

Fall 2025



Manitoba
Municipal and Northern Relations



COMMUNITY

CONTACT

The Northern Affairs Newsletter



Waterhen Community Marks Orange Shirt Day

Fall Reflections: Community, Connections & Events

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Meet the New Deputy Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations



Maurice Bouvier

I am honoured to serve as the new Deputy Minister for Municipal and Northern Relations. Since joining the department on August 25, 2025, I have been grateful for the warm welcome from staff and the thoughtful insights shared by community leaders. These early conversations have deepened my appreciation for the important work taking place in the department and in Northern Affairs communities.

Before joining the department, I spent over 22 years in the public service, primarily with Manitoba Agriculture. During that time, I held several leadership roles, including Assistant Deputy Minister, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, and Director of Community, Cooperatives and Regional Development Initiatives. Prior to entering government, I began my career in municipal administration as the Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Arborg and later served in regional and community economic development leadership roles in the Interlake region and provincially for 11 years.

As Deputy Minister, my goal is to strengthen partnerships with northern and municipal community leadership, advance strategic initiatives that reflect government priorities, and support the delivery of programs and services that create lasting, positive impacts across the regions.

I am excited about the many great projects and initiatives already underway across the department. I look forward to working with you, learning from your expertise, understanding your local priorities, and visiting your communities to build meaningful relationships that support the growth and success of Northern Affairs communities.

COMMUNITY FEATURE

Waterhen Community Marks Orange Shirt Day



On Wednesday, October 1, 2025, the Waterhen Community Council hosted a heartfelt Orange Shirt Day event at the Waterhen Community Centre, drawing over 100 attendees. This was the first time the community held this event, made possible through the Orange Shirt Day Fund and a Manitoba Provincial Grant secured from the Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation Secretariat. The gathering brought together the mayor, council members, council staff, local residents, and representatives from surrounding communities in a powerful show of remembrance.

Orange Shirt Day, observed annually across Canada, honours Indigenous children who were sent to residential schools. It is a time for reflection, learning, and a shared commitment to truth and reconciliation. This event sought to raise awareness, honour survivors, acknowledge the legacy of residential schools, and create space for the community to come together in meaningful commemoration.



Waterhen resident singing and playing the hand drum



Turning Point Jrs. from Skownan First Nation Youth Drum Group

The evening opened with a warm welcome from the mayor, followed by a delicious catered meal. Attendees received complimentary merchandise, including t-shirts and *Every Child Matters* memorabilia. A local resident then offered a moving performance—singing and playing her hand drum which set a reflective tone for the night.

Community leaders delivered inspiring remarks, after which a youth drum group, the Turning Point Jrs. from Skownan First Nation, performed six songs. As they drummed and sang, community children showcased their pow wow dancing, celebrating the vibrancy and resilience of Indigenous culture.

This memorable evening underscored the importance of community-led initiatives that honour the legacy of Residential School Survivors and those who did not make it

home. Waterhen Community Council remains committed to fostering understanding, healing, and cultural pride, and looks forward to hosting future events that support reconciliation.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS EVENTS

Deputy Minister Townhall and Northern Affairs Staff Event September 16–17, 2025

Deputy Minister Townhall: Learning and Engagement



Deputy Minister Maurice Bouvier
addressing MNR Staff

On September 16, 2025, the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations hosted its annual Town Hall, bringing staff together for a day of engagement, learning, and collaboration.

The event was opened and emceed by Deputy Minister, Maurice Bouvier, with warm greetings from Minister Glen Simard. Attendees were then treated to the keynote session “Swim Sideways”, an interactive session led by David Falk of Facilitated Solutions. Falk shared practical strategies for navigating real-world challenges with creativity and resilience, sparking lively discussion among participants.

After a networking lunch, United Way presented on “Here for Community”, highlighting opportunities to support local initiatives. The day concluded with an insightful presentation on Generative Artificial Intelligence by MB Innovation and New Technologies, noting how AI can transform service delivery and innovation in government. Closing remarks expressed gratitude for staff’s hard work and reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to fostering collaboration and embracing new ideas.

Northern Affairs Staff Day: Strategy and Staff Recognition



On September 17, 2025, Northern Affairs staff from across the branch gathered at the Winnipeg Office (400–352 Donald Street) for a full-day meeting focused on strategic planning, program updates aligned with future priorities, and strengthening internal collaboration and team building.

The day opened with remarks from the Directors, the Assistant Deputy Minister, and the Deputy Minister, who acknowledged staff dedication and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration in supporting communities.



The afternoon focused on forward planning, beginning with an overview from Ayo Job on the Northern Affairs Branch Strategic Plan and Program Modernization plans. ADM Kevin McPike followed with a comprehensive presentation on Central Government and Northern Affairs Branch priorities followed by insights on community administration and governance from Stew Sabiston and Tracy Grexton. Additional updates included the 2025 Wildfire Debrief led by Kevin Popowich, with special recognition for staff who went above and beyond in supporting communities during the wildfire season, as well as program updates on the CSO and fire programs from Gabriel Peters. Together, these sessions reinforced shared goals around modernization, stronger community engagement, and enhanced service delivery.

After a short break, Paul Doolan and Kevin McPike recognised employees celebrating milestone years of service. Karon Chester then facilitated a light-hearted Bingo session to build camaraderie and team spirit. The day concluded with a candid “Tell it as it is” feedback session focused on communication, followed by closing remarks from Paul Doolan, who thanked staff and reaffirmed the branch’s commitment to continuous improvement and community-focused service.

Paul Doolan and Kevin McPike recognising employees celebrating milestone years of service



Paul Doolan - 20 years



Antonella Buccini - 20 years



Robert Barbeau - 20 years



Ron Bruneau - 15 years



Bonny Dumas - 10 years

Not pictured:
John Musyoka - 5 years
Narpinder Rehallu - 5 years



NORTHERN AFFAIRS EVENTS

Highlights from the 2025 Northern Affairs CAO Workshop



Left to Right – Northern Affairs Community CAOs: Keith Seymour, Lloyd Flett (behind), Darlene Beck (wearing a rainbow scarf), Diane Trumbla, Louisa McCreery, Margaret Wastasecoot (in front, not facing the camera), Bonny Johanneson (long blond hair, in back), Lydia Rawluk (short blond hair, front), Lorri Monkman (long hair, back), Gail Wynne (big smile), Greg Wood (hat worn backwards), Sam Sharma, Shannon Yetman (orange shirt), and in front on the right is Cole Matheson.

On October 7–8, 2025, Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) from across Manitoba's Northern Affairs communities gathered at the Birchwood Inn in Winnipeg for the annual Northern Affairs CAO Workshop. Hosted by the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations, the two-day event offered a dynamic mix of learning, collaboration, and networking opportunities designed to support CAOs in their leadership roles.

Day 1: Strengthening Preparedness and Collaboration

The workshop kicked off with opening remarks from the Master of Ceremonies, Jessica Drakul and the Management Team, setting the tone for two days of engagement and professional development.

The morning sessions focused on emergency management, with Kevin Popowich and Gabriel Peters leading a comprehensive discussion on Emergency Planning and Preparedness. Their presentation emphasized the importance of proactive strategies and community readiness.



Ulf Kristiansson provided insights into Business Continuity Planning, highlighting tools and approaches to maintain essential services during disruptions. The morning concluded with a Community Management Plan Engagement Session led by Bonny Dumas and Tracy Grexton, fostering dialogue around community planning and development.

After lunch, CAOs participated in a lively Speed Mentoring session with Regional Staff, exchanging ideas and best practices. The afternoon continued with a session on Infrastructure and Safety Audits, led by Darren Nicklin and Devin Jagassar, which offered practical guidance on maintaining safe and sustainable community assets. The day wrapped up with a team-building activity and a Crown Lot Sale update presented by Beth Ladyka, providing valuable insights into land management and development opportunities.



CAOs engaged in various team-building activities at the workshop

Day 2: Policy, Funding, and Skills Development

Day two began with a warm welcome from the Management Team, followed by a Policy Update Overview from Donna Sitko, who outlined recent changes and upcoming initiatives impacting Northern Affairs communities. After a short wellness break, OJ Sabiston (Regional Recreation Director) led a session on Grants and Proposal Writing, equipping CAOs with strategies to secure funding for local projects. Jaime Bertrand provided a Workplace Safety and Health Update, and Stew Sabiston and Ayo Job shared the latest on Funding Delivery, ensuring communities are well-informed about available resources.

The afternoon featured another round of CAO Speed Mentoring, reinforcing connections and peer support. Gabriel Peters and Narpinder Rehallu then presented a Fire Program Review, followed by Engagement Updates from Jessica Drakul, highlighting ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with communities. The workshop concluded with a hands-on Excel Basic Training session led by Ulf Kristiansson, aimed at enhancing CAOs' data management and reporting capabilities.

The 2025 CAO Workshop was a valuable opportunity for learning, collaboration, and community building. CAOs return to their communities with new tools, insights, and connections to support their work. The Northern Affairs team looks forward to continuing this momentum at next year's workshop to continue supporting CAOs in their critical roles.

Northern Affairs Hosts 2025 Public Works Employee Workshop

Strengthening Infrastructure and Capacity in Northern Affairs Communities



Northern Affairs Public Works Employees and Northern Affairs staff at the Landmark Water Treatment Plant, RM of Tache

From November 4–6, 2025, Northern Affairs Branch, hosted the 2025 Public Works Employee (PWE) Workshop. Held over three days, the workshop brought together public works employees, community representatives, and technical experts to build capacity, share knowledge, and strengthen infrastructure management across Northern Affairs communities.



Day 1: Hands-On Learning and Technical Training:

the first day opened with remarks and scenario-based discussions on common PWE challenges. Participants engaged in sessions on infrastructure audits, safety manual updates, and emergency reporting protocols led by the Office of Drinking Water. The highlight of the day was the plumbing training delivered by Red River College, offering practical instruction tailored to resolve plumbing issues in Northern communities. The evening concluded with a networking dinner and bowling at Westwood Lanes.

Day 2: Field Visits and Operational Insights: The second day featured a site visit to the community of Landmark, where participants met with water treatment plant operators and public works employees from the RM of Tache. Guided by RM of Tache staff, NAB PWEs toured the water treatment plant and gained firsthand insight into new treatment technologies, as well as operations and maintenance best practices.



L-R: Jaime Bertrand delivering a presentation on Workplace Safety, participants on a field trip to the community of Landmark



Bowling at Westwood Lanes

Day 3: Safety and Equipment Training: the final day was a half day, the sessions focused on chainsaw safety, an essential skill for northern public works teams managing seasonal hazards and emergency response.

The workshop concluded with remarks from Paul Doolan, Executive Director of Northern Affairs who emphasized a shared commitment to continued learning and collaboration. Northern Affairs remains dedicated to practical training, peer learning, and infrastructure investment. Participants left with new skills and stronger networks. Northern Affairs thanks all participants for their engagement and looks forward to welcoming communities back for next year's PWE Workshop.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS UPDATES



CSO Program Review

The Community Safety Officer Program Review was completed in early November 2026. A report with recommendations was produced and is being reviewed by Municipal and Northern Relations leadership. The branch looks forward to continue to work with Northern Affairs communities to ensure safety is prioritised.



Community Management Plans & Third-Quarter Funding

Friendly reminder that Community Management Plans (CMP) are due January 31, 2026. To release community third-quarter funding, kindly submit the 2024–25 audit, community inventory updates, first (April – June) and second (July–September) quarterly financial statements and a copy of the bank portfolio statement to your Regional Office. Community Management Plans (CMP) are due on January 31, 2026.

REMINDERS

November Is Indigenous Disability Awareness Month

Manitoba recognizes each November as Indigenous Disability Awareness Month (IDAM) – a time to honour the strength, resilience, and contributions of Indigenous Peoples with disabilities.

Dec. 2 @ 1:30pm
Community Townhall (Teams Call)

Municipal Calendar:

https://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/northern/pubs/na_manual/financial/appendix_f2-a.pdf

Dec. 25, 26

Christmas Day, Boxing Day ½ Day – STAT Holiday

Jan 6 @ 1:30pm

Community Townhall (Teams Call)

Jan. 1

New Year's Day – STAT Holiday

NORTHERN AFFAIRS STAFF PROFILE



Karon Chester - Manager, Cottage Program (CAMP)

We are pleased to announce Karon Chester as the Manager of the Northern Affairs Branch Cottage Program. Karon has been acting in the role since June 2025, leading the Cottage Administration Modernization Project (CAMP) and supporting cottage subdivisions across northern Manitoba.

Prior to becoming manager, Karon was the Senior Program and Policy Analyst of the Cottage Program. Karon's brings strong previous experience including leading and coordinating impactful programs across various Manitoba government departments to add value to internal and external

stakeholders. Karon also contributes to the public service community as Co-Chair of the Manitoba Black Employees Resource Group (MBERG) and through various volunteer roles. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours), a Certificate in Adult Education, is a Certified Career Coach, and is currently completing the Certificate in Public Sector Management. During her free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends.



Manish Dixit, Senior Program and Policy Analyst

We are happy to welcome Manish Dixit as the new Senior Program and Policy Analyst for the Northern Affairs Branch Cottage Program.

Manish joins us after completing the Manitoba government's Leaders in Training Program, where he gained experience through rotations with Treasury Board Secretariat, Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care, and Municipal and Northern Relations (Northern Affairs Branch).

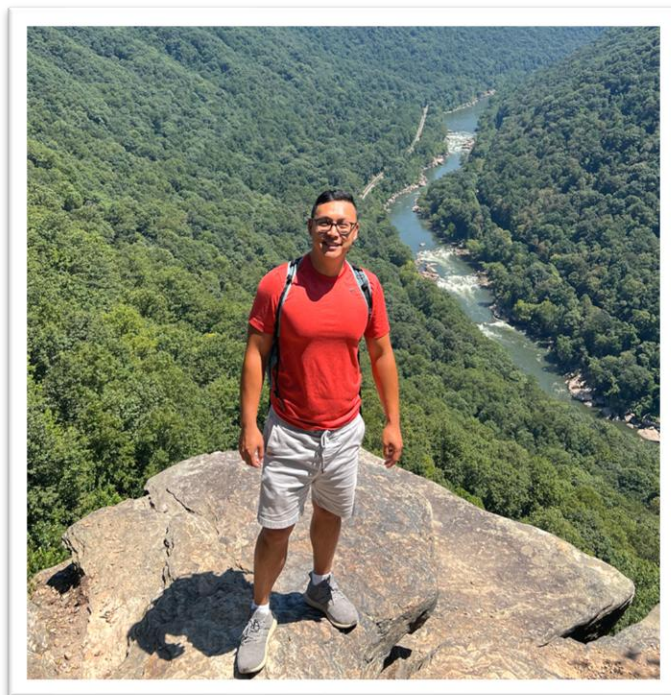
He holds an MBA in Leadership and Supply Chain Management from the Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba, and is certified as a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt

in business systems optimization. Manish also serves as a Director with the Institute of Public Administration of Canada – Manitoba Chapter.

In his new role, Manish looks forward to contributing to policy and program development and leading strategic initiatives, including the Cottage Administration Modernization Project (CAMP) to support cottage subdivisions and communities in northern Manitoba.

Outside of work, Manish enjoys spending time with family, enjoys conversations about world issues and has a passion for cars and bikes.

NORTHERN AFFAIRS STAFF PROFILE

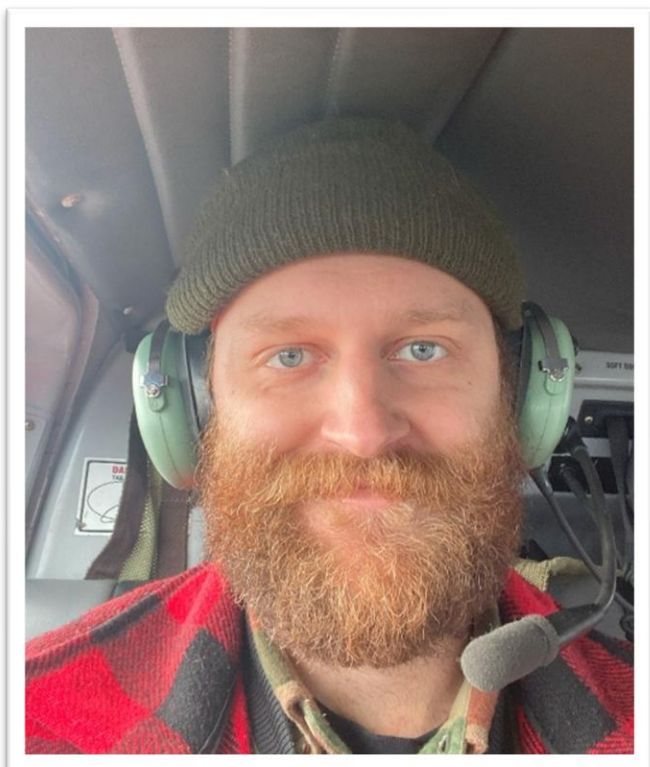


Justin Tsang – Infrastructure Analyst

We are excited to introduce Justin Tsang, who has joined the Northern Affairs Branch as our new Infrastructure Analyst within Asset Management and Community Grants Services.

Justin comes from Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure, where he supported public engagement and communications for the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels project and helped administer the Indigenous Economic Development Fund.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts and is completing his Master of Public Administration at the University of Manitoba. Outside of work, Justin enjoys being in the outdoors: fishing, hiking Manitoba's beautiful landscapes, and spending time with family and friends.



Gabriel Peters – Protective Services Consultant

We are thrilled to share that Gabriel Peters joined the Northern Affairs Branch as a Protective Services Consultant, leading Northern Affairs' fire and public safety programs.

He previously served as Operations Manager for Emergency Management in Manitoba and Nunavut with the Canadian Red Cross, overseeing teams responding to small- and large-scale emergencies.

During the 2025 Manitoba Wildfire Response Gabriel held multiple roles, which included managing emergency shelters and leading the field operations teams. Gabriel holds a Bachelor of Arts in Geography from the University of Winnipeg. Outside of work, he enjoys outdoor activities, cooking, and spending time with his family.



L-R: Stew Sabiston - North Central Director, Ayo Job - POS Unit Director, Tracy Grexton - Northern Director, Paul Doolan, Executive Director

As the year comes to a close, we want to take a moment to thank all Northern Affairs community councils, staff, and partners for your dedication and hard work throughout 2025.

This year brought steady progress across Northern Affairs communities through local initiatives and collaborative efforts that strengthened services and support for residents. We increased staffing capacity, sustained funding to support municipal services, advanced program reviews, strengthened local governance, conducted meaningful engagement with communities on key changes that impact their future state, and delivered training to build skills and increase team capacity. We also deepened collaboration with key partners such as the Northern Association of Community Councils (NACC). Looking ahead, we remain committed to building on these achievements together.

On behalf of the Northern Affairs Branch and the Department of Municipal and Northern Relations, we wish you and your families a joyful holiday season and a healthy, peaceful New Year.

Warm regards,

Stew, Ayo, Tracy and Paul.





DID YOU KNOW?



Here's a fun fact about Northern Affairs communities in Manitoba:

Before it was called Thicket Portage, this community was known as Franklin Portage—named after the famous Franklin Expedition! The area was a key travel route connecting the Nelson River to Wintering Lake, making it an important stop in early exploration and fur trade routes.



Alero Tenumah, Editor

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Community Contact is your quarterly newsletter, sharing updates from Northern Affairs Branch and stories from Northern Affairs communities. We hope you enjoyed this issue and invite you to help shape the next one! Have ideas or questions? We'd love to hear from you.

We acknowledge that Manitoba is located on the Treaty Territories and ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewak, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk Nations, the ancestral lands of the Inuit, and the homeland of the Red River Métis.