



(Photo: Nipissing First Nation after a cold winter freeze this March)



DIBAAJMOWIN

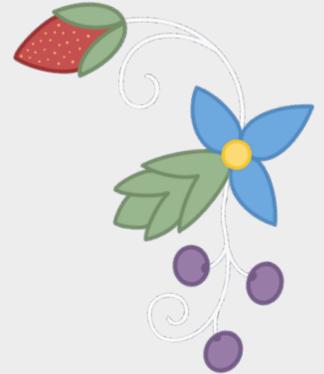
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Message from the Director



Boozhoo, Koolamalsihmwa!



Over the past few months, the First Nations of the AES have continued to strengthen partnerships, expand language programming, and support student success and bimaadziwin. This month's newsletter highlights work across all four regions at both the local and regional levels. We're also pleased to share several language initiatives made possible through the support of the First Nations.

Miigwech/Anushiik to everyone contributing to the meaningful work reflected in this month's newsletter. Together, we continue to build a strong, culturally grounded education system.

Nancy O'Donnell, Director of Education

Regional Education Council Highlights

Regional Education Council 1



The Connected North team has been working closely with Migizi Wazisin School in Long Lake #58 to offer live, interactive virtual field trips to students. The sessions are focused on delivering culturally relevant content from Indigenous professionals in a variety of fields including artists, scientists, knowledge holders, entrepreneurs and role models. Sessions held at Migizi Wazisin School have included star blanket teachings with Jasmyn Albert, woodland art with Jim Oskineegish, soapstone carvings with Priscilla Boulay, bracelet making with Kokom Scrunchies, and the science of wigwams with Alex Allard-Gray. The school looks forward to continuing their partnership with Connected North further into the future!

Regional Education Council 2

Region 2 communities have been active in keeping spirits high and promoting wellness. Shawanosowe School in Whitefish River First Nation hosted a Family Ski Day on February 3 in partnership with Spirit North, introducing families to cross-country skiing. St. Joseph's Anishinabek School in Sheshegwaning First Nation is adjusting Nutrition and Recess Breaks to strengthen handwashing routines and help prevent the spread of colds and flu.

Zhiibaahaasing First Nation celebrated its 24th Annual Winter Carnival (February 13–16) with snow sculptures, a parade, snowshoe races, and more. Michipicoten First Nation held a Family Ice Fishing Derby on February 28, with prizes for all ages. Atikameksheng Anishnawbek marked the opening of the Waasakwa Children's Centre, while Aundeck Omni Kaning continues to offer youth and family programming throughout the winter.

Region 2 communities remain active, connected, and wellness-focused. Aapji Nishin!



Atikameksheng Anishnawbek opened the doors of Waasakwa Children's Centre on Feb. 9th, 2026
Photo Source: Anishinabek News

Regional Education Council Highlights

Regional Education Council 3

Collaborative Special Education Communication Protocol

Over the past year, Region 3 has been working to develop a Collaborative Special Education Communication Protocol. Wahnapiatae First Nation, alongside Region 2 and Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, agreed to pilot the initiative in partnership with the Sudbury Catholic District School Board.



The protocol is designed to ensure the right partners are at the table, establish clear meeting schedules, outline action items, and strengthen accountability through an annual communication timeline. Implementation began in Fall 2025.

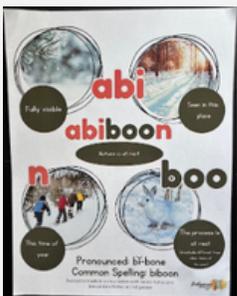
A review of the protocol was conducted in February to assess how the protocol is working in practice, identify any additional supports required, and make necessary adjustments. This pilot will help inform future refinements and strengthen collaborative approaches to supporting students with special education needs across participating communities

Regional Education Council 4

Working Together

Working together remains a priority across Region 4 as partners strengthen collaborative approaches to Indigenous Language Teacher recruitment and resource hiring within the Anishinabek Education System framework. The Elders Endorsement Model continues to expand, with increased participation from partner boards and First Nations.

Following direction from the Fall Regional Meeting in Aamjiwnaang, Indigenous Education Officers and the Regional Education Council Coordinator are planning a May 4 gathering that will bring together Indigenous Education leadership, human resources, and finance representatives. The focus will be on practical solutions to support recruitment, retention, and respectful employment pathways for Indigenous Language Teachers.



Language Coordinator Updates

Region 1 Language Updates

2ND BI-ANNUAL ONLINE LANGUAGE BOWL
FEBRUARY 24TH 1:30-3:00PM

PRIZES AND POINTS!
3 big prizes will be spun for on a wheel after the language bowl. All participating teams will receive a gift of AES swag!

POINTS CULMINATE!
Redeem your team points for awesome prizes at a shop during the in-person B2A Language Bowl.

SUBMIT YOUR WORDS!
Teams will be able to submit their own Ojibwe words to add to the word list! Check the sign-up form for more details.

SIGN UP BY CLICKING HERE!
OR SCAN!

MORE INFO CONTACT: hanah.edmond@aes.ca 705-255-7763

The beginning of 2026 has been focused on advancing REC 1 language initiatives through committee planning, resource development, and event coordination. The Anishinaabemowin Niigaaniwag Committee confirmed May 14–15 for the annual PD Days, which will focus on grammar and language structure, including pluralization, tense, pronouns, word endings, double vowels, and pronunciation. Potential facilitators are currently being contacted.

Recognition is extended to Andrea Onabigon, alongside Elders from Long Lake #58, for completing translations for the Anishinaabemowin in the Classroom initiative. Supporting resources are expected to be finalized and shared prior to March.

Planning also continued for the second Online Language Bowl that took place virtually on February 24, eight schools participated in Region 1. The Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee will support judging, facilitation, and collaborative resource development.

The REC1 Language Teacher PLC has been confirmed for March 26, with all facilitators secured. Registration remains open until the end of February, and all are welcome to attend.

Region 2 Language Updates

NOW LIVE!

OUR LANGUAGE RESOURCE HUB IS OFFICIALLY AVAILABLE THROUGH THE AES WELLNESS PORTAL

Access booklets, activities, and community-developed resources to support Anishinaabemowin and Lunapeew revitalization.

Stay tuned as we continue to upload more content in partnership with our PFNs and language champions in our regions.

aeswellnessportal.ca/LanguageResource
Scroll down and click the red button to explore.

January and February may feel long, but Region 2 communities have remained active in keeping spirits high and promoting wellness. Shawanosowe School in Whitefish River First Nation hosted a Family Ski Day on February 3, in partnership with Spirit North, to introduce families to cross-country skiing. St. Joseph's Anishinabek School in Sheshegwaning First Nation is also adjusting Nutrition and Recess Breaks to strengthen handwashing routines and help prevent the spread of colds and flu.

Zhiibaahaasing First Nation celebrated its 24th Annual Winter Carnival from February 13–16, featuring snow sculptures, a parade, snowshoe races, and other winter activities. Michipicoten First Nation is preparing for a Family Ice Fishing Derby on February 28, with prizes planned for participants of all ages. Atikameksheng Anishnawbek marked the opening of the Waasakwa Children's Centre, while Aundeck Omni Kaning continues to offer youth and family programming throughout the winter months.

Overall, Region 2 communities remain active, connected, and focused on wellness throughout the season.

Language Coordinator Updates

Region 3 Language Updates

On January 30, 2026, the Region 3 Professional Learning Circle (PLC) was held at Duchesnay Community Hall in Nipissing First Nation. The day included traditional teachings and necklace-making (copper cup and medicine pouch), instruction on using the Nishnaabemwin Online Dictionary, and an introduction to the first two skill sets of Dr. Stephen Greymorning's Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) model. Participants also received a variety of printed language resources for classroom and community use.

Feedback reflected strong engagement and appreciation, with participants sharing that they were already using the big books and language games in their teaching. Others described the day as enjoyable, informative, and wished for even more time with presenters.

Looking ahead, Regions 3 and 4 will host a two-day gathering at Casino Rama on March 24–25, 2026: Anishinaabe Miingweziwin (Passing on / Giving / Sharing of Our Gifts). Pre-registration is open, with a waitlist available as needed.

link to register is: <https://forms.office.com/r/VY8rg9nyJ5>



Language Coordinator Updates

Region 4 Language Updates

The start of shki-bboon has been a busy time in the region, with recent work focusing on planning, connection, and resource development.

Planning is underway with the REC 3 Anokiit and Coordinator for the March 24–25 conference at Casino Rama, which will bring together language teachers and language warriors from across the region. The Elders and Youth Tea initiative was also a success and is scheduled to take place again next month in Georgina Island First Nation, continuing to strengthen intergenerational connections.

Language teachers are being invited to share games they or their students have created to support the growing Language Games initiative. Jessica Shonias (Miigwanaabiikwe) will present at the March 20th Kweji-Kinoomaagzidaa session on “Tips for Starting Strong - How to Get Started Learning Language”.

In addition, “Around the Home” kidwinan sticker labels have been developed and will be available at this year’s LNHL event. Planning has also begun for the next REC 4 PLC, with a save-the-date to follow.



 **Kweji
Kinoomaagzidaa**
“Let’s Learn!”



**TIPS FOR STARTING STRONG -
HOW TO GET STARTED LEARNING LANGUAGE**
Jessica Shonias (Miigwanaabiikwe) is caribou clan from Chippewas of Rama First Nation. She is a Nishnaabemwin educator and learner with over a decade of experience. She is a co-founder of Eshki-Nishnaabemjig Immersion Academy, a two week program for adult second language learners, host and producer of The Language podcast, and currently writes curriculum for various language reclamation programs.

Hosted By :
Jessica Shonias

REGISTER NOW



 **FRIDAY, MARCH 20TH, 2026**

 **9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.**

 **Virtual (Online)**

 For more information, contact us at
Email: comms@a-e-s.ca

<https://forms.office.com/r/ydUhAV9hW1>

Language Coordinator Updates

Region 4 Language Update - Lunaapeew

Lunaapeew work continues steadily through the winter months. Community language classes continue, with plans underway for a new 12-week session. The Lunaapeew Language Challenge has now reached five months, with 125 phrases introduced to date. A monthly study resource with QR code access is being developed to further support learners.

Monthly Language Group meetings were held January 20 and February 4, with a Family Day Lunaapeew Bingo event on February 16. Planning is also underway for monthly Professional Development sessions for Munsee daycare teachers.

Velma attended the January 30th PLC in North Bay, delivering a presentation and live demonstration of Dr. Stephen Greymorning's Accelerated Second Language Acquisition model. Translation work has supported the creation of stickers for Little NHL, the AES student planner content, Earth Day materials, and additional communication needs. Below are the Audio QR Codes developed, scan to listen to the various household Lunaapeew terms.

Audio QR Codes for Lunaapeew Phrases

To hear audio clips for each word, scan the QR code with your device and practice pronunciation together. Place matching stickers in your environment and use the words in daily routines to reinforce language skills. Regular listening and repetition will boost your confidence and familiarity with the language.

Leelamatapiing – Living Room



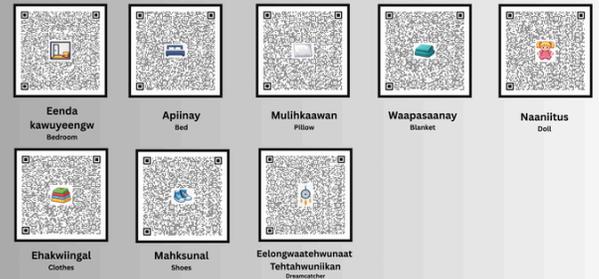
Eenda ndupwiing - Kitchen



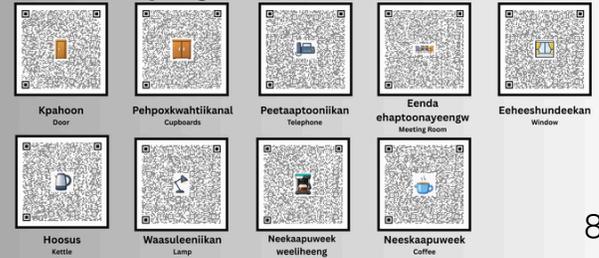
Wiikwamshung - Bathroom



Eenda kawuyeengw - Bedroom



Eenda alohkayeengw - Office



Language & Culture Lead Update

PILOT PROJECT

Work continues across resource development, language support, and pilot initiatives. Development of the Chunking Method Teacher Kit for JK/SK–Grade 3 remains a priority, with number cue cards, beginner lesson plans, and no-heartbeat prompts completed.

Heartbeat prompts and additional lesson plans are underway. Grades 4–8 materials, including flashcards and updates to the Anishinaabemowin Baakinaage resource, continue to be refined.

Language support for Partner First Nations and District School Boards remains steady, including group lessons and ongoing translation and pronunciation assistance for educators. Pilot implementation at St. Joseph's Anishinaabek School continues to show strong learner retention and growing confidence in sentence building through the chunking approach. The Naakizhege (Stoking the Fire) pilot at Shawanosowe School is moving into its next phase, with proposal development underway to expand the model across regions.

AES Language Portal



Scan the QR Code or visit:
<https://tinyurl.com/LanguagePortal>

To view the full Aambe Gendaaswidaa Books
& other language resources.

MYAP Update: Building Relationships Through Pedagogy Event

On January 30th, the Building Relationships Through Pedagogy event took place. This annual, virtual event is open to the public and brings together participants to present best practices around priority areas in education. This year, the theme of the event was 'Engaging Language Learning Spaces'.

Throughout the morning, there was a series of four presentations sharing approaches to language teaching and learning that engage learners. There were 96 participants in this event.

Miigwech/Anushiik to the following presenters:

Andrea Custer: Andrea shared teaching approaches, classroom norms, and learning environment considerations she has learned through her teaching and research experience when supporting learners in language learning spaces.

Marsha Shilling: Marsha shared about the language programming offered at the Rama immersion school, Waasa Enaabijig Anishinaabemowin Zaswin. This immersion program continues to grow and integrate school, family and community learning.

Andrew Manitowabi and Mary O'Donnell: Andrew and Mary outlined the numerous language support programs developed by the Anishinaabemowin Bodaawe Committee. Through the implementation of a mentor-learner program, immersion camps, and school and community visits, this committee is supporting language learning in the Northern Superior region.

Hannah O'Donnell: Hannah shared how the KEB Kidwinan Nike'ii Gaa Nokiitamang expanded a successful in-person language bowl event to include a virtual component. The addition of virtual opportunities to engage in a language competition creates more opportunity for youth to engage in a fun and challenging language learning environment.

The 2027 Building Relationships Through Pedagogy event will take place in January 2027.

**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PEDAGOGY:
ENGAGING LANGUAGE LEARNING SPACES**

Friday January 30, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

The Kinooaadziwin Education Body invites you to this virtual professional development event. There are four presentations to share current practices in creating engaging language learning spaces for Anishinabek youth.

9:00-10:00am- Keynote Session
Andrea Custer
Andrea Custer is a Rock Cree woman from wopwiskocaninik (Pelican Narrows) in the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, with ancestral ties to the Churchill, Beaver, and Sturgeon River systems. A Rock Cree language speaker, she comes from a family of traditional harvesters connected to Uskik Lake and Iskwatom Lake. Andrea is the mother of five and wife to Randy Clarke, a fluent Cree speaker from Southend, Saskatchewan. She is a PhD candidate and Varier Scholar in Indigenous Language Revitalization at the University of Victoria, with research focused on intergenerational Cree language transmission, family-based learning and land-based approaches to language revitalization.

10:00-10:45am- Involving Families in Language Learning
Marsha Shilling
Marsha is an indigenous early-years educator from Chippewas of Rama who is deeply committed to Anishinaabemowin language revitalization and culturally grounded education. She works at Waasa Enaabijig Daycare, where Ojibwe language learning is woven into daily routines for children as young as 18 months. Guided by the knowledge and presence of Elders Marsha supports language learning as more than instruction. Marsha will share practical insights and lived experience from the front lines of indigenous language revitalization in engaging families in early learning environments and using words and Anishinaabemowin at home.

10:45-11:30am- Anishinaabe Bodaawe Committee
Mary O'Donnell and Andrew Manitowabi
The Anishinaabemowin Bodaawe Committee is a unique Northern Ontario initiative dedicated to the revitalization of Anishinaabemowin in the Lake Superior/Lake Nipigon region. The foundation of the work evolved from communication with community leaders, teachers, First Nations, provincial indigenous organizations, and local school boards. Mary and Andrew will be sharing the learning curves, innovation, successes and realizations related to this challenging but foundational work of Anishinaabemowin survival.

11:30am-12:15pm- Language Bowl
Hannah O'Donnell
Language bowls are an amazing way to stoke the competitive spirit of our youth when it comes to learning Anishinaabemowin. This presentation will review the format of a language bowl competition and how it can be adapted to be held online or in-person.

12:15-12:30pm- Closing

REGISTER HERE

Virtual Secondary School

As a team, Mike, Jessie, and Marlo would like to recognize and celebrate the effort and commitment shown by all students this past semester. It has been an honour to work with each student and witness their growth along their individual learning journeys.

As Semester 2 begins, the Virtual Secondary School continues to support language learning by offering Level A, Level B, and Level C Ojibwe, along with Level A Lunaapeew.

The Virtual Secondary School is now accepting registrations for the Summer Reach Ahead program. This year, Level B Ojibwe will be offered. This course is open to all students.

For more information, please contact Systems Principal, Marlo Beaucage, at Marlo.Beaucage@a-e-s.ca.

We are excited to announce that the Virtual Secondary School now has its own dedicated website. Please click the link below to access the site and learn more about our programs and offerings.

Introducing Our New Virtual Secondary School Webpage!



We're excited to announce the launch of our new **Virtual Secondary School** webpage!

This new page serves as a central hub for **key information** about the Virtual Secondary School, making it easier for **students, families, and communities** to explore online learning opportunities and stay connected.

What you'll find on the new page:

- Course offerings and program information
- Registration details and important dates
- Student supports and learning resources
- Updates and announcements

Explore the page:

<https://aes-keb.com/vss-home/>



Explore the Virtual Secondary School webpage and stay connected to important information and resources.

Youth Initiatives Update

Split Toe Moccasin Workshop

Youth Initiatives: Youth Initiatives recently hosted a youth-led Split Toe Moccasin Workshop that took place entirely online. The workshop was facilitated by Brooklyn Sawyer from Nipissing First Nation and provided youth with the opportunity to learn the process of creating traditional split toe moccasins in a virtual setting. There were six spots available for this two-session workshop, allowing participants to receive more focused guidance while working through each step of the project.

Participants were also able to learn about the cultural significance of moccasin making while developing new skills and connecting with other youth. Youth Initiatives looks forward to hosting more workshops like this in the future to continue creating opportunities for youth to learn and engage with cultural practices.



(Brooklyn Sawyer set up to share her knowledge)

Professional Development

AES Winter Professional Development Recap

Miigwech to all educators and staff who participated in last month's AES Winter Professional Development offerings. Throughout January and February, a range of sessions were offered to support educator learning, student wellbeing, and classroom practice.

The series began with Trauma Informed Teaching Through an Indigenous Lens, facilitated by Indigenous educator Jen Ashlee. This session explored the importance of honouring relationship, story, and spirit in learning spaces while supporting educators in understanding trauma informed practices within an Indigenous context.

Educators also participated in the Supporting Student Mental Health Series, led by Carly Leyburne (RP, RCAT). These sessions focused on recognizing and responding to trauma, identifying and managing anxiety in students, and supporting children and youth who are experiencing grief.

A number of participants joined the AES Winter Book Study on MTSS for Reading Improvement, facilitated by literacy consultant Heidi Cloutier. During these evening sessions, educators explored how Multi Tiered Systems of Support can strengthen reading instruction through structured literacy, collaborative team structures, and data informed planning.

The Speech and Language Support in the Classroom series with Speech Language Pathologists Carly Woods and Shaun Pearson focused on strengthening educators' understanding of language development, speech sound milestones, stuttering, and strategies to support non verbal students in classroom environments.

Finally, educators had the opportunity to explore emerging tools through The AI Educator sessions, which introduced practical ways artificial intelligence can support teaching and learning, including AI tools for educators and applications such as Canva's AI Studio. These sessions continue to strengthen our shared commitment to supporting AES youth through culturally grounded, evidence informed educational practices.



Winter Professional Development Sessions

1 TRAUMA INFORMED TEACHING THROUGH AN INDIGENOUS LENS

2 SUPPORTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERIES

3 AES WINTER BOOK STUDY

Evening sessions will be led by literacy consultant Heidi Cloutier in late January/February. Participants will be provided with a copy of the resource.

BOOK SUMMARY

This comprehensive guide provides practical tools that help leaders engineer robust support systems across all tiers. Move beyond individual interventions to create lasting, system-level improvements. This book is perfect for educators ready to bridge research and practice to achieve reading success for all students.

K-12 school leaders and administrators can use this book to:

- Engineer sustainable, systemwide reading improvement through MTSS
- Implement the science of reading at every tier of instruction
- Build effective team structures that drive lasting change
- Transform assessment data into actionable improvement plans

4 SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM

Join us for a PD Series on SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM

February 17, 24, 25
March 3, 10

Register using the QR code or the link above!

5 THE AI EDUCATOR

- The AI Classroom: Surprising Truths Every Educator Should Know
- AI Educator Tools: The Best Apps for Teachers
- Playing with Magic: Canva's AI Studio for Educators

UPCOMING EVENTS

ANISHINAABEMOWIN KINOOMAAGZIDAA
ANISHINAABEMOWIN
BOOK BAG



ANISHINAABEMOWIN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT WORKERS

ANISHINAABEMOWIN RESOURCE BUILDING
15 ANISHINAABEMOWIN BOOKS

75+ ACTIVITIES

CREATION OF ANISHINAABEMOWIN LESSON PLANS

APRIL 17, 2026

DELTA HOTELS WATERFRONT,
SAULT STE MARIE, ON
START FROM 9:00AM - 3:00PM

REGISTER HERE:
<https://forms.office.com/r/dYjuNhi5n>



Eko Niizhig Dibaakiwin Anishinaabemowin Anokit
Kinooaadziwin Education Body
Lynn McGregor
lynn.mcgregor@a-e-s.ca
705-825-2159



Indigenous Language Teachers Learning Circle - Book Bag Resource Gathering

April 17, 2026

Sault Ste. Marie, ON

Contact:

Lynn.McGregor@a-e-s.ca

11th Annual Niigaan Gdizhaami Forum

April 21 & 22, 2026

Sault Ste. Marie, ON

Contact:

Paige.Fortier@a-e-s.ca



**SAVE
THE DATE**

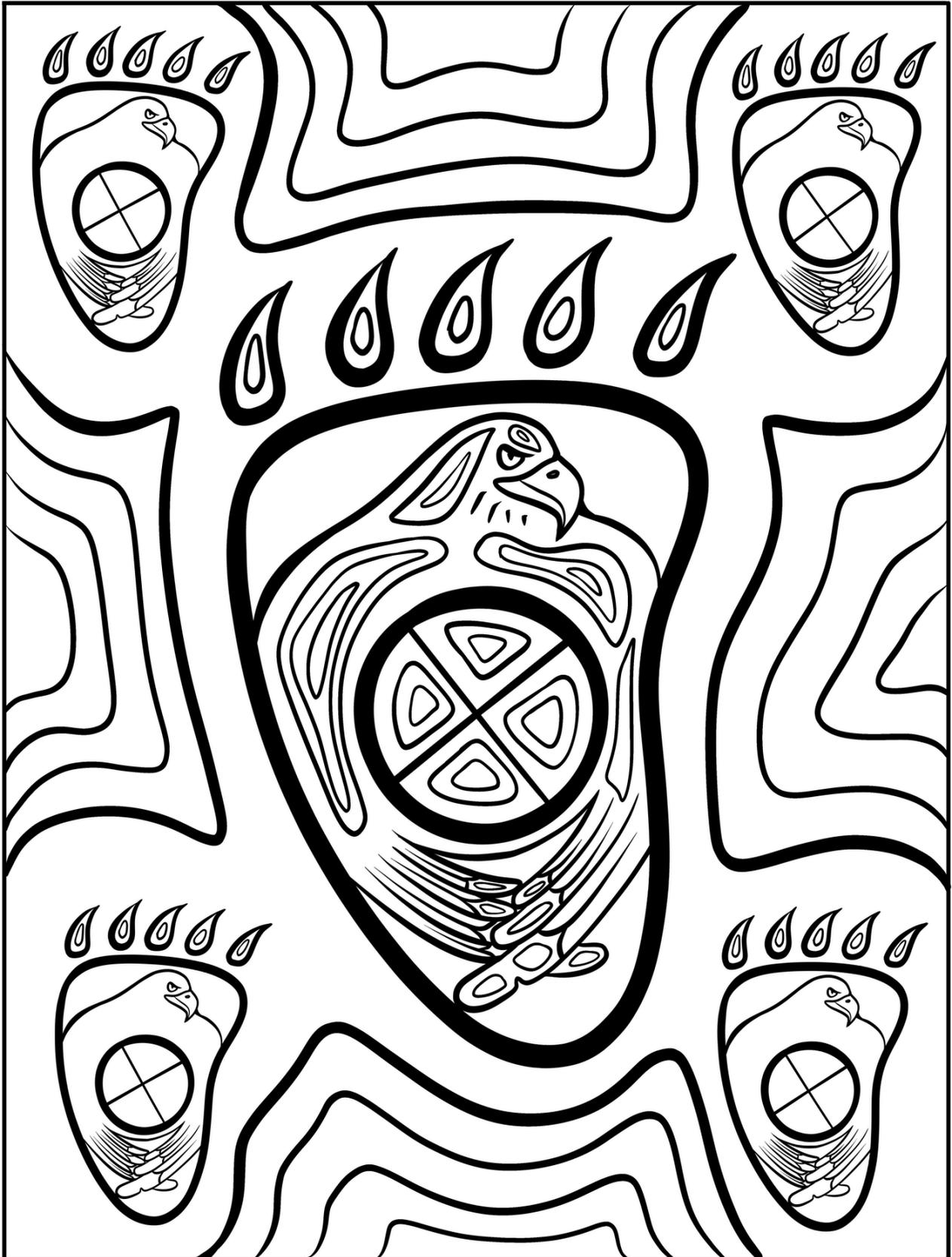
**11th
ANNUAL
NIIGAAN
GDIZHAAMI
FORUM**

Quattro Hotel & Conference Centre,
SAULT STE. MARIE, ON

April 21 & 22, 2026

Draft agenda and event details to follow

Anishinabek Education System Colouring Page



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