situations. In extreme cases, they can provide advanced first aid treatment and help to stabilize an injured individual before paramedics arrive.

"Although our members are not trained as paramedics, they do get involved in serious physical emergencies and they are usually the first to arrive at the scene of an incident. They attend these medical emergencies because there will always be family or friends affected by these situations who will need trained individuals to counsel and care for them during these traumatic events. They do what they can as any human being would do but they are not trained for critical care and people have to understand that," said Archer.

He added that Crisis team members also play a significant part in handling community wide emergencies. Due to the nature of the intensity and stressfulness of the work involved in dealing with social issues in the communities, there is a regular turn over of team members in each Wabun First Nation. Over the years, many First Nation members received training as a Crisis team members and the benefits are far reaching because even when they leave the group and go on to other positions they still have a lot of emergency crisis knowledge.

"One recent example of how valuable crisis team training has become relates to the forest fire evacuation of Mattagami First Nation recently. Our current team members knew what to do and previous team members also joined in and were able to help in coordinating a safe and efficient evacuation. It was like second nature to them," said Archer.

Through his role as Regional Crisis Coordinator, Archer is also able to assist in community wide incidents by working with team members in other communities.

"Our communities are a close knit group of family and friends and when a community wide crisis event occurs, our team members will also be affected. That is when I am able to call in team members from other First Nations to assist in dealing with these community wide crisis events. That is one of the unique features of our regional crisis program, our Wabun crisis team members can work together in just about any given situation and act as one team. We are like family," said Archer.

# Explaining The Facts On Non-Insured Health Benefits



**Peggy Claveau,**  
Program  
Manager NIHB  
/ Accreditation  
Coordinator

Peggy Claveau, Program Manager Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) and Accreditation Coordinator is responsible for two major programs that are an integral part of Wabun Health Services.

The NIHB program is made available by Health Canada, First Nation and Inuit Health Branch to provide benefits to eligible First Nation and Inuit people throughout Canada. The program is designed to meet the needs of medical and dental services not covered by federal, provincial, territorial or other third party health insurance plans. The program includes benefits for prescription medication, medical transportation, dental, medical supplies and equipment, vision goods and services, crisis intervention, mental health counselling and health care premiums where applicable.

Wabun Health Services only provides direct assistance for the Patient Transportation Program, which is part of the NIHB program. Wabun Health receives an annual contribution agreement from Health Canada, First Nation and Inuit Health Branch to deliver the Patient Transportation Program. Under strict guidelines and procedures, Wabun Health Services delivers this program to eligible Wabun First Nation members and non-Wabun First Nation people.

Wabun Health Services is not involved in the other portions of the NIHB program which includes coverage of other services including dental, medication and medical supplies. The annual contribution agreement with Wabun Health only applies to the Patient Transportation program and not for any other service or reimbursements covered by other sections of the NIHB program. In other words Wabun does not have any funds to disperse for these items.

"Although we can not directly assist clients with other parts of the NIHB program, we can help them get the information they need to complete any reimbursements. Our staff has a lot of expertise and knowledge of the program, so we are ready to assist if a client has questions about coverage

concerning issues such as prescriptions, medical devices or other services and they should talk to us before making any purchases because we could save them time, effort and money," said Claveau.

As Program Manager for the NIHB, Claveau oversees a program that provides Patient Transportation services for eligible First Nation people. The Patient Transportation program is designed to provide funds for eligible clients to complete their visits to medical facilities away from their home community. Coverage of this type is governed by strict guidelines and policies developed by Health Canada.

Claveau explained that under the annual contribution agreement, clients receive the normal designated coverage as though it were coming from Health Canada but it is managed by Wabun Health. That means that Wabun assists the client or member in terms of their planning and costs. However, Wabun Health is in the position of having to implement the proper administration, documentation and accountability of the program for its clients in order to receive reimbursement from Health Canada. It is very important that clients or members get in touch with Wabun Health before arranging travel and assorted costs concerned with health care travel to make sure it is understood what is covered and what is not while also outlining what responsibilities the client has in terms of receipts and following through on appointments.

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***Wabun Health staff  
is well suited to  
advocating for  
clients when it comes  
to dealing with  
Health Canada  
coverage policies***

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"We need to stay within budget in order to deliver the program to our clients. Since we are essentially passing funds to our clients, if any inconsistency is identified by Health Canada, then that coverage will not be reimbursed and Wabun Health and Wabun Tribal Council will have to cover that cost using our other administrative funds which means that

comes out of another program budget. Also, if we are under budget, we are obligated to return any unused funds back to Health Canada," said Claveau.

The Patient Transportation program policy required by Health Canada involves having to complete a series of reporting procedures and submission of documentation and original receipts of transportation and related costs. If a client accessed this program directly with Health Canada, First Nation and Inuit Health Branch in Thunder Bay, all documentation and reporting would be required of the client and reimbursement would not be identified until after a four to six week waiting period. Wabun Health acts as a representative organization to assist Wabun First Nation members to access the program easily and quickly. By having Wabun Health represent the First Nation client, turnaround times for reimbursements directly to clients are reduced to days rather than weeks.

Wabun Health also follows a policy of its own in order to accommodate clients and Health Canada regulations. One of Wabun Health's policies include what is known as a 'hold back', where travel is pre approved for the client but funds are held back until the medical trip is completed and accounted for in documentation and receipts. This policy had to be put in place because people were not providing documentation and receipts and that posed budget problems for Wabun Health as Health Canada refused to honour costs without proper reporting.

"We understand that this can be difficult for clients on a fixed income but we do our best to accommodate their needs by offering prepaid services in advance such as taxi vouchers. This hold back is inconvenient but it ensures that we maintain funds to continue to assist all our patient transportation clients as well as meet our responsibilities to Health Canada funding requirements," said Claveau.

She added that Wabun Health staff is well suited to advocating for clients when it comes to dealing with Health Canada coverage policies.

"We have been running this program for many years now and our staff has first hand knowledge of the reporting procedures that are required. Also, we understand what our First Nation clients are going through and we do our best to accommodate their situations but in the end we have to follow the policies of Health Canada in order to complete the reimbursements," said Claveau.

She explained that the NIHB program requires a great deal of



resources, staff time and expertise in order to meet the needs of the client while following government policy. Wabun Health submits detailed reports on the NIHB Patient Transportation Program to Health Canada three times a year.

"Our regular reports require detailed information on all our clients and what expenses they incurred. If our reporting does not match the documentation, then we have to answer to Health Canada and be held accountable. If any discrepancy is identified, Health Canada reserves the right to withhold funds, which would mean that we have to cover these costs from other sources within our organization," said Claveau.

Clients are encouraged to contact the Wabun Health office if they have any questions or concerns regarding coverage under the NIHB program so they are not disappointed or surprised later in the process.

## ACCREDITATION CANADA

Wabun Health Services took part in an accreditation process with Accreditation Canada starting in 2008.

In early 2009, Claveau took on the additional role of Accreditation Coordinator to oversee the accreditation process for Wabun Health, which involved Wabun Health staff and First Nation health care workers in each of the Wabun's communities.

"We are proud to say that Wabun Health achieved a primer award in 2011 after completing an initial three year process. We are still working with Accreditation Canada, as accreditation is an ongoing process that helps us to continually examine our programs and procedures to make sure we are delivering the best possible services for our First Nation members," said Claveau.

Accreditation Canada is a non-profit organization that assists other health entities to examine and improve the quality of service that is provided to patients and clients. The process has allowed Wabun Health to evaluate all of its programs, procedures and services in order to establish recognized standards in health care delivery and methods.

In a time where bureaucratic dictates are becoming more and more complex and stringent in regards to funding programs and services First Nation communities are finding it difficult to develop the expertise and systems to respond to the challenges this produces. However, Wabun Health continues to develop its expertise, reporting systems and program administration and that is reflected in the successful process of accreditation.

# ACCOUNTABILITY PROMOTED



**Darlene  
Lafontaine,  
Finance  
Advisor**

Wabun Tribal Council is a progressive First Nation organization that has become a recognized group for its accountability and good governance model. Darlene Lafontaine, Finance Advisor for Wabun Tribal Council explained that federal and provincial governments have rewarded Wabun, its Chiefs and First Nations for its good governance practices and efficient accountability by providing better access to many services and programs. Based on the reputation Wabun Tribal Council has developed over the years in terms of accountability, transparency and capability, relationships with the Canadian and Ontario governments is excellent.

"Many people outside our organization believe that we are actively building a larger organization at Wabun. The fact is that as we become more accountable and more efficient, funding bodies are now coming to us to start new projects or programs. There may be a lot of activity at our office but over the past decade we have not grown as an organization. Instead we have passed on many of these new programs and services to help build capacity in our communities and assist in their growth and development," said Lafontaine.

As First Nation development increases from successfully acquiring new funding or from partnerships with major corporations, First Nation members feel that their representative organizations need to become more accountable. Lafontaine pointed out that sometimes there is confusion among members in terms of understanding how Wabun Finance department operates. However, Wabun members can always take comfort and pride in the fact that the Wabun Chiefs who sit as the Board of Directors make all the decisions when it comes to any department of Wabun Tribal Council.

"The finance department is not one of these departments where we can point to bricks and mortar or things that people identify with. That is the case with all financial departments. However, we provide a valuable service to our members by making sure that Wabun Tribal Council is kept accountable and transparent, not only to government but to our community members as well," said Lafontaine.

She added that First Nation members may feel at times out of the loop from the work that finance departments conduct due to the fact that security protocols keep financial data confidential and private. However, Lafontaine explained that regular reports are generated to show where all funds have been received and how they have been distributed. These reports are made available to Wabun members upon request. In addition financial reports are part of the Annual Report presented at Wabun's Annual General Meeting.

"Every year we are obligated to generate financial statements and reports to present to our management and our Board of Directors, the Chiefs of Wabun Tribal Council. We present these documents at our Annual General Meetings which are held every year and are open to participation by our Wabun members. We keep a very transparent and open policy when it comes to disclosing our financial information to our Wabun members. All they need to do is ask for the information and we are more than willing to show them our annual reporting," said Lafontaine.

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**Any Wabun member  
with questions about  
financing can contact  
Darlene at the Wabun  
office or by email at:  
[finance@wabun.on.ca](mailto:finance@wabun.on.ca)**

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When Wabun Tribal Council first started out as an organization, the finance department's main responsibility was to submit reporting information to government and other funding sources. That perspective has changed over the years to focus more on accountability to its membership as well as upholding to other responsibilities.

"Financial transparency is at the forefront now. It is actually community members who are requesting more accountability. Reporting to funders is still a task we have to complete but one of my main goals now is to ensure that all our finances are in order so that our management understands our fiscal health and that we are accountable to our Wabun members," said Lafontaine.

She works directly with each Wabun First Nation administration office and its finance departments to coordinate and assist in financial operations. As a regional office, Lafontaine acts as a central liaison for each community finance office and she is able to share valuable training

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# Good Governance And Accountability

## Cont From Pg 11

opportunities as well as information to help each community build on capacity and become more efficient.

Before the creation of Wabun Tribal Council there was much distress at the community level when it came to accountability, managing finances, reporting and dealing with governments due to limited staffing and the small size of a community. Often funding opportunities were missed and the relationships with government were strained and run in a very colonial fashion.

Lafontaine pointed out that she enjoys working directly with each of the Wabun Chiefs in order to keep them updated and informed on financial issues. Keeping leadership informed has proven valuable over the past few years, as each community has entered into major resource development agreements which requires an intimate knowledge of financial information.

"We make sure that all our financial officers in the community get the training they need in order to keep up to date. We assist our leaders to access appropriate training in financial issues as well so that they can interpret financial documents and make informed decisions when negotiating major resource development projects," said Lafontaine.

She commented that this added training at all levels has also meant that First Nation finance departments have been able to take on more of the reporting duties than they did in the past. Auditors at one time did the majority of year end reporting duties with the First Nation having to pay for this added work. Trained First Nation finance officers are now taking on these tasks and their work has paid off by decreasing annual audit costs for their communities.

The ongoing sharing of information and resources between financial departments has been very beneficial to the Wabun communities. When major resource development agreements are being negotiated, sometimes several Wabun communities will enter into the same agreement. Information sharing ensures that all communities act as a collective group in order to provide the most benefits for their First Nations.

"As we become more connected, our leaders are able to work together on these major resource development agreements. This means that they are able to work out better deals for their people and their communities," said Lafontaine.

In addition, when government imposes new regulations or policies pertaining to financial issues, Lafontaine

explained that the Wabun First Nation financial officers are able to speak as a group to voice any concerns. When Wabun Tribal Council Chiefs speak they have a strong voice and governments listen.

"When new regulations are created that make our lives more difficult and are unfair in one way or the other then it is easier for us to act as a group to show our concern to government organizations. It feels reassuring to know that as a group we can stand together when unfair rules or regulations are imposed on us," said Lafontaine.

She urges any Wabun member with any questions about financing to give her a call and have a personal chat with her.

## ***Wabun Youth Gathering 2012***

**The Sixth Annual Gathering will be held in Elk Lake, Ont. from July 16 to 27, 2012**  
**Contact Mike Archer at Wabun Tribal Council for more information**

## Aurico Gold Pours First Gold Bar



ON MAY 1, 2012, AURICO GOLD INC ANNOUNCED THE COMPLETION OF ITS FIRST GOLD POUR AT THE YOUNG DAVIDSON MINE SITE. MATACHEWAN FIRST NATION IS A SIGNATORY OF AN IMPACT AND BENEFITS AGREEMENT (IBA) WITH THE COMPANY. PICTURED FROM L-R ARE: ANDREW CORMIER, PROJECT MANAGER AND MARCUS BINKS, MILL SUPERINTENDENT WITH THE FIRST GOLD BAR.



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