

Welcome to Northern Threads Magazine

Our Northern Stories Woven Together

Est. 2025

Reflections From The Editor



Who are you, really?

Is your identity tied to the title on your business card? Is it the way you lead a team as a boss, or the way you nurture a family as a parent? We spend so much of our lives collecting these descriptions, stacking them like bricks to build a wall that we hope looks like “success” to the outside world.

At Northern Threads Magazine, we believe that the most beautiful parts of your story aren’t found in a title. They are found in the messy, vibrant, and deeply human threads that connect us all.

The Boxes We Build

We are obsessed with classification! We use systems to define our worth, our value, and our standing before we even say hello. From the upper, middle, and lower class to the specific hierarchy of your office, these labels act as shortcuts. They tell us who is “important” and who is “invisible.”

But these shortcuts are dangerous. When you look at someone through the lens of their socioeconomic standing, you aren’t seeing a person. You are seeing a category. And a category can never hold the fullness of a life. It cannot hold grief. It cannot hold tenderness. It cannot hold the private battles people fight behind closed doors or the quiet courage it takes to begin again.

In our tight-knit Northern Ontario communities, these categories can stick like glue, defining a person’s future before they’ve had a chance to write it. A label can shape who gets trusted, who gets overlooked, who gets invited in, and who remains standing at the edge of the room. Over time, those labels do more than organize society. They interrupt connection. They keep us from meeting one another heart-first.

The Illusion of the Paper Trail

Education level is perhaps the most deceptive label of all. We use it to define intelligence, yet a degree is often more a sign of opportunity than of ability. We fixate on those pieces of paper that not all of us are lucky enough to have within our reach.

I once knew someone who loved to mention they were the “most educated” person in the neighborhood. But what was that statement actually based on? Was it fact? I doubt they ever asked their neighbors for their IQ scores.

The older I get, the more I wonder if statements like that are rarely about confidence at all. Truly secure people do not need to announce their value every time they enter a conversation. They do not need to rank themselves above the people living beside them. Often, that kind of declaration feels less like truth and more like hunger. A hunger to be noticed. A need to be validated. A fear, perhaps, that without the title or credential, there may be nothing else holding up the image they have built of themselves.

And that is the quiet sadness of it. When someone clings too tightly to being the “most educated,” they may be revealing not superiority, but fragility. They may be telling you how badly they need the world to confirm that they matter. But the damage is real. To elevate yourself by flattening everyone around you is still a form of harm. To assume another person’s limits based on your own narrow perception is discrimination, plain and simple. It wounds people who have had fewer opportunities, people who have taken unconventional roads, and people who have had to survive long before they had the luxury to impress anyone.

The Smartest Person in the Room

Think about the places we frequent: the schools, the hospitals, the office buildings. We often assume the person with the most prestige is the smartest. But the smartest person in the building might very well be the janitor.

Maybe they are someone who once dreamed in blueprints, poetry, chemistry, or music. Maybe life pulled them away from a classroom and into survival. Maybe they are caring for a parent, raising grandchildren, recovering from loss, or rebuilding after years no one else ever had to endure. Maybe they know how to fix what others throw away. Maybe they can read people better than any execu-

utive in the corner office. Maybe their brilliance was never missing. Maybe it simply was never packaged in a way society finds easy to praise.

That is the tragedy of labels. They train us to admire the visible ladder and ignore the invisible mountain someone has already climbed. Without getting to know a person, you cannot know their history or the pathway they’ve travelled. We are so strongly rooted in classifying that we forget about the underlying person. We forget that the “threads” of a life aren’t always visible from the surface. Some of the wisest people you will ever meet do not speak in polished language. Some of the strongest minds have taken paths less traveled, less celebrated, and far less understood.

Reclaiming the Human Thread

So, how do we correct this? How do we stop labeling and start seeing?

It starts with communication! We need actual, open, and honest dialogue between people.

Not the polished kind. Not the kind built on networking, performance, or social positioning. Real communication asks more of you. It asks you to slow down. To listen without trying to sort someone into a category. To speak with curiosity instead of assumption. To let another person’s story change the way you see the world.

Stop looking at the title and start looking at the eyes. Ask questions that don’t have to do with work or status. Listen to the stories of our neighbors across Northern Ontario: their struggles, their triumphs, and their quiet wisdom. Let conversation become an act of repair. Let it loosen the grip of class, prestige, and perception. Let it remind you that every human being carries an inner world far richer than any label could name.

When we break down the labels, we find that we are all just human beings walking vastly different paths. But communication is how those paths finally meet. It is how strangers become neighbors. It is how judgment softens into understanding. It is how communities heal. Let’s decide today to value the person, not the classification, and to speak to one another in a way that leaves room for dignity, surprise, and grace.

What label are you ready to let go of? Tell us in the comments! Cheers,

KO'Connor



In the Loop: Northern Ontario News Features

A Light in the North: Remembering Constable Tarun Bali by KARRIE O'CONNOR



Northern Ontario is a place of deep beauty and even deeper connections! Our communities are built on the strength of the people who protect them. Today, we are taking a moment to honor a truly remarkable soul who gave everything for the safety of the North. Have you heard the name Tarun Bali?

He was more than just a uniform. He was a son, a friend, and a light in every room he entered. While his loss on June 9 in Hearst has left a heavy silence across the province, his legacy is something we should all carry forward

A Journey of Service

Tarun was just 29 years old. A “son of Brampton” through and through, he carried the vibrant energy of his hometown wherever he went. Before he donned the OPP blue, he spent time in Kitchener working in bylaw enforcement.

He was someone who truly believed in the power of public safety.

Can you imagine the dedication it takes to move from the busy streets of Southern Ontario to the quiet, rugged landscapes of the North? Tarun did exactly that. He had been with the Ontario Provincial Police for two and a half years, primarily based at the Dufferin detachment. He was in Hearst on a temporary deployment, stepping up to help where he was needed most.

The “Perfect Gentleman”

If you ask anyone who worked with him, they’ll tell you the same thing. Tarun Bali was the “perfect gentleman.” He didn’t just do his job; he did it with a warmth that stayed with people. He was a rookie officer with an old soul and a heart aimed squarely at helping others

Edit your perspective on what it means to serve.

Remember the person behind the badge. Celebrate the kindness he showed to every stranger. His colleagues describe him as a dedicated public servant. But more than that, they describe a man who was genuinely good. In a world that can often feel loud and chaotic, Tarun was a steady, helpful presence

A Community in Mourning

The impact of Tarun’s passing has been felt from the streets of Hearst all the way down Highway 400.

Did you see the tributes?

First responders lined the overpasses as he was brought home. The CN Tower dimmed its lights. Flags in Brampton flew at half-mast. It was a powerful reminder that when one of us falls, we all feel the weight of it.

At Northern Threads Magazine, we believe in the stories that connect us. Tarun’s story is a thread of bravery, sacrifice, and immense heart. He represents the very best of what it means to be a neighbor in Northern Ontario.

How You Can Honor Him

We often wonder what we can do in the face of such a tragedy. The answer is simple.

- Reflect on the sacrifices made by our local officers every day.
- Share a story of a time someone helped you when you needed it most.
- Support your local community initiatives that foster safety and connection.

Let’s keep his spirit alive by being a little kinder to one another today.

Final Thoughts

Tarun Bali was a light that was extinguished far too soon. But lights like his never truly go out as long as we remember them. Think about the “perfect gentleman” today. Carry his warmth with you. Rest easy, Constable Bali. *We’ve got the watch from here.*



In the Loop: Northern Ontario News Features

FemFest 2026: The Soo's Creative Powerhouse Comes to Life by KARRIE O'CONNOR



more than a one-night event. It's the beginning of something bigger, with hopes of becoming a staple annual festival for the city.

The Soundtrack of the Night

Who is ready to dance? The lineup this year is absolutely stacked with local powerhouses. You'll get to experience a wide range of sounds that showcase the incredible diversity of talent in the Sault.

Check out these must-see performers:

- Miss Madii – Get ready for some serious stage presence.
- Gabi Dumas – Bringing those soulful vibes.
- Juliana Regan – A voice you won't soon forget.
- Chloe Wyslocky – Local talent at its finest.
- Mal Isabel – Catch her before she's headlining world tours!
- Mossy Mind – Bringing a unique edge to the evening

And don't even think about leaving early! Once the live bands wrap up, DJ ÉIRIS will take over with a late-night set to keep the party going until 2:00 AM.

Style, Threads, and Local Makers

At Northern Threads Magazine, we believe fashion is one of the strongest ways we connect with our culture. FemFest agrees! This isn't just a concert; it's a full-blown lifestyle event.

Arrive early to explore the vendor market. You'll find:

- Constance's Closet
- OC Beauty
- Bella Blue
- 3C Threads
- Loathe Studios: Second-Hand Fashion: Score some unique, sustainable pieces for your summer wardrobe.
- DIY Merch: Want to get hands-on? Head over to the "Make Your Own Merch" station and create something one-of-a-kind.

These local vendors, and more, bring even more Northern flavour to the night and help show exactly what FemFest is all about. It's a celebration of women-led creativity, local business, and the kind of community support that helps a new event grow into a city tradition.

Shopping local is a great way to keep our creative economy thriving. Plus, you'll walk away with pieces that have a real story behind them.

Why You Need to Be There

Why does FemFest matter so much to us?

Because it highlights the "human thread" that connects us all. It's about more than just a ticket price; it's about showing up for your neighbors and celebrating the creative pulse of Northern Ontario.

Events like these are what make our community vibrant. They provide a platform for voices that deserve to be heard and spaces for everyone to feel welcome.

Plan Your Night

Ready to go? Follow these simple steps to make the most of your FemFest experience:

Mark your calendar: Saturday, June 20, 2026.

Head to the Queen Street: The event is at Soo Blaster, 345 Queen Street East.

Bring some cash: Admission is just \$15 at the door: a total steal for this much talent!

Arrive early: Doors open at 6:00 PM so you can shop the vendors before the music starts at 8:00 PM.

Invite a friend: Everything is better when you share it with your crew.

See You There!

Interested In Low Cost Ads?
If you are looking for low cost advertising message us for details at.

info@northernthreadsmagazine.ca

As an independent publication we rely on advertising revenue and donations.

We would love to work with you!

Are you ready to feel the creative energy of Sault Ste. Marie! This Saturday, June 20, 2026, the local scene is about to get a whole lot louder and more stylish. And this time, it's extra special. FemFest 2026 marks the inaugural, first-ever FemFest in Sault Ste. Marie, bringing women-led talent, local style, and community spirit together at Soo Blaster for one unforgettable night.

Whether you're a long-time supporter of the arts or just looking for a fun night out, this is the place to be. We're talking about a night that blends music, fashion, and community in the heart of Northern Ontario.

The festival was founded by Ela Kallonen, whose vision is simple and powerful: create a dedicated space for women's creativity in the local arts scene. Born out of a desire to celebrate and support women-led talent in the Sault, FemFest is

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The Sweet History of Thunder Bay's Famous Persian Donut by KARRIE O'CONNOR

Few foods are as closely tied to a city's identity as the Persian donut is to Thunder Bay. Ask anyone who has lived in Northwestern Ontario, and chances are they have fond memories of biting into the soft, spiral-shaped pastry topped with its unmistakable pink berry icing. More than just a sweet treat, the Persian has become a symbol of local pride, community tradition, and Thunder Bay culture.

The origins of the Persian date back to the mid-1940s when baker Art Bennett, founder of Bennett's Bakery in what was then Port Arthur, created a new pastry unlike anything else available at the time. The exact recipe remains one of Thunder Bay's best-kept secrets, but the result was a unique combination of donut and cinnamon roll, finished with a distinctive pink icing that has sparked debate for decades over whether it contains raspberries or strawberries.

The story behind the unusual name is almost as famous as the pastry itself. Local tradition holds that Bennett named the creation after American General John "Black Jack" Pershing. According to the legend, Pershing stopped by the bakery while Bennett was experimenting with the dough. The two men struck up a conversation, and Bennett decided to name the new pastry in the general's honour. While historians have questioned some details of the story, it remains an important part of Thunder Bay folklore and has been passed down through generations.

Over the decades, the Persian evolved from a bakery specialty into a regional icon. Following changes in ownership, the recipe continued to be produced and eventually became closely associated with The Persian Man, the bakery that helped make the treat famous throughout Northwestern Ontario. Visitors travelling through Thunder Bay are often told that trying a Persian is a requirement, much like experiencing poutine in Quebec or a butter tart in rural Ontario.

What makes the Persian unique is not just its flavour but its role in community life. Schools, churches, sports teams, and community organizations have long sold Persians as fundraisers. Families serve them at gatherings, and many former



residents arrange to have boxes shipped across Canada when nostalgia strikes. Some locals even prefer them toasted and re-iced, creating an entirely different experience from the traditional version.

Today, nearly eighty years after its creation, the Persian remains one of Thunder Bay's most recognizable culinary treasures. Despite countless attempts to imitate it, the original recipe remains a closely guarded secret. For many residents, the pastry represents more than a delicious snack—it is a reminder of home, community, and the unique culture of Northwestern Ontario.

For this writer, the Persian is more than a regional pastry—it is tied to memories of family, friendship, and Northern Ontario adventures. As this article is being written, a shipment of Persians is currently making its way north, bringing back memories of years spent living in Thunder Bay, where the treat became a family favourite. Whether visiting the city or hearing that someone is making the trip through Thunder Bay, the question is often asked: "Can you bring back some Persians?"

The pastry was also a highlight of a summer camp journey, travelling by bus with groups of youth under the watchful eye of a camp leader from Thunder Bay on their way to a remote camp near Espanola for an awaiting volunteer. The arrival of a box of Persians was always met with excitement and quickly became part of the tradition.

Like many beloved foods, the Persian has evolved over the years. Recognizing that fans now carry them across the province and beyond, some bakeries offer Persians with the famous pink icing packaged separately, making them easier to transport while keeping the pastry fresh. Whether enjoyed fresh from the bakery, shared on a long road trip, or delivered to former Thunder Bay residents hundreds of kilometres away, the Persian continues to connect people to the city and to the memories made there.

In a province filled with iconic foods, the Persian donut stands apart as a true Thunder Bay original. Its story is woven into the history of the city itself, proving that sometimes the simplest traditions leave the sweetest legacy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Children's Festival & Children's Services Expo

Thunder Bay | June 20, 2026

A free family-focused event at Chippewa Park.

Tbaytel Motorcycle Ride for Dad

Thunder Bay | June 20, 2026

One of Northern Ontario's largest charity motorcycle rides, raising funds and awareness for prostate cancer research and treatment.

Northern Lights Festival Boréal

Sudbury | July 10–12, 2026

Canada's longest continuously running music festival returns with a lineup of Canadian and international artists, workshops, food vendors, and family programming.

Shake the Lake Ribfest

North Bay | July 17–20, 2026

One of North Bay's signature summer events, combining award-winning rib vendors, live entertainment, family activities, and fundraising for local food security initiatives.

Canada Day Celebrations

Timmins | July 1, 2026

Activities are planned throughout the day, making it one of the community's largest summer gatherings.

Want Your Event Featured?

To have your event featured in our Event section please send all event details to:
info@northernthreadsmagazine.ca
 by the 10th of each month.

We would love to feature you!



Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews

Corey Clouthier: Turning Lived Experience Into Hope and Recovery

by KARRIE O'CONNOR



In the world of addiction recovery, credentials and education matter—but so does lived experience. For North Bay addiction counsellor Corey Clouthier, recovery work is built on both. Through Firebrand Recovery, Clouthier has dedicated his career to helping people find a path forward, one conversation and one connection at a time.

His journey into the helping profession was not born from textbooks alone. Drawing on both professional training and personal experience, Clouthier understands many of the challenges faced by those struggling with addiction. This perspective has become a cornerstone of his work, allowing him to meet people where they are with authenticity, compassion, and understanding.

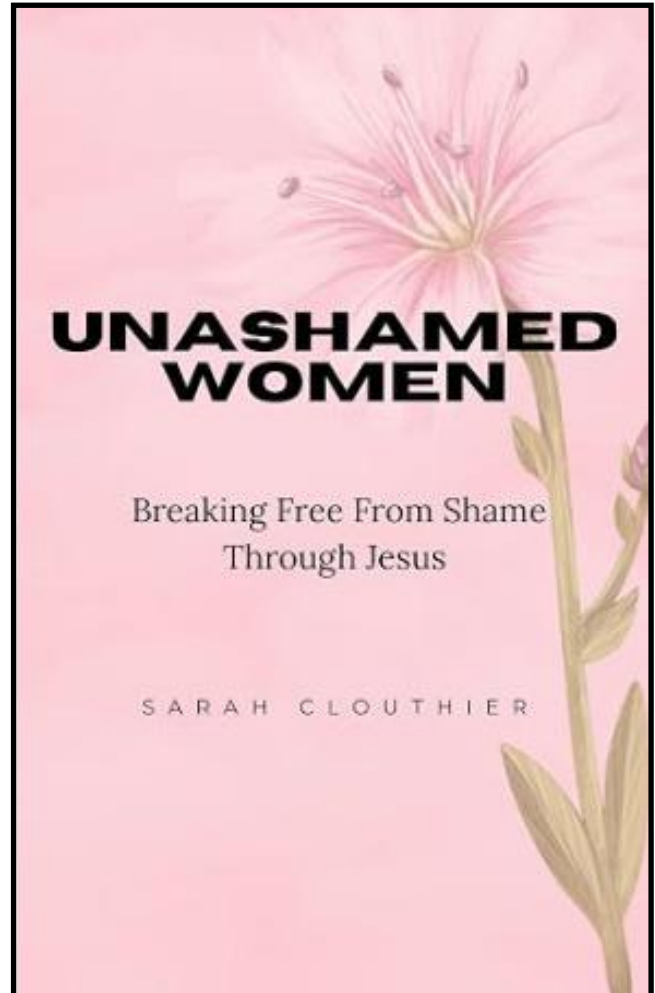
Throughout his career, Clouthier has earned a reputation for helping individuals make meaningful changes in their lives. His work extends beyond addiction counselling and includes recovery planning, anger management support, and helping clients rebuild relationships, confidence, and purpose.

At the heart of Firebrand Recovery is the belief that recovery is possible for everyone. Rather than focusing solely on addiction as a problem to overcome, Clouthier emphasizes personal growth, accountability, resilience, and the development of healthy coping strategies. His approach

encourages individuals to recognize their strengths and take ownership of their recovery journey.

What sets Clouthier apart is his commitment to creating an environment where people feel heard, respected, and supported. Recovery can often feel isolating, particularly for those who have experienced stigma or judgment. His work is rooted in the belief that healing begins when people are given the opportunity to tell their stories and discover that they are more than the mistakes they have made.

That message of hope and redemption extends beyond Corey's professional life and into his family. Recently, his wife, Sarah Clouthier, released her first book, *Unashamed Woman*, a faith-based exploration of healing, redemption, and overcoming shame. Through personal stories and spiritual reflection, the book encourages women to recognize that their past does not define



them and that healing is possible through Christ. Building on the book's message, Sarah is now developing a digital course for women designed to provide practical tools, reflection exercises, and faith-based encouragement. The course will help participants move beyond shame, embrace healing, and discover renewed confidence in their identity and purpose.

Together, Corey and Sarah share a common mission: helping people recognize that they are not defined by their struggles. While Corey works directly with individuals navigating addiction and recovery, Sarah's writing and educational initiatives offer encouragement and support to women seeking healing and personal growth.



Photo Credit: Karrie O'Connor
Corey manning his booth at Canadian Mental Health's Education Day recently in North Bay. Always a welcome connection to run into him at events.

As communities across Northern Ontario continue to face growing mental health and addiction challenges, professionals like Corey Clouthier play an important role in providing hope, guidance, and practical support. Through Firebrand Recovery, he remains committed to helping people discover that their past does not have to determine their future.

In a field where every success story represents a life transformed, Clouthier's work serves as a reminder that recovery is possible, healing can happen, and every person deserves the opportunity to write a new chapter in their story.

- Peer Support & Accountability
- Resources & Tools
- Seminars & E-courses
- Mentorship & Coaching
- Inner Healing and Counseling

<https://www.skool.com/firebrand-recovery-5389/about>

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The Northern Chuckle

by GILLIAN HEBERT @StudioGillian
Artwork By Gillian Hebert

Ever since the COVID lockdown, my job has existed in this mostly hybrid space. My coworkers are either working from home or spread out across different regions. Meanwhile, I'm still in the office because my role depends on the printing and cutting machines; not really something that I can do remotely.

I've never actually known this workplace any other way. From the day I started, the building has always felt a little too big, a little too quiet. Most days, there might have been maybe five of us max. It's just rooms of empty desks, storage for office supplies and a lunchroom that echoes a little more than it should.

It's slowly starting to fill in with a few more people, but most days at lunch, it's still just me sitting alone (with Ollie of course) in this oversized room, trying to imagine what it must have felt like when it was full and bustling with conversation and collaboration.



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Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews

Mark Wilson: Investing in People, Building Community by KARRIE O'CONNOR



When entrepreneur Mark Wilson looks at North Bay, he sees more than a city—he sees opportunity.

As the founder of The Money Project North, Wilson has launched an innovative charitable initiative designed to help aspiring entrepreneurs turn their ideas into reality through interest-free loans, mentorship, and practical business support. His vision is simple yet powerful: provide people with a fair chance to succeed, regardless of their financial circumstances.

The Money Project North was created to address a challenge many entrepreneurs face when starting a business: access to capital. Traditional financing can be difficult to secure, particularly for individuals without established credit, family wealth, or business experience. Wilson's initiative seeks to bridge that gap by offering interest-free loans and guidance to entrepreneurs who are committed to building businesses that contribute positively to the North Bay community.

For Wilson, the project is deeply personal.

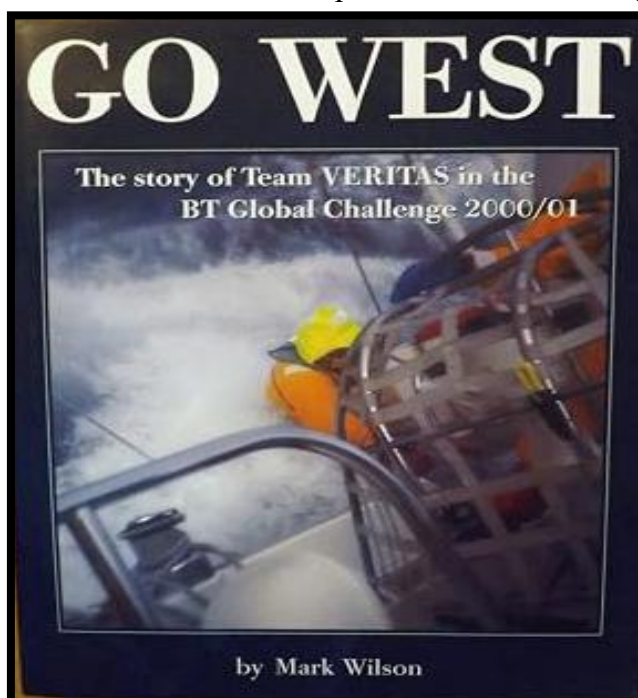
Born and raised in London, England, he entered the workforce at just seventeen years old. His first professional role was with a commercial finance company specializing in invoice discounting and factoring—a niche area of finance that provides businesses with advances against outstanding invoices. Starting in the company's mailroom as a clerical assistant, Wilson sorted incom-

ing payments and learned the fundamentals of the business from the ground up. His dedication earned him a place in the company's management trainee program, where he rotated through departments and gained a comprehensive understanding of finance and business operations.

Those early experiences shaped not only his career but also his understanding of opportunity and mentorship.

One of the most influential moments in Wilson's life came when a mentor challenged him to think beyond the safe path that lay in front of him. Rather than settling into a predictable career, Wilson was encouraged to explore the world while he was young. Taking that advice, he borrowed enough money for a plane ticket and travelled to Australia on a two-year work visa. The experience proved transformative.

Those two years broadened his perspective, exposed him to new opportunities, and gave him the confidence to pursue ambitious goals. More importantly, it taught him the power of mentorship. Someone had seen potential in him before he fully saw it in himself, and that lesson stayed with him throughout his life. After years of travel and learning, Wilson purchased a struggling freight business in Hong Kong and spent the next fifteen years building it into a successful company. Later, he became the majority owner of Envision, a Canadian design-build architectural signage company where he continues to serve in an advisory capacity. Wilson is also an accomplished author. Drawing



from a life filled with adventure and challenge, he wrote *Go West*, a book that recounts his participation in the BT Global Challenge, widely regarded as one of the world's toughest ocean races. The event challenged amateur sailors to race around the globe against prevailing winds and currents, testing their endurance, resilience, teamwork, and leadership. The experience reinforced many of the values that continue to guide Wilson today: perseverance, adaptability, and the belief that growth often comes from stepping beyond one's comfort zone.

Despite his success, Wilson has never forgotten the people who helped him along the way.

"I've been lucky in this life—not because things were handed to me, but because at the right moments, people believed in me," he explains on The Money Project website. That philosophy now serves as the foundation for the organization he created.

Wilson and his wife, Gillian, moved to Canada in 2009 and spent years visiting North Bay, where Gillian's family has deep roots. After purchasing and restoring a home in the city, they made North Bay their permanent residence in 2025. The move strengthened Wilson's desire to invest in the community that had become home.

What makes The Money Project unique is its self-sustaining model. Loans are provided interest-free and, when repaid, the funds are recycled to support the next entrepreneur. Wilson personally funds the initiative and has designed it to create a lasting cycle of local investment, mentorship, and economic growth.

In addition to financial assistance, applicants gain access to business guidance, financial education, and support navigating future opportunities. Wilson believes that capital alone is not enough; entrepreneurs also need encouragement, knowledge, and someone willing to believe in their vision.

Through The Money Project North, Mark Wilson is doing more than funding businesses—he is passing forward the same belief, encouragement, and mentorship that helped shape his own remarkable journey. Whether through entrepreneurship, adventure, writing, or philanthropy, Wilson's message remains consistent: invest in people, believe in potential, and extraordinary things can happen.

For More Information visit:
www.moneynorth.ca

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Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews

Why They're Staying: Young People Choosing Northern Ontario

by KARRIE O'CONNOR

For decades, one of Northern Ontario's biggest challenges has been the steady migration of young people to larger urban centres. The promise of higher-paying jobs, bigger markets, and more educational opportunities has often pulled graduates south. Communities across the North have watched as talented young people packed their bags in search of opportunity elsewhere.

What makes today's trend particularly interesting is how much the conversation has changed over the years.

I remember sitting on a panel discussion about youth out-migration while I was a student at Mohawk College in Hamilton in 2002. The event, hosted through the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, focused on the issue of young people leaving their communities in search of opportunity. Yet my perspective was somewhat different from many of the others in the room. I wasn't a young person leaving Southern Ontario—I was a young person who had already left Northern Ontario and migrated south.

At the time, the movement seemed almost expected. Many Northern youth felt that if they wanted to pursue post-secondary education, specialized careers, or larger opportunities, they would need to relocate. For many, leaving wasn't a choice; it felt like a necessity.

But a different story is beginning to emerge.

Across Northern Ontario, a growing number of young entrepreneurs, artists, tradespeople, and professionals are choosing to stay—or are returning after spending time away. Rather than seeing the North as a place to leave behind, they see it as a place where they can build meaningful careers, start businesses, raise families, and make a difference in their communities.

For many, the decision comes down to quality of life.

While major cities offer certain advantages, they also come with rising housing costs, lengthy

commutes, and increasing pressure on work-life balance. In contrast, Northern communities offer shorter travel times, easier access to nature, affordable housing, and a stronger sense of connection.

Many young professionals speak about wanting more than just a career. They want a community.

In the North, relationships matter. Whether it's a local business owner supporting a startup, a coach mentoring young athletes, or neighbours coming together to help one another, there is often a sense of belonging that can be difficult to find in larger cities.

That support network is helping fuel a new generation of entrepreneurs.

From small-town coffee shops and creative studios to technology startups and skilled trades businesses, young Northerners are creating opportunities where others once saw limitations. Many are finding that modern technology allows them to build successful businesses while remaining rooted in the communities they love.

Remote work has also changed the equation.

A generation ago, pursuing a career in technology, marketing, design, consulting, or media often meant relocating to Toronto, Ottawa, or another major centre. Today, many professionals can work with clients across the country—or around the world—while living in North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Timmins, Thunder Bay, or countless smaller communities.

For others, the appeal lies in the chance to make a visible impact.

In smaller communities, one person's efforts can have a ripple effect. A young teacher can influence an entire generation of students. An entrepreneur can create local jobs. An artist can help shape community culture. A volunteer can help build programs that simply wouldn't exist without their involvement.

That opportunity to contribute is attracting people who want to be part of something bigger than themselves.

The future of Northern Ontario is also being shaped by innovation. Colleges, Indigenous-led initiatives, skilled trades programs, healthcare recruitment efforts, and community partnerships are

creating new pathways for young people to build successful futures close to home. Communities are increasingly recognizing that retaining youth means investing in them—not only through jobs but through mentorship, leadership opportunities, and spaces where their ideas can thrive.

Challenges still exist. Access to specialized services, transportation, housing availability in some communities, and workforce shortages remain ongoing concerns. Yet many young Northerners see these challenges not as reasons to leave, but as opportunities to create solutions.

Perhaps that is what makes this generation different.

They are not staying because they lack options. They are staying because they see potential.

They see communities where their voices matter. They see opportunities to build businesses, careers, and families. They see room to innovate, collaborate, and lead.

Most importantly, they see a future worth investing in.

For years, the story of Northern Ontario was about the people who left. Today, a new chapter is being written by the people who choose to stay—or who, like many before them, leave for a time and eventually find their way back home.

And through their vision, determination, and creativity, the future of the North looks brighter than ever.



A group of artists from Northern Ontario who travelled to Renfrew to network and meet other artists north of Toronto. This type of exposure creates opportunity for those in the North.

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Why They're Staying: Young People Choosing Northern Ontario

by KARRIE O'CONNOR

Timmins has long been known as one of Northern Ontario's mining capitals, but today the city faces a challenge that many communities would welcome: there are more opportunities than there are workers to fill them.

Recent reports indicate that the Timmins region is expected to require approximately 3,700 mining-related workers by 2029 as existing operations expand and new projects move forward. In response, educational institutions, employers, and community leaders are working together to develop training pathways that will help prepare the next generation of skilled workers.

The issue extends beyond mining itself.

While underground miners, heavy equipment operators, mechanics, and geologists remain in demand, the ripple effect reaches construction, transportation, environmental services, engineering, healthcare, education, and local businesses. Every new job created within the mining sector creates additional demand throughout the community.

To help address the growing need, Collège Boréal's Timmins campus recently announced a new Construction Engineering Technician – Civil and Mining program designed to prepare students for careers in mining, construction, and surveying. The program represents one of several efforts aimed at ensuring local residents can access training opportunities close to home while helping employers address future labour shortages.

The challenge facing Timmins is not unique. Across Canada, the mining industry is anticipating significant workforce needs over the coming decade as experienced workers retire and demand for critical minerals continues to grow. Industry forecasts suggest hundreds of thousands of new workers may be needed nationally by the mid-2030s.

For Timmins, however, the issue carries particular significance.



Mining remains one of the primary drivers of the local economy and continues to attract investment and business development. Economic development organizations have been actively promoting entrepreneurship, workforce development, and business growth to help ensure the region can capitalize on future opportunities.

The workforce discussion also ties into a broader conversation occurring throughout Northern Ontario: how do communities attract and retain young people?

For decades, Northern communities have watched many graduates leave for larger urban centres. Yet today's labour market may be creating new reasons for young people to stay. Competitive wages, expanding career opportunities, entrepreneurship programs, and improved educational pathways are helping change perceptions about what is possible in the North.

At the same time, community leaders recognize that jobs alone are not enough. Housing, infrastructure, recreation, healthcare, and quality of life all play important roles in attracting workers and their families. Recent investments in infrastructure, housing development, and long-term growth planning demonstrate that Timmins is preparing not only for economic growth but for population growth as well.

The question facing Timmins is no longer whether opportunity exists.

The opportunity is already here. The challenge—and perhaps the greatest opportunity—lies in ensuring enough people have the

skills, support, and confidence to seize it.

If successful, Timmins could become a model for how Northern Ontario communities transform resource-sector growth into long-term economic development, helping build a future where young people no longer feel they need to leave the North to build successful careers.

For this writer, the story is also a personal one. Growing up in the Mattice-Hearst area, regular trips to Timmins were a part of life throughout the 1980s. Timmins was the regional hub—a bustling northern city where families came to shop, attend medical appointments, access specialized services, and enjoy attractions that smaller communities simply could not offer. For many residents of the surrounding region, a trip to Timmins represented opportunity, activity, and connection to the broader North.

On a recent visit, however, I was saddened to see some of the same social challenges that have become increasingly visible in communities across Northern Ontario. Issues related to housing, addiction, mental health, and economic pressures are difficult to ignore. Yet despite those realities, there remains a strong sense of resilience within the community. The conversations taking place around workforce development, economic growth, and community investment offer hope that Timmins can not only address these challenges but also reclaim its position as one of Northern Ontario's leading centres for opportunity and prosperity.

Instead, they may find that the future they are looking for is already waiting for them at home.

Welcome to Northern Threads Magazine

Our Northern Stories Woven Together

Est. 2025

Common Threads: Community Profiles & Interviews

More Than a Moose: The Story Behind Hearst's Most Famous Landmark

by KARRIE O'CONNOR

For generations of Northern Ontarians, certain roadside landmarks have served as unofficial mile markers of home. In Wawa, it's the giant goose. In Cochrane, it's the polar bear. In Moonbeam, it's the flying saucer. In Hearst, it has always been the moose.

Today, visitors travelling along Highway 11 are greeted by the impressive wildlife display at the Gilles Gagnon Welcome Centre, where a towering bull moose stands protectively over a cow while wolves circle nearby. Thousands of travellers stop each year to take photographs, stretch their legs, and learn more about the community known proudly as the Moose Capital of Canada.

What many visitors don't realize, however, is that Hearst's relationship with its famous moose stretches back decades and includes a surprising history of relocations, repairs, and reinventions.

Long before the current sculpture was unveiled, Hearst had already adopted the moose as its symbol. The animal represented the vast forests surrounding the community and the hunting, trapping, and outdoor traditions that helped shape life in the region. By the 1970s, a large moose statue had become one of Hearst's most recognizable landmarks. Travellers arriving in town would often stop for a photograph, while residents proudly pointed it out to visiting family and friends.

Over the years, the original moose found itself on the move more than once. As roads were upgraded, businesses changed, and tourism initiatives evolved, the statue was relocated to different locations around the community. Like many Northern Ontario attractions exposed to decades of harsh winters, blowing snow, freezing rain, and road salt, the moose also required regular maintenance. Antlers needed repairs, paint faded, and weather damage occasionally left its mark.

Local stories tell of more than a few mishaps along the way. Some involved curious visitors climbing where they shouldn't, while others came courtesy of Northern Ontario's unforgiving climate. Yet



despite the wear and tear, the community always found a way to restore and preserve its beloved mascot.

Rather than allowing the moose to fade into history, Hearst chose to build upon its legacy.

In the early 2000s, a new vision emerged for welcoming visitors to the community. The result was the striking sculpture that stands today at the Welcome Centre. Created by Quebec artist Denys Heppell and unveiled in 2002, the display transformed the idea of a roadside attraction into a dramatic scene from the wilderness. Instead of a single animal, visitors were presented with a story: a powerful bull moose standing guard over a cow as wolves cautiously approach.

The sculpture perfectly captures the rugged spirit of Northern Ontario. It reflects not only the wildlife found throughout the region but also the resilience of the people who call the North home.

The Welcome Centre itself is a destination worth noting. Designed to celebrate Hearst's forestry heritage, the building features architecture inspired by the region's most important industry. Its distinctive roof resembles a giant evergreen tree, while the front facade echoes the shape of a saw blade. Together, the building and sculpture create one of the most memorable roadside stops along Highway 11.

For those who grew up in the area, however, the moose represents something much deeper than tourism.

As someone who spent their childhood in the Mattice-Hearst region, I remember how the moose served as a signal that a journey was nearly over. Whether returning from shopping trips, medical appointments, hockey tournaments, or family vacations, seeing the moose meant home was close, it also indicated we were close to school each morning on the long bus rides. Long before navigation apps existed, landmarks like the moose told us exactly where we were.

There was a sense of comfort in spotting it after hours on the highway. It marked the transition from travelling to belonging. The forests felt familiar again. The roads became recognizable. Home was just around the next bend.

That may be why Hearst's moose has endured for so many years. It has survived moves, repairs, weather, and changing times. It has evolved from a simple roadside statue into a symbol recognized across Northern Ontario. More importantly, it continues to connect generations of residents through shared memories.

For visitors, it may simply be a place to stop for a photograph. For those who grew up here, it is something far more meaningful.

It is a reminder of where we come from.

And no matter how many times it has been moved, repaired, or reinvented, Hearst's moose (and friend) continues to do what it has always done best—welcome people home.

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Building a New Chapter: Gateway Pride Collective Raises the Flag for Community in North Bay

by KARRIE O’CONNOR



Photo Credit: City of North Bay
Jerry Ranger, Johanna Kristolaitis, Karrie O’Connor, Deputy Mayor Maggie Horsefield and City Counsellor Justine Mallah raise the PRIDE flag at North Bay City Hall.

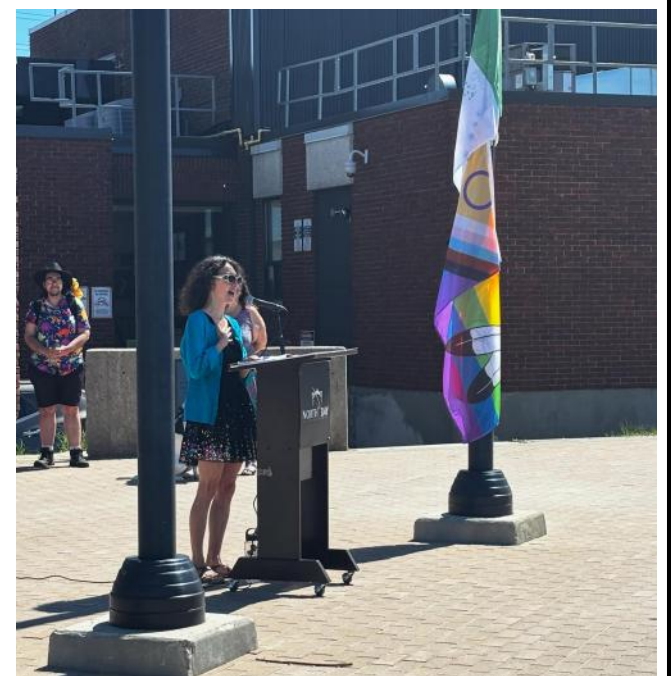


Photo Credit: City of North Bay
Jerry Ranger, Johanna Kristolaitis, starts of the Flag Raising Ceremony with a speech on inclusivity and diversity.

A new chapter in North Bay’s Pride movement is taking shape, and its message is simple: community comes first.

Earlier this month, residents, allies, community organizations, and supporters gathered at North Bay City Hall as the Pride flag was raised to mark the beginning of Pride Month. The ceremony represented more than the start of a season of celebrations—it symbolized a renewed commitment to inclusion, visibility, and community connection. Members of the newly formed Gateway Pride Collective joined local leaders and supporters in recognizing the importance of creating spaces where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected.

The flag-raising ceremony featured remarks from speakers Johanna Kristolaitis, Karrie O’Connor, Jerry Ranger, and others. Each sharing their own perspectives on community, acceptance, and the importance of creating a North Bay where everyone feels they belong. Their messages reflected both the challenges and the progress experienced by members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community while emphasizing hope for the future.

As one of the speakers, I had the privilege of sharing my own journey of self-discovery and acceptance. Standing before the crowd, I reflected on the

importance of community, the people who helped me find my voice, and the power of allowing ourselves to become who we truly are. Looking out at the diverse gathering of youth, families, seniors, allies, and community members, it was clear that Pride is about far more than a flag—it is about belonging.

The creation of Gateway Pride Collective comes at an important time for North Bay. Over the years, local Pride organizations and initiatives have experienced periods of inactivity, leadership changes, and organizational challenges that left many community members searching for opportunities to reconnect and rebuild. While those challenges are part of the area’s history, members of the new collective are focused on creating a positive path forward.

Gateway Pride Collective was formed with a vision of bringing people together through healthy, fun, and inclusive events that celebrate diversity while raising awareness of issues facing the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Organizers hope to provide opportunities for people of all ages to connect, learn, volunteer, and build meaningful relationships. The goal is not only to celebrate Pride during one month of the year but to foster a stronger sense of community throughout the year.

The collective is also committed to strengthening local voices. By creating safe and welcoming spaces for conversation, education, and celebration, the group hopes to empower individuals to share their stories, advocate for themselves and others, and become active participants in shaping a more inclusive North Bay.

Plans for 2026 include a variety of community-focused initiatives designed to encourage participation, visibility, and connection. While some events will celebrate the achievements and contributions of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, others will focus on education, wellness, social engagement, and building partnerships throughout the region. Organizers believe that Pride can be both meaningful and enjoyable, creating opportunities for awareness while fostering genuine relationships and community support.

For Gateway Pride Collective, the Pride flag represents more than a symbol. It represents resilience, visibility, acceptance, and the belief that every person deserves to be seen and valued for who they are. As the flag flies over North Bay, it serves as a reminder that progress is built through connection, understanding, and collaboration.

After years of uncertainty and change within the local Pride landscape, Gateway Pride Collective is working to write a new story—one focused on unity, positivity, and community. If the enthusiasm surrounding this year’s flag raising is any indication, that story is already beginning to unfold.

Frequency 'X'

(launching May 2026)

This Is My Personal Story Of Resilience

By Brody Boulay

Foreword: Some stories are difficult to tell. Others are difficult to hear. This is one of those stories.

What follows is a deeply personal account shared by Brody, a young writer whose courage, resilience, and willingness to speak openly about his experiences have touched many people. While the events described are painful, they also reveal the remarkable strength of a young person who endured adversity and found a way to grow, heal, and move forward.

Brody recently received First Prize in the Conspiracy of 3 Writing Competition in North Bay for this powerful piece. His story is more than an award-winning essay—it is a testament to perseverance, self-discovery, and the power of finding hope in even the most challenging circumstances.

By sharing his journey, Brody hopes to raise awareness about the experiences many children and youth face and to remind others that resilience can emerge even in life's darkest moments. We are grateful for his willingness to share these deeply personal reflections and invite you to read his story with an open heart.

We are so proud of Brody who just graduated from Nbisning Secondary School winning three awards and for having the courage to write about his experiences and growth.

This is my personal story of resilience, and I am sharing it to spread awareness for the things I and others have gone through because of experiences like the ones described in this story.

My story begins when I was eight years old. At that time, I was taken into the care of Children's Aid Services. Not only was I separated from my family, but I was also separated from the entire life I had known. I was taken into care after my parents had been fighting through the night and someone called the police. Looking back now, I realize that this was ultimately a good decision for me because of the neglect I was experiencing. However, eight-year-old me didn't understand that. I was overwhelmed by every negative emotion imaginable.

I had never been away from my family for more than a day before, and suddenly I found myself in Parry Sound, staying in a stranger's home. I arrived at around three o'clock in the morning and was so exhausted that I didn't fully feel how frightening the situation was until I woke up. For the next week, my life became a cycle of constant crying and barely eating because I simply couldn't bring myself to do either.

After that initial period, I remember having to convince myself to be brave. At the time, I didn't know anything about the Grandfather Teachings, yet I was already demonstrating one of them in what felt like the scariest situation I could imagine.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the end of the challenges I faced. The people whose care I was placed in turned out to be hostile and, at times, borderline abusive. For the next four years of my life, I was constantly belittled and repeatedly told that I would never go home. During that time, I was never checked on by a higher authority within the Children's Aid system. I also had to watch many of my belongings—often the only things that brought me comfort—be broken or destroyed.

I was forced to become resilient. Day after day, I endured circumstances that left me feeling powerless and defenseless. At that age, I had no idea that I was brave, let alone capable of surviving such a difficult period in my life.

Yet I did more than simply survive. I used wisdom to improve myself. Without realizing it, I was practicing the Grandfather Teaching of Wisdom. Despite everything I was experiencing, I excelled academically and often performed far beyond many of my peers. When classmates asked for

help, I offered it. Even while living through what I consider the worst period of my life, I continued to learn, grow, and support others.

Perhaps my greatest victory, however, was learning the teaching of Love.

I learned to love myself and the things that brought me joy. I discovered how to hold onto the activities, interests, and passions that gave me peace, even in the middle of difficult circumstances. I found reasons to keep moving forward when it would have been easier to give up.

When I was finally released from that environment of abuse and cruelty, I emerged stronger. By drawing on these teachings, even without knowing their names at the time, I was able to navigate the rough waters that defined so much of my childhood.

Now, years later, as a high school student who has been free from that situation for six years, I am only beginning to fully understand the power of the teachings I was unknowingly using during those moments when I thought I couldn't keep going.

This is my story of resilience. It is the story of how I survived by harnessing the strength of my own mind and the wisdom of the Grandfather Teachings, even before I understood what they truly meant.

Frequency X is the youth-powered section of Northern Threads Magazine—created by youth, for youth. It is a space where young people from across Northern Ontario can share their stories, perspectives, artwork, photography, opinions, and experiences with a wider audience. More than just a magazine section, Frequency X is a platform designed to amplify youth voices and celebrate the creativity, insight, and leadership that exists throughout the North.

Through Frequency X, contributors have the opportunity to develop their writing, communication, and creative skills while building confidence in themselves and their abilities. It is also a chance to connect with other youth across Northern Ontario, fostering meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging within a diverse and growing community. Whether you are an aspiring writer, artist, photographer, storyteller, or simply someone with something important to say, Frequency X welcomes your voice. If you are a youth interested in getting involved, please contact info@northernthreadsmagazine.ca to learn more about contributing and becoming part of this exciting initiative through our discord community.

