



Walking in Beauty

Annual report 2024-25



Walking in Beauty:

A Diné Prayer and Blessing Ceremony

*In beauty I walk
With beauty before me I walk
With beauty behind me I walk
With beauty above me I walk
With beauty around me I walk
It has become beauty again*

*Today I will walk out, today everything negative will leave me
I will be as I was before, I will have a cool breeze over my body.
I will have a light body, I will be happy forever, nothing will hinder me.*

*I walk with beauty before me. I walk with beauty behind me.
I walk with beauty below me. I walk with beauty above me.
I walk with beauty around me. My words will be beautiful.*

*In beauty all day long may I walk.
Through the returning seasons, may I walk.
On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.
With dew about my feet, may I walk.*

*With beauty before me may I walk.
With beauty behind me may I walk.
With beauty below me may I walk.
With beauty above me may I walk.
With beauty all around me may I walk.*

*In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.*

My words will be beautiful...



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CEO Letter

This year, Wabano's journey has been guided by the Diné Blessing of Walking in Beauty. As our management and staff teams have consciously reflected on this blessing, we have come to understand the *power* that lies in beauty, which is a true gift in challenging times like these.

Every day, we can see a clear view of the ugliness that the world allows, of the shadow side of our humanity, where beauty is tossed away, seen as naive or frivolous. Neglecting the beautiful has disastrous results.

But more importantly, focussing on the beautiful has *powerful* results.

Many years ago, a client came upstairs in the old Wabano building. She was a single mother who had been attending Wabano's perinatal and children's programs. That one day, she was wearing a stunning ribbon skirt. *You look so beautiful*, I said to her. She looked at me and said gently:

"Wabano makes me beautiful."

Her simple statement has stayed with me over the years. It has been a constant reminder of our collective responsibility to uphold beauty. For when we do, we unconsciously empower others to do the same.

The very existence of Wabano, as a space and a service, reflects our community's value of and commitment to beauty. In this booklet, you will see all the ways that Wabano walked in beauty this year and the powerful impact this has on our community.

- From our Gala, that has become the go-to event on National Indigenous Peoples Day
- To our Symposium where we focussed on the power of bundles and how bundles help us walk in beauty
- To the myriad programs and services that our dedicated team provides to our community.

This work is an animated walk in beauty.

I say chi miigwetch (deepest of appreciation in Anishinaabemowin) to the funders and donors who value and invest in Wabano's beauty journey.

I offer my deep gratitude to our Wabano board, staff team and volunteers for their fortitude to continually choose beauty.

And to the Indigenous community in Ottawa, I raise my hands to each of you as you continue to have the courage to walk in beauty each day.

In beauty, we walk.

Allison Fisher
CEO



Wabano's Commitment to Beauty

The Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health is an award-winning and internationally recognized healthcare facility located in Ottawa, Ontario. Wabano's unique model of care emphasizes the importance of nurturing the mind, body and spirit through the provision of a full medical clinic, mental wellness and addictions services, community and cultural programs, and community outreach. The result has been the creation of a place of belonging where culture flourishes in support of more than 18,000 Indigenous people.

Wabano Logo

The circular shape of the logo represents unity of all cultures and shows that we are all connected, all related. This circle concept is shared by First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures. There are four parts to the logo, representing the four elements. The four elements are also the names of the four floors of Wabano's building.

- **Earth:** dark blue at the bottom of the logo (ground floor)
- **Water:** turquoise in the middle (maternal wellness and clinic floor)
- **Fire:** white sun burst (cultural gathering space)
- **Sky:** rainbow segments at the top of the logo (social enterprise, mental health and outreach)

The lines separating earth from sky and water represent the confluence of three rivers in the Ottawa area; the Rideau, the Gatineau and the Ottawa Rivers. The line that cuts between the turquoise and dark blue takes its shape from Métis infinity flag that represents the joining of cultures that will go on forever.

The shape of the turquoise, which represents water, emulates the undulating glass that hugs the outside of Wabano's building.

The negative or white space in the middle depicts a sunburst and combined with the shifting colours above represents the northern lights and sky of our people to the North.

The thirteen points of the rising sun represent the thirteen Grandmother Moons.

The seven coloured segments that make up the top half of the logo represent the seven Grandfather Teachings: wisdom, truth, honesty, love, respect, humility and courage. From right to left they depict the shifting colour of the sky from a yellow sunrise in the east to a purple sundown in the west.



Our Vision

We envision a world in which all Indigenous people have achieved full and equitable access to the conditions of health. This includes pride in ancestry, cultural reclamation, peace, shelter, education, food, income, a stable environment, resources, social justice, and where the gifts and wisdom of our cultures are recognized as valuable, distinctive and beautiful.

Our Mandate

The main purpose of the Centre is to create and deliver services that will prevent ill health, treat illness and provide support and aftercare. Services are offered in a culturally sensitive way that welcomes, accepts and represents all Indigenous people.

We believe that good medicine is characterized by:

- Reclaiming culture as a pillar of healing;
- The teaching and healing practices of Indigenous people;
- A contemporary model of quality primary healthcare;
- Focusing on the individual in the context of their family and the community;
- Believing in the wisdom of Elders, traditional healers, and teachers; and,
- Believing in the importance of traditional ceremony and celebration.

Our Mission

The Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health is an urban health centre that:

- Provides quality, holistic, culturally relevant health services to Ottawa's First Nation, Métis, and Inuit population;
- Engages in clinical, social, economic and cultural initiatives that promote the health of all Indigenous people;
- Promotes community-building through education and advocacy; and,
- Serves as a centre of excellence for urban Indigenous health.



The Support that Makes Wabano's Beauty Possible

Our Board of Directors

- **Chair:** Louise Logue
- **Vice-Chair:** Melissa Hammell
- **Secretary:** Jennifer Bouchard
- **Treasurer:** Shaun Logue
- **Member-at-Large:** Bret Cardinal
- **Member-at-Large:** Jennifer Francis
- **Member-at-Large:** John Ramsay
- **Member-at-Large:** Rosemary Spring

In loving memory

This year the board and community lost one of the founders of Wabano and our longest standing board member, Valorie Whetung. Valorie had a long battle with cancer and journeyed to the spirit world on Christmas Eve. Valorie modelled for us every day how to walk in beauty. Her kind spirit always shone in every conversation, showing us how words can be beautiful. We carry on her legacy of community-building through beauty.



Our Funders

We say chi miigwetch (Anishnaabe word for our highest appreciation) to each one of these partners for helping the Indigenous community in Ottawa live Mino Bimaadiziwen (Anishnaabe word for health, literal translation is “the good life”).

- Bell Canada
- Canadian Heritage
- City of Ottawa
- Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy
- Indigenous Primary Health Care Council
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Long-Term Care of Ontario
- Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation
- Ministry of Sport
- Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres
- Ontario Health
- Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group Foundation
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- United Way East Ontario

Walking in Beauty with the Ottawa Community

Igniting the Spirit Gala 2025

Wabano's Walking in Beauty Gala on June 19, 2025, welcomed 620 guests to the Ottawa Conference and Event Centre and over 900 silent auction registrants, both online and in person — a testament to its special place in our community.

The evening opened with twenty women in vibrant ribbon skirts, followed by a breathtaking duet between a ballerina and a traditional dancer. Hoop dance, fancy shawl, and men's traditional styles filled the stage, each movement carrying story and spirit. The final moment — a young dancer lifted high, feather fan raised — symbolized the passing of teachings to the next generation.

A video tribute shared the heartfelt journeys of four frontline workers, moving many to tears and reminding all of Wabano's role in healing and strength.

As Gala Chair Kevin Ford, CEO of Calian Group, shared: *"This isn't just 'a night out,' this is us showing up and saying: 'this matters.'"*

Year after year, the gala sells out — a celebration of Indigenous identity, beauty, and belonging that leaves guests inspired.

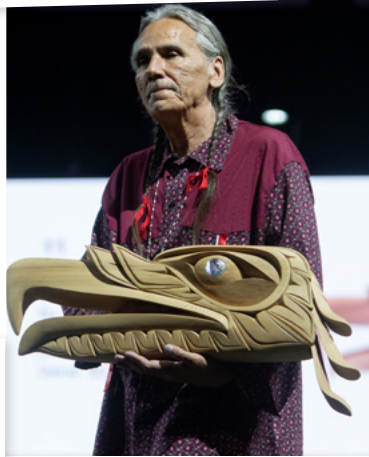


Caroline in the Capital



OBJ Social of Water Gala









Bundle Symposium

Indigenous Knowledge for Health and Well-being

The 2025 Bundle Symposium held May 7–8, brought together Indigenous leaders, health professionals, authors, and community members to explore Indigenous knowledge as a foundation for health and well-being.

Pre-Session

The gathering began with a powerful ceremony led by Elder Gloria Oshkabewisens McGregor and Ron McGregor from Wabano's sister organizations, Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre to birth Wabano's bundle. That evening, over 200 people attended a community book talk with Robin Wall Kimmerer and Monique Gray Smith, moderated by Shelagh Rogers.

Day One

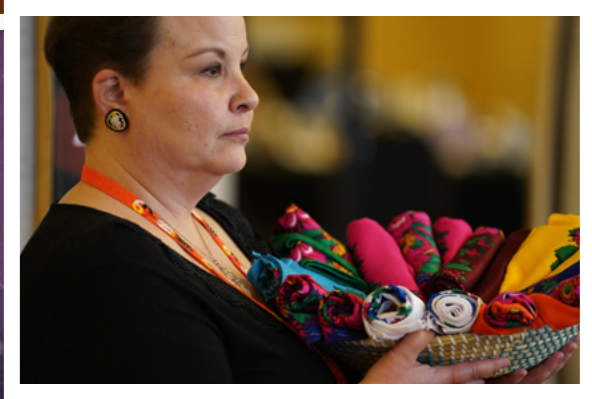
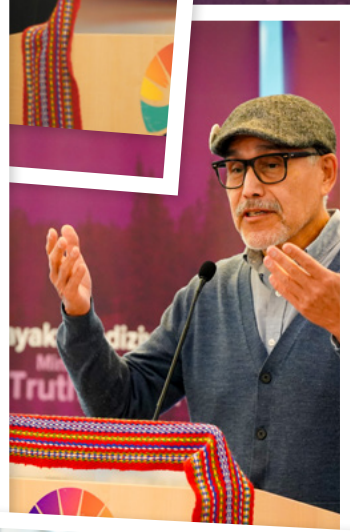
Keynote speaker, Robin Wall Kimmerer spoke on land, language, and learning, urging a shift from seeing the Earth as a resource to seeing it as a relative. Monique Gray Smith followed with a heart-led message on creating spaces of love and safety, especially for children.

Day Two

Featured Michael Yellow Bird on the impacts of colonization and the environment, Katsi Cook on spiritual prenatal care, and Elder Gloria on the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

The symposium was a profound experience of community, learning, and reconnection — grounded in the truth that the land is the heart of our bundle.





Culture is Beauty

This year, Wabano brought community members together on medicine walks, culture nights, and the Mohawk Social—celebrating with dance, laughter, and joy. Seasonal events like the Bear Feast, Ojibway classes, drumming circles, and a new women’s hand drum class deepened cultural connections. Beading classes thrived, guided by skilled artists. Elders and knowledge keepers, including Dennis Windego, Wanda Gabriel, Jim Mishquart, and Jo-Ann and Jerry Saddleback, shared teachings that enriched staff and community. From opening bundles to making talking sticks, culture was woven into every moment. At Wabano, Indigenous knowledge in Indigenous hands is both our foundation and a powerful path to healing.



Walking in Beauty Across Generations

Over the past year, culture has been woven into Wabano's daily rhythm through the leadership of the Wabano Values Committee. This cross-sectoral staff group created a seasonal cultural planning guide and hosted lunch-and-learn sessions to deepen understanding of Indigenous ways of being.

A key recommendation — to increase intergenerational programming — came to life in a series of culturally rooted events between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. Highlights included apple picking with Elders, youth, and early years families; visits to Parc Omega, Saunders Farm, and the Biodome, where youth and Elders shared storytelling; and Wabano's Annual Winter Solstice celebration, which welcomed 104 participants from across programs.

Staff and participants also visited a sugar bush to learn traditional maple teachings and gathered for strawberry teachings and harvest, concluding with communal jam-making to honour the “heart berry” as a symbol of love and connection.

These gatherings show culture as a living thread connecting generations. By grounding our work in Indigenous knowledge and seasonal teachings, Wabano continues to build a community rooted in belonging, mutual respect, and cultural wellness.



Walking in Beauty Across the Lifespan

Early Years Programming

Honouring the Past, Embracing the Future

Throughout the year we enjoyed many intergenerational programs with youth and seniors, reminding us that it truly takes a village to raise a child. A special Early Years project embraced our theme of *Walking in Beauty*. We supported moms and dads as they began creating their child's regalia for a spring walking out ceremony. Together, they learned, stitched, and crafted ribbon shirts and skirts—an act of quiet reclamation and cultural pride. Their children's steps will carry this beauty forward.

Our Prenatal program continued its vital role, supporting young moms through the Parenting Bundle and a variety of cultural grounding workshops. These groups offered breastfeeding support and regular perinatal gatherings featuring visits from community partners, creating a strong network of care and connection.

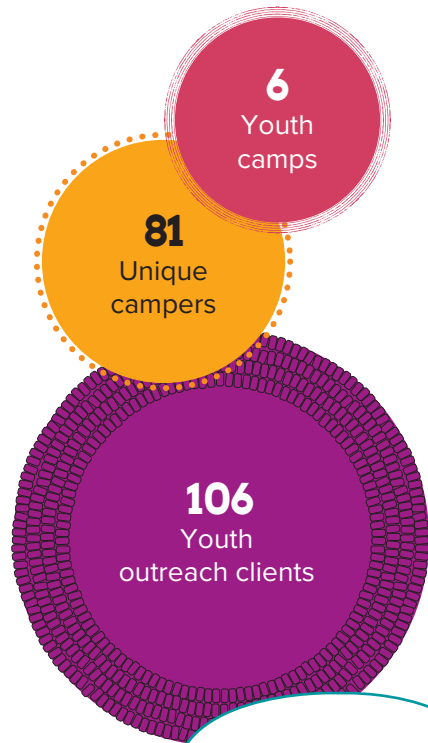


Youth Services

Where Culture and Community Shine

This year, our Youth Team energized the community with engaging workshops, summer and March Break camps, and Youth Healing Camps—building culture, connections, and fun. Our Indigenous School Liaison worked closely with OCDSB, delivering cultural presentations that boosted Indigenous pride and raised awareness among all students. The Indigenous Youth Recreation Club combined homework help with cultural games, arts, crafts—and even virtual reality! Meanwhile, the Wasa-Nabin program empowered teens through meaningful discussions, cultural teachings, and phone-free shared meals. Regular high school visits provided vital one-on-one and group support, weaving culture and advocacy directly into students' academic lives.

Another highlight was Glow Up & Grow Up: Youth Wellness Day, which brought together 20 Indigenous youth for a special day of culture, nutrition, and mental health. Youth received professional wellness services, enjoyed thoughtful activities, and left with boosted confidence, joy, and well-being. This day of care and celebration made each young person feel valued and seen, empowering them on their path to health and happiness—an expression of what it means to walk in beauty.



Looking amazing
thanks to the stylists

My fire haircut!!!
I look too good for
this to be free...



Seniors Care

A Year of Culture, Care & Connection

Kwey Kina Awik! (greetings everyone)

Over the past year, guided by our Cultural Seasonal Planning framework and rooted in Mino Bimaadiziwin—the good life—our Seniors program has thrived. From crafting ribbon skirts with Legacy of Hope to building birch bark canoes, and celebrating seasons with feasts, prayers, and gatherings, we've embraced tradition and community.

Our adventures included Kitchi Zibi boat tours, medicine walks, sugar bush brunches, horse rides, and a trip to the Biodome.

We're proud to introduce the Palliative Care Coordinator role, supporting community members with ceremony, advocacy, and compassionate care. Behind the scenes, our Seniors Team provided one-on-one support, case management and advocacy.

Together, we've learned, laughed, healed, and grown—cherishing culture, kinship, and the promise of another vibrant year ahead.

1,948

Seniors group participants

105

Outings & group activities

2,714

Appointments

195

Senior clients



Walking in Beauty Leads to Health

At Wabano, our Health Services team is a compassionate group of professionals dedicated to supporting the wellness of our community. This team includes physicians, nurse practitioners, a registered practical nurse, a dietitian, and medical receptionists, all providing culturally safe care. We also collaborate regularly with a respiratory therapist, gynecologist, and chiropractor to offer specialized support.



1,910

Served by clinic

702

Internal referrals

530

Screenings for colorectal, breast and ovarian cancer



211

New clients

4346

External clinical referrals



Prenatal Clinic

Over the past year, 58 clients received care through 250 appointments, underscoring our commitment to maternal and infant health.

58

Clients

250

Appointments

Well-Child Clinic

This year, 118 children were supported through 167 appointments, demonstrating the trust families place in Wabano's care.

118

Children

167

Appointments

New Partnership with SD&G Optometry Clinic & Lumris



193

Appointments

Dental Partnership with Ottawa Public Health



670

Appointments



Health Promotion Programming

Wabano's Health Promotion team creates vibrant opportunities for community members of all ages to connect, move, and celebrate culture.

Physical Activity and Fitness

Energizing Community Through Culture, Connection, and Movement

Adventures included a youth trip to Camp Fortune, where participants hiked with cultural games, learned Ojibwe names for natural items, and experienced the thrill of a ski lift and luge coaster.

The Sunrisers Softball team launched their first season, bringing young teen girls together for teamwork, fun, and friendship. Fitness programming included Zumba, Kickboxing, Seniors Warmup, and the high-energy Cardio Drum class.



1,577

participants attended 227 fitness sessions:

400

Wellness bundles

41

Zumba sessions

71

Seniors exercise sessions

70

Cardio drum sessions

7

Sunrisers softball games

38

Kickboxing sessions



Diabetes Education

Walking the Path to Wellness

Wabano's Diabetes Education team supported clients through clinical appointments, outreach, and special events. Over the past year, the team provided health promotion and education, case management, and diabetes screening services to 416 registered clients, while also engaging 1,755 participants in group programs.

Nutrition classes also played a key role, reaching 835 participants and empowering individuals to make informed, healthy lifestyle choices—one small step at a time toward better health and wellness.

Health Fair

Get Moving, Get Healthy

Over 150 people came together for a vibrant Health Fair blending wellness, culture, and fun for all ages. Guided by Vision Quest journey maps, guests explored interactive stations with activities like writing positive affirmations, apple ring toss, and sampling healthy snacks.

The day began with prayers, drumming, singing, and Early Years dancing, setting a joyful, respectful tone. Attendees accessed valuable health resources, from vaccinations and screenings to wellness giveaways.



Beauty Starts at Home

Housing Support: Connecting Community to Homes and Hope

Wabano is the central point for Coordinated Access for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Wabano completes intakes and then matches those from our centralized waitlist to case workers at either Wabano, Minwaashin Lodge, Odawa or Tungasuvvingat Inuit. With the implementation of Coordinated Access, we, as a community of organizations, gather data on what we feel is important to ensure our story is reflected and shared the way we want it shared. By working this way, these agencies are better positioned to support community members collectively and maximize our limited resources.

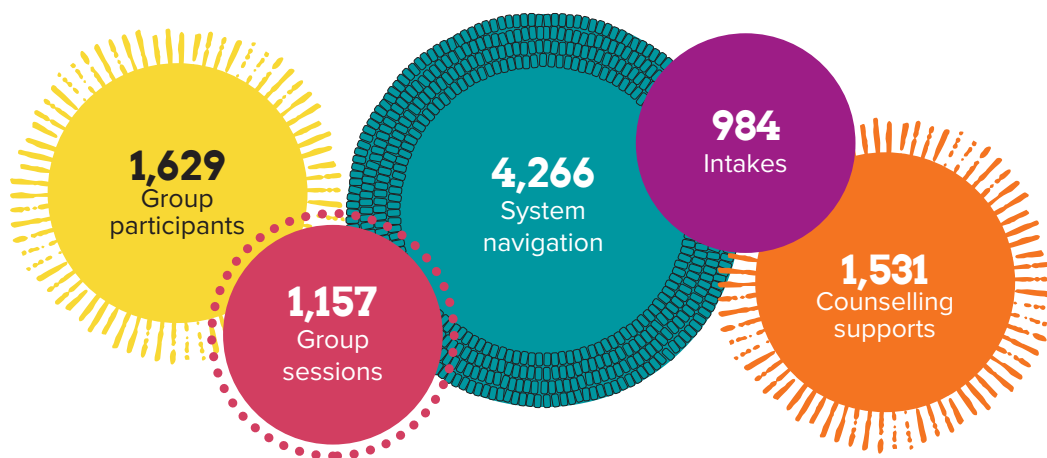


Mental Wellness is Beautiful

Mental Wellness: Walking Together Toward Healing

Over the past year, we have walked alongside 1,554 community members, offering 6,781 moments of connection—whether through counselling, psychotherapy, case management, or simply being there when someone needed to walk in and be heard.

Every number tells a story—but behind each one is a person, a family, and a community that continues to grow stronger together.



Walking in Beauty... in the Next 3 Years

2024-2025 Overview



Our New Plan

Our new Strategic Plan centers around three strong priorities: Wabano is:

1. Community
2. An Indigenous Employer of Choice,
3. An Indigenous Centre of Excellence.

Like sweetgrass, these pillars intertwine and strengthen each other, with culture woven deeply throughout—what we call Walking with Our Bundle.

We invite you to be part of this journey. As community partners, let's explore new ways to collaborate, especially as we expand our presence with mobile van outreach and community programs.

As community members, your voice matters—join us in programming, share what you want to learn or see, and help shape a welcoming, vibrant space that belongs to us all. Together, we grow stronger.



Walk in Beauty...Become a Donor!

There are so many ways you can give to Wabano and donations of any amount, big and small help Wabano provide critical service to Indigenous people in Ottawa.



Chi Miigwetch

for walking in beauty
with our community.



471,966

Clients visited
since 2013
expansion





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Charitable number: 873580690RR0001



wabano.com

