

WELCOME TO

# Onigaming First Nation



**TEACH  
FOR  
CANADA**





# aaniin





# Onigaming First Nation

Boozhoo! Aahniin!

On behalf of Mikinaak Onigaming School here in the community of the Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation, welcome to the Treaty 3 area of Northwestern Ontario – the traditional territory and homeland of the Anishinaabeg. As you begin to settle in your new home, I encourage you to take the time to listen and learn from the Anishinaabe people, the culture, histories and the peace and beauty this land offers. There is always so much to learn and grow from. I am more than happy to share a little bit about the school and the community that will soon become home.

Mikinaak Onigaming School is a JK-12 school with a current nominal roll of 100 students. Enrolment has fluctuated over the past few years, as a number of students have transferred to Whitefish Bay School and several that return to Mikinaak from time to time. Federal funding for the education services occurs through Indigenous Services Canada. Onigaming has one of the oldest Indigenous schools in Canada and was one of the first First Nations to govern its own school and control the direction of its students' education.

As part of Treaty Number 3, the Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation is situated between Kenora and Fort Frances with a number of communities in between. Nestor Falls is several short kilometres away from the reserve community on the Highway 71 South. You may hear the name Sabaskong, it is the traditional name of the community that was used before the Onigaming was officially adopted as the First Nation's name.

We are proud of the many opportunities that we can offer our students. These include a music program, an outdoor education program with two cabins and an outdoor classroom, and a new archery program. (ADD) All classrooms are also equipped with SMART Boards and students make extensive use of Chromebooks and laptops. Teachers are encouraged to implement activities for their students. Teachers are encouraged to implement activities for their students.

The history of education in Onigaming demonstrates a strong will to provide culturally relevant education services to prepare students for future endeavours in a highly technological world. Today, a great majority of the employment in Onigaming relates to education, social services, health, and with an increased graduation rate, Onigaming has the potential to be a service centre for trades and professional services.

With your openness, humility and love of children, doors will open as you create friendships with your colleagues, your students and their families. Take the time to enjoy the land and learn from the young leaders that you will come to meet over the next while. Miigwech.

Sincerely,

**Steve Grindrod**

Education Director

Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation

# Community



## A Brief History

**Late 1800's  
to 1950**

Schooling was provided by the Catholic Missionary School. It fluctuated between a community run school and Father Moss Catholic School.

**Mid 1970's**

Education was transferred back to the Ojibways of Onigaming and was financed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), with Grades JK to 8 offered at the school. The Ojibways of Onigaming were the first community and First Nation that transferred the responsibility of the elementary and later secondary education to their own self-governance structure.

Educational influence changed over the years with the development of a Local Education Authority, the devolution of the Authority, followed by its re-creation. Language instruction began and secondary school went to a block system of course delivery.

**1995**

Mikinaak Onigaming School was built with Chief and Council overseeing educational services. The beginnings of Special Education services began with the hiring of a Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) and contracting a Speech and Language Pathologist occurred.

**2013**

High School graduation has proven to be difficult for the students at the school, with few graduates from the 2007 report to 2012. In 2013, five students graduated. Unemployment of the youth in the community could be a direct correlation to a low graduation rate over the past 10 years.

**2014 - 2015**

For the past year and a half, there has not been an Education Director. The Principal manages the Mikinaak Onigaming School and works closely with the Chief and Council in providing educational services to the students.

# About Onigaming



Onigaming, which translates to the “portage”, is between Lake of the Woods and Crow Lake.

The people lived primarily on Sabaskong Bay, Lake of the Woods, prior to their present location. Crow Lake is inland and is separated from Lake of the Woods. It is spring fed which means that the water is pure here. The water is also deep, cool and clear. The trout favour this type of habitat and are, therefore, abundant. The people would portage to Crow Lake in the spring and fall for the trout. They would portage back to their homes.

The name Sabaskong migrated with the people and for many years the present day community was referred to as Sabaskong. Today it is known as Onigaming and the people are the Ojibways of Onigaming. The community is situated on the area between the two lakes.

## Onigaming Community Map





# Mikinaak Onigaming School



## **School Population**

100 - 120

## **Grades**

JK - Grade 12

## **Education Director**

Kathy Kishiqueb

## **Unique Aspects**

- The school has their own drum and area for sacred fires for ceremonies
- Cultural resource room
- Funerals take place in the school gymnasium
- Outdoor Education and trapping certification
- School cabins for outdoor education use

## **Welcome to a school that is proud of their Anishinaabe cultural teachings!**

Mikinaak translates to snapping turtle. The terrain directly across the road from the school has the shape of a turtle: the rock shape is the head of the turtle and its back is the lined trees.

### **Extracurricular activities at Mikinaak Onigaming School**

- Choir
- Ice fishing
- Snowshoeing
- Skating
- Cross-country running
- Homework nights
- Language table: Anishinaabemowin at lunch time
- Land-based learning

### **What extracurricular would you like teachers to plan for students?**

- Outdoor pursuits like canoeing, snowshoeing, kayaking, and archery
- Low organisation games like pick-up floor hockey
- Community garden





## A Day in the Life of a Teacher

Teachers arrive around 8:15. They can get something to eat from the breakfast program if they want. Teachers also take time in the morning to get ready for the day. Students usually start showing up around 8:30-8:45, they come and hang out in the classroom. Morning classes start at 9:00. Recess is from 10:20-10:35. A snack is usually provided around recess, either before or after. The second block of classes is from 10:35-11:55. At some point in the morning, the students meet with a Cultural Language teacher and advisor. This provides prep time for teachers.

Lunch is from 11:55-12:50. Teachers who live in the community often go home to eat but teachers who come in from out of town eat at school. Students go home.

In the afternoon, there's a second recess from 2:10-2:25. Classes end at 3:45. Usually three days a week there is a prep for 40 minutes in the afternoon.

Teachers are expected to support with yard and recess duty, and after-school pick up. Every other Friday is a half-day, for appointments.

Teachers receive professional development and support for First Nation Student Success Programs through the Seven Generations Education Institute in Kenora.







## Teacherages

A five minute drive to the school, teacherages are three-story townhouses with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Each unit is furnished with dressers, beds, side tables and living room furniture. There is laundry on-site in the basement.

Teachers are allowed to bring pets to live with them in Onigaming but they must first obtain approval from the school administration.

Wifi internet is available in the teacherages, teachers much purchase a router if there isn't already one in the house.

There are no landlines in the teacherages.

Satellite TV is available through Bell; a receiver must be purchased if the house doesn't already have one.







# In the Community

## Special Events

Onigaming is a fairly traditional community and celebrates several traditional events. Everyone in the community, including teachers, are welcome to events and ceremonies.

- Full Moon ceremony
- Sweats
- Fall Feast: youth learn traditional skills like plucking ducks, smoking venison, and other traditional tasks that would have been done to prepare for winter.
- Pow wows: students from a few other communities in the area are invited to participate.
- Annual fishing tournament

## Activities in the Community

- Making traditional regalia and crafts (dresses, ribbon shirts)
- Judo club for kids and adults
- Adults baseball teams for men and women

## Getting to Onigaming

Onigaming is a drive-in community located in Treaty 3. It is located 3 kilometers from Nestor Falls, a small resort town which has a supermarket, restaurants, and hotels/motels. By car, Kenora is 75 minutes away, Winnipeg is 3.5 hours away, and Thunder Bay is 5 hours away. It is best to have a car.



# Quick Facts

**Community Name**  
Onigaming First Nation

**Tribal Council**  
Anishinaabeg of Kabapikotawangag Resource Council

**Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO)**  
Grand Council Treaty #3



Population On-Reserve

**477**



Language Spoken

**Anishinaabe  
and English**



Treaty

**Treaty 3**



Average Yearly Temperature

**-11°C**  
January

**25°C**  
July

It can dip to -37°C in January and reach +34°C in June.

Access



**Year-round**



# Around the Community



①

Art in the school

②

Band Office

③

Welcome sign

④

Round House

⑤

Community Garden



# Directory

**School Office**  
807-484-2612

Mikinaak Onigaming School,  
PO Box 339,  
Nestor Falls, ON  
POX 1K0



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