

WELCOME TO

Wasagamack Anisineew Nation



GAKINO'AMAAGE
TEACH FOR CANADA

Waachi'ye

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Wasagamack Anisineew Nation

Dear Teachers,

Waachi'ye! On behalf of Wasagamack Anisineew Nation, we extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to those considering joining our community as educators. We are excited about the opportunity to welcome passionate and dedicated teachers who are eager to contribute to the education and well-being of our students.

Our community, known as Wasagamack Anisineew Nation, holds a rich history deeply rooted in the traditional lands of the Island Lake region. The name "Wasagamack" translates to "bay" in Anisineew, reflecting the unique shape of our bay, characterized by a distinctive curved line. We take pride in our heritage, culture, and the resilience of our people throughout history.

The journey of our community has seen both challenges and triumphs. From the early days of sustainable living through local wild food diets to the impacts of fur trading, and the complexities of colonial history, our community has persevered. Today, we are focused on reclaiming our sovereignty and returning to Mino Bimaadiziwin—the Good Life.

The land that surrounds Wasagamack Anisineew Nation is awe-inspiring, with beautiful rock formations, islands, forests, and the sixth-largest lake in Manitoba. Alongside Red Sucker Lake First Nation, St. Theresa Point First Nation, and Garden Hill First Nation, we form the Island Lake Tribal Council, connected by our shared history and commitment to our unique Anisineew identity.

Our language, Anisineew, is central to our people, and we proudly uphold our local dialect, Baswinaksimon, meaning "Island Lake/Smooth Rock People".

We take great pride in our students, who are known for their eagerness to learn, kindness, and active involvement in the community. As you consider joining us on this educational journey, we encourage you to embrace the unique aspects of life in Wasagamack Anisineew Nation. Participate in our community events, celebrate our cultural weeks and feasts, and explore the rich history that surrounds us.

Chi-miigwetch for considering this remarkable opportunity.

Sincerely,

Chief and Council of Wasagamack Anisineew Nation

Community



A Brief History

We are known by Wasagamack Anisininew Nation, formerly Wasagamack First Nation.

**Mino
Bimaadiziwin**

“The good times” before colonialism:

- Our people pursued a local wild food diet.
- Most people lived in small family hunting groups dispersed throughout the Island Lake region and travelled by canoe, snowshoes, and dog sleds.

Late 1700s

The Ininew (original inhabitants of Island Lake) welcomed Anishinaabe refugees from the Western Great Lakes and Boundary Waters region. These people joined our community.

1818

The first fur traders from the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) arrived on our land but soon left.

1864

An HBC trading post was built at what is now known as Old Post on Linklater Island. Our people traded furs for sugar, alcohol, blankets, rifles, and flour. Alcoholism began and caused great social upheaval.

Late 1800s

People began over-hunting to trade for alcohol, and at the same time, starvation began to occur for some people. The beaver was over-hunted to be used for European fashion, and as a result ecosystem decline began. The beaver were no longer able to protect the waterways as they had since time immemorial.

1870

6,000 beaver pelts were sold to HBC.

1890

Less than 500 beaver pelts were sold to HBC, reflecting the critical decline of the beaver population.

**Late 1800s
cont'**

Our people began burying our ceremonial and sacred objects in the land to save them from destruction or theft.

1891

Island Lake Chief John Wood asked for a treaty chest from the Canadian government.

- **1903** United Church of Canada Missionaries arrived and remains at Island Lake.
- **August 13th, 1909** We signed Adhesion to Treaty 5 at Old Post on Linklater Island. During the negotiations, the commissioner who came took note of our requirements for agreement to the Treaty and said that he needed to negotiate with the Crown on our behalf. He said that he would come back to resolve the terms. No commissioner has ever returned to honour his promise. The Treaty agreement promised hunting, fishing, farming implements, and local education.
- **1920** Roman Catholic Missionaries come to St. Theresa Point First Nation, then known as Maria Portage.
- **1956-1970s** Children were stolen from the community to attend residential schools and vanished during the "60's Scoop". Some children were stolen right in front of their parents and siblings. Float planes would land, grab a child, and leave. Some children moved with their families to remote traplines to keep them safe.
- **1960s** Compulsory schooling began, and combined with the crash of the fur trade many of our people were forced to move to settlements.
- **1969** All Island Lake communities were one people and shared one Chief until 1969, when we formed 4 sovereign nations.
- **Pre-1980s** No instances of diabetes in the Island Lake region.
- **1982** Local teachers are trained through Brandon University. Many go on to teach 20+ years, some of whom are still at Wasagamack First Nation School.
- **1987** Elders Victor and Emma Harper began Nopimink: On-The-Land-Education.
- **1990** George Knott School built in Wasagamack Anisineew Nation.
- **1991-1992** Students from George Knott School had an exchange with Victor Wyatt School, which was featured on Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
- **1999** Island Lake is linked to hydro, however, no accommodations were made to pump water and sewage.
- **2000** A high rate of diabetes is reported across the Island Lake communities.
- **2004** The first phase of piped water and sewage for St. Theresa Point First Nation begins.
- **2010** The first phase of piped water and sewage for Garden Hill First Nation and Wasagamack Anisineew Nation begins.
- **2015** A cheque was sent from the government of Canada to Wasagamack Anisineew Nation for a total of \$79.38, intended to be "payment in full" for 20 years of twine and ammunition for the community. It was sent to the Canadian Human Rights Museum in Manitoba where it remains on display.
- **2018** Along with Red Sucker Lake First Nation, St. Theresa Point First Nation, and Garden Hill First Nation, we declared our intention to leave Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and begin sovereign nation-to-nation relationships with the Crown.
- **October 2018** We began a two-year course on home building (Mino Bimaadiziwin Homebuilders) for 20 local workers. 19 more local workers completed a 10-month course in 2019-2020. We were making good progress on local development, until the building materials burned and were not replaced due to COVID-19.
- **2020** Wasagamack First Nation School was built and George Knott School closed.
- **February 2024** Wasagamack, alongside 20 other Anisineew Nations, issued a press release stating that we would henceforth be known as Anisineew Nations. At this time, our community's name changed from Wasagamack First Nation to Wasagamack Anisineew Nation.
- **Present** We are reclaiming our sovereignty and traditional lands. We are working on returning to Mino Bimaadiziwin.

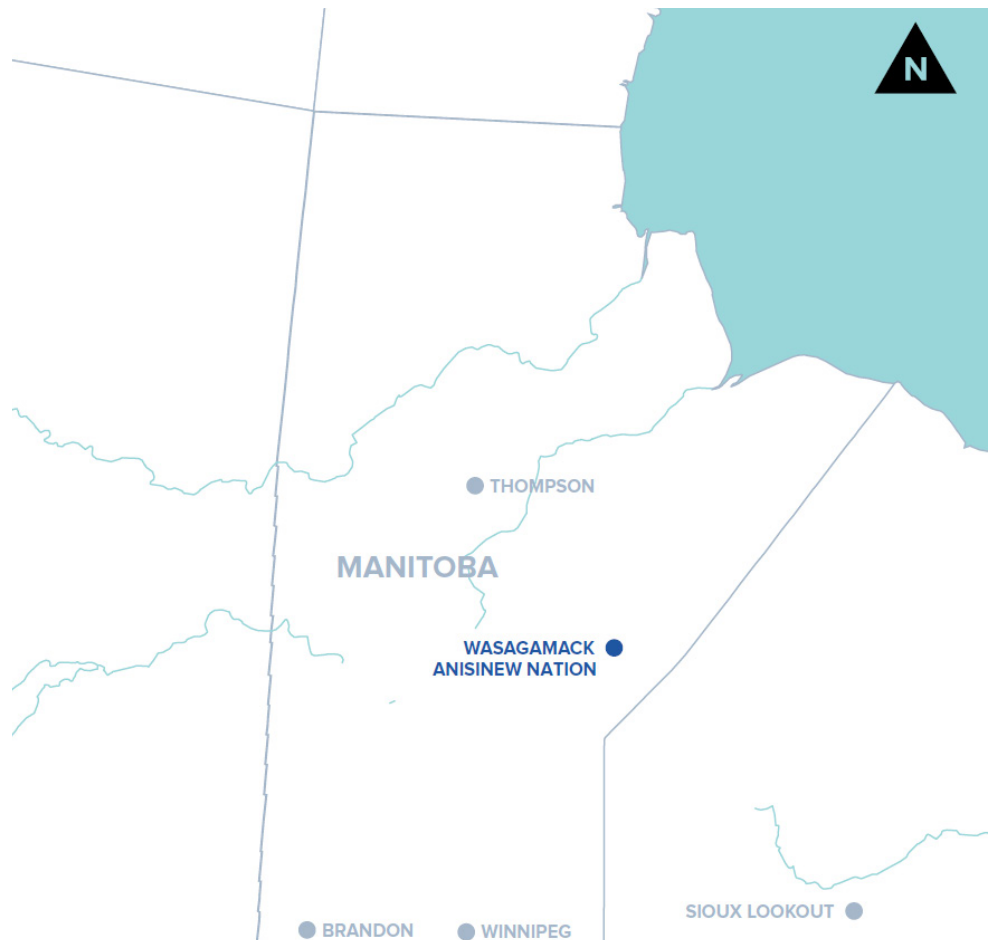


The Land

Wasagamack Anisineew Nation is located on the western shore of Island Lake in Northern Manitoba. Our community is amongst beautiful rock formations, islands, forests, and breathtaking views of the sixth-largest lake in the province. Nearby are the communities of Red Sucker Lake First Nation, St. Theresa Point First Nation, and Garden Hill First Nation, and together we form the Island Lake Tribal Council. Historically, all four of these communities formed one group, however in 1969 a colonial government decision led to the division of our community into four distinct First Nations.

Here you will also be able to enjoy some of the best hunting, fishing, camping, and outdoor activities in all of Turtle Island. Moose, caribou, grouse, geese, and bears—among many other animals—are a frequent sight here.

Wasagamack Community Map



Language and Customs

Our language is Anisineew. You may hear our language referred to as Oji-Cree, however in Anisineew “Oji” means “maggot,” and is an offensive term. In 2018 we, along with the other Anisineew Nations of the Island Lake region, issued a statement: “We are not part Cree or part Ojibwe, we are Anishiniwuk, a distinct and sovereign nation with rights that deserve to be respected.”

Our local dialect in the Island Lake region is Baswinaksimon which translates to “Island Lake/Smooth Rock People.” Baskwinaksiin is translated as “place of many islands”.

We are proud that 64% of people here identify Anisineew as their first language, and 78% consider themselves fluent speakers.

We are a Christian community with 3 churches: Roman Catholic, Protestant, and United. The Lord’s Prayer is said each day during the school’s morning announcements.

Community Events

One of our most important celebrations is **Treaty Reenactment Days** which happen in June. Our students dress like our ancestors and reenact the treaty signing.

Our **Cultural Week** is at the end of September. Students get out on the land with their families or with the cultural coordinators in the school.

We have regular seasonal feasts which bring together the community members and those who live here. You would be more than welcome to attend and in fact, we encourage you to come!

The seasonal feasts include:

- Elders Feast at Christmas. Elders are picked up and served, and gifted sugar, flour, lard, and other staples important to our history.
- Fish Fry with the whole community at the end of May. Students help to catch and prepare the fish (typically pickerel, jackfish, whitefish, perch).
- Every year there is a community feast, typically around the end of October or the beginning of November.



Wasagamack First Nation School



Welcome!

Opened In
2020

School Population
700

Grades
K4-12

Facilities

- Gym & weight room
- Home economics class
- Industrial arts shop
- Computer lab
- Science lab

Unique Classes

- Industrial Arts
- Land-Based Learning
- Advanced Science
- Home Economics
- Music

Our Mission

With the guidance of our Elders, we at Wasagamack First Nation School will strive to provide a learning environment that will benefit all. Embracing our culture, we will grow to achieve our full potential as a community.

Together we will create an atmosphere of respect, friendship, and appreciation of life and learning.

Our Vision

Wasagamack Anisnew Nation Kikinamagewin (meaning “education”) is the responsibility of the whole community given to us by our Creator. The staff of Wasagamack First Nation School and the community of Wasagamack believe that quality education will promote lifelong learning and prepare students academically, emotionally, spiritually, and technologically. Graduates will contribute to a continually progressive and thriving community.

A child with a strong foundation based on culture, a healthy sense of self-esteem, and the guidance of Elders will be able to achieve once unattainable goals.

We will realize the vision of achieving vital school and community goals through commitment, cooperation, dialogue, teamwork, and role-modelling.

We are most proud of...

We are most proud of our students. They are wonderful, kind, and good kids. They are very eager to learn and be involved in the world—students recently requested to have a French teacher so that they can participate in federal government activities after they graduate. We are proud of our history and our culture, and we are proud to have so many young people fluent in our language.

Teacher Highlight



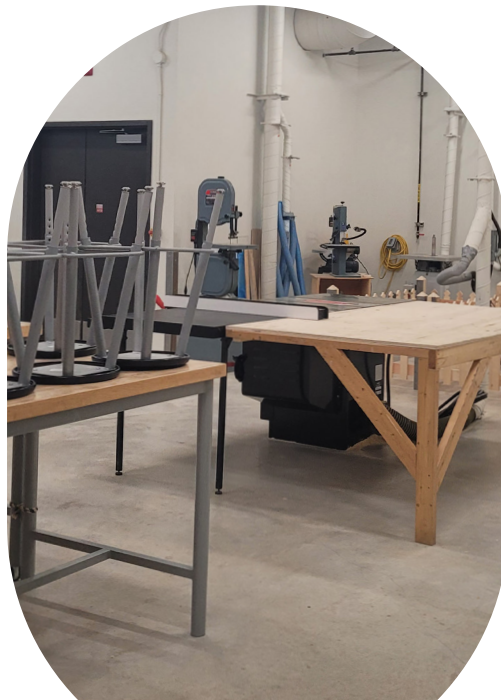
Willie Deaffie

Industrial Arts Teacher

“I was drawn into teaching from a different direction. I went to residential school when I was young. When I returned home, I split my time between my parents and grandparents. From them, I learned the teachings of my ancestors from Norway House Cree Nation and Dauphin River First Nation. They instilled a work ethic in me. When I got older, I got into Red Seal Carpentry. I’m most proud of holding a finished project in my hands, and I spent many years working construction and carpentry jobs. I started teaching after that, and the first time I walked into a classroom to teach the kids, it gave me a reason to get up in the morning.

When you live in a remote community, you can’t just go to the lumber store for more materials. I try to teach the kids here to make useful things, cultural things, like tikinagans and snowshoes. I try to instill a work ethic in the kids—you can see them get so proud of themselves when a product they’re making is coming together in their hands!

My advice for teachers coming here is to learn to be a part of the community. Talk to people, have empathy, and LOTS of humour! Remember there’s a time to work, and there’s a time to have fun. Don’t demand respect, earn it. Don’t look at it as a paycheck; teaching is a gift that we are given and the kids deserve teachers who really care and WANT to teach. And while you’re at it, take a break! The fishing here is amazing, the meat is so much better than what you get anywhere else.”





A Day in the Life of a Teacher

Teachers arrive at school by **8:30 AM**

First break at **10:25 AM**

Teachers go home for lunch from **12:00-1:00 PM**. School lunch is provided to grades 1-4

Second break at **2:25 PM**

The school day ends at **3:00 PM** for elementary, **3:30 PM** for middle school, and **4:00 PM** for high school

Teachers are required to participate in a minimum of 8 hours per month of extracurricular activities outside of school hours.



Teacherages



Land-Based Learning

One of our most impressive programs in our school is the Land-Based Learning Program. Our two program providers, Nora and Emma, are respected Elders and Knowledge Keepers in our community with an incredible breadth of experience. When you come to teach here, make sure to meet with Nora and Emma and find out how you can incorporate their program in your classroom!

Nora Whiteway

Land-Based Learning Coordinator

“For a person to really learn, they must be out on the land. The best thing I know is to be out on the land. People come to me and ask “How do you know that?” and I say “The land taught me. Learn about the land, and you’ll learn about yourself.”

I grew up on the land. My parents were poor, we had to be on the land. When my father was sick with tuberculosis, my mother had to walk over the ice all the way to St. Theresa Point First Nation (12 km) just to get us necessities like flour and lard.

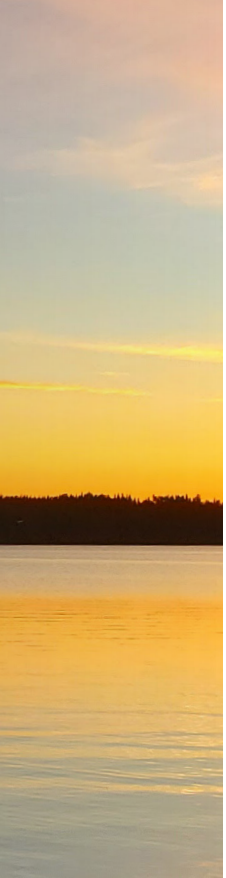
When I was on the land, I was always happy. The people around us were happy too, there were no drugs or alcohol at that time, and we respected each other. There was respect everywhere; an old law is that you never hunt on someone else’s trapline, and my father taught me to always respect that.

At the same time, I grew up without my sisters—they were taken away to residential schools. I had to take care of my little brother. I never cried, because there was no one to cry to. But every time my older sister came back, she took care of me. Even now, I don’t get to see my sisters much. Residential school made me grow up without them.

I had to go through all that to find myself and learn about the land. Even today I’ll sometimes go canoeing or walking by myself and people will worry about me, but for me, it’s healing. Some Elders came together. We didn’t want the people to forget our ways, so we started the Traditional Family Values Gathering, and it’s now in its 7th year. The high cost of living always makes it a challenge, but it’s worth it. The Elders gather and pass on legends and history, how we used to be and can be again, and family values are very important. We make and trade for medicines, and teach traditional skills like net fishing.

Like I always say, “don’t let your bundle get heavy. Be light, so you can fly. The land will show you how.”





Emma Harper

Elder and Language Instructor



“I’ve spent a long time learning from the land. When I was little, my mother and father used to help an Elder with his garden, and we would share everything. What we didn’t need, we would put in a shed for everyone else who needed something. We did a lot of fishing and trapping, mostly in the spring and the fall. People would gather at those times for a big feast. Before the feast, everything was brought to the Chief’s house, and the Chief would bless the food. At that time, there was only one Chief for all four regions. We used to decide who was our leader differently; someone would nominate a person, and everyone who wanted them to be the leader would stand behind them. The people who had the smallest amount of people behind them would go to another leader with more. My late father-in-law, Zacheus Harper, was the last Chief of all the regions in 1967.

When I got back from residential school I asked my father to teach me the language, and he did. Because of residential school, I felt like the love bond with my parents was gone. Even getting a hug from my mother made me freeze in fear, probably because of all the punishments we got. Even when I became a mother, I had a hard time hugging my kids and they didn’t understand. I didn’t talk about what happened. I guess I thought I was protecting them, but I should have told them. They didn’t understand.

I am a survivor, and I’m glad I survived. I became a pipe carrier when I realized there was more to life after I did my closure. I decided to become a teacher. When I graduated as a teacher, I took 2 years off teaching to be on the land. When I returned in 1986 I taught for 2 years in classrooms before in 1988 I was asked to teach the students our language.

We began with teaching syllabics—Roman Orthography wasn’t as good and the kids found syllabics easier to learn. We offer the students a lot of independence in what and how they learn in the language and find that it’s easier for them to pick things up that way. In the immersion program, everything is in syllabics.

We teach the kids through activities and give them the space to explore. They learn by doing, through things like skinning rabbits, making snowshoes and birchbark baskets, etc.

The Elders in the community help and teach along with teachers in the classroom and do monthly reports on all the students, looking for what each student needs for support. Even those reports are done in syllabics.

When you come here to teach, remember not to take things for granted. You are lucky to be here. Mingle with everyone, don’t be afraid to ask questions, and come to community events; we want you to come! Some people think it’s respectful to not come, but it’s more respectful to go participate, and learn! Explore the community, there’s so much history here. Look for the rock paintings in the area, they’re thousands of years old.



Left: Nora Whiteway

Right: Emma Harper

Quick Facts

Population On-Reserve



2000

Language Spoken



**Anisininew
and English**

Provincial Territorial Organization



**Island Lake
Tribal Council
Inc.**

Treaty



**Adhesion to
Treaty 5**

Average Yearly Temperature



-22°C
January

17°C
July

Access



Year-round



Dec - Mar

Getting to and from Wasagamack Anisnew Nation

- Helicopter (Custom Helicopter): 204-891-9164 / 204-250-6455
- Boat (TC Marine): 204-462-2222
- The winter road to Norway House is accessible from December through March by truck or snowmobile and to St. Theresa Point from January to February. Teachers may borrow snowmobiles and quads from the school
- Perimeter Airlines sometimes offers holiday specials on flights
- A community airport is currently under construction and will be finished in 2 years

Getting Involved in Community

- Wasagamack Anisnew Nation Buy and Sell [Facebook Group](#)
- Radio station: 102.5 FM



Wasagamack First Nation School:

Randy Harper, Principal

Marilyn Harper, Vice Principal

204-457-2775

204-457-2943

Fax: 204-457-9869

Adam Knott, Education Director

204-457-2225

Band Office

204-457-2337

204-457-2339

Fax: 204-457-2255

Medical Centre

204-457-2805

Fax: 204-457-2720

Local Police

Safety Officers Dispatch

204-457-2003

Cell Phone Provider

All networks

Post Office

204-457-2282

Internet Provider

Starlink

Airline Services

Custom Helicopters

204-891-9164

Child and Family Services

204-457-2469

Fax: 204-457-2153

Jordan's Principal

204-457-281

204-457-9785

Northern Store

Also includes Tim Hortons with an expanded menu

204-457-2402

Com'on Store

204-457-2151



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