



BMIC announces plans for new retail and housing development on Lakeshore Drive

BAY MILLS — As Bay Mills Indian Community moves forward with plans to revitalize the area where King’s Club Casino once operated, a new retail space will accompany nine second-floor apartments in the mixed-use facility.

The former casino/tribal administration building, located on Lakeshore Drive, will be tentatively be demolished this spring.

The former tribal administration building is the oldest building left standing in BMIC and was the first construction project undertaken by the tribe to expand governmental services. Throughout the years, the building has been expanded upon to house more services. At one time, the building was home to nearly all of Bay Mills tribal government — gaming took place on one side, governing on the other. BMIC still holds the claim to being the first tribal nation in the U.S. to operate a gaming facility with slots and table games in the administration building.

“This project will honor our history and provide for our future. King’s Club gave BMIC the foundation to build upon, and for that we are thankful,” said BMIC President Whitney Gravelle. “With the input and vision of our General Tribal Council and membership, through open dialogue and thoughtful discussion, our community voiced the need for both housing and economic opportunities. By moving forward with this plan, we are honoring that guidance and creating a development that blends retail and residential spaces to revitalize this important area for future generations.”

The price tag for the project is estimated at \$5.5 million, with \$2 million from Indian Community Development Block Grant funds. BMIC will utilize \$3.25



million in General Fund dollars, and the USDA Rural Development Grant will allocate \$300k toward the project.

Engineering plans for the site will be finalized this winter, with bids to be accepted in the spring.

“This development marks an exciting milestone as the first mixed-use facility in BMIC. By combining apartments with vibrant retail spaces, we’re not just creating a place to live, but a community space where people can work, shop, and enjoy the waterfront,” said BMIC Planning Manager Brianna Gunka.

New boat/kayak launch to take shape thanks to grant monies

BAY MILLS — Bay Mills Indian Community will kick off another infrastructure project this summer, this time utilizing grant funds from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust. BMIC has received \$125k to develop a permanent boat launch and seasonal dock/kayak launch along Lake Superior, near Bay Mills Township Hall.

These access site improvements will allow for additional tribal fishing crews to utilize the waterway, as well as the general public.

The nearest alternative launches are seven miles away, making it difficult for local and visiting anglers to access Lake Superior efficiently. The current site is undeveloped, which limits the types of boats that can be launched and poses safety risks for those attempting to use it. Developing this site will provide a much-needed safe harbor, particularly for anglers who would otherwise have to navigate around Bay Mills Point, a potentially hazardous journey in adverse weather conditions.

“This project is a significant step forward in ensuring safe and equitable access to Lake Superior for our tribal fishing crews and the broader commu-

nity. It reflects our commitment to balancing economic development with sustainable resource use while honoring our cultural traditions – especially one as important as our treaty fishing right,” said BMIC President Whitney Gravelle. “By improving this access site, we are not only supporting local community members but also enhancing safety and fostering a connection to the water that has always been central to our way of life. We are grateful for the Great Lakes Fishery Trust’s support in helping us achieve this vision.”

BMIC will be responsible for maintaining the site, ensuring that the facilities remain safe and functional for at least the next 20 years. The tribe will provide regular maintenance of the boat launch and pathways, as well as complete safety inspections. The project will include clear signage outlining user regulations and safety guidelines, helping to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors.

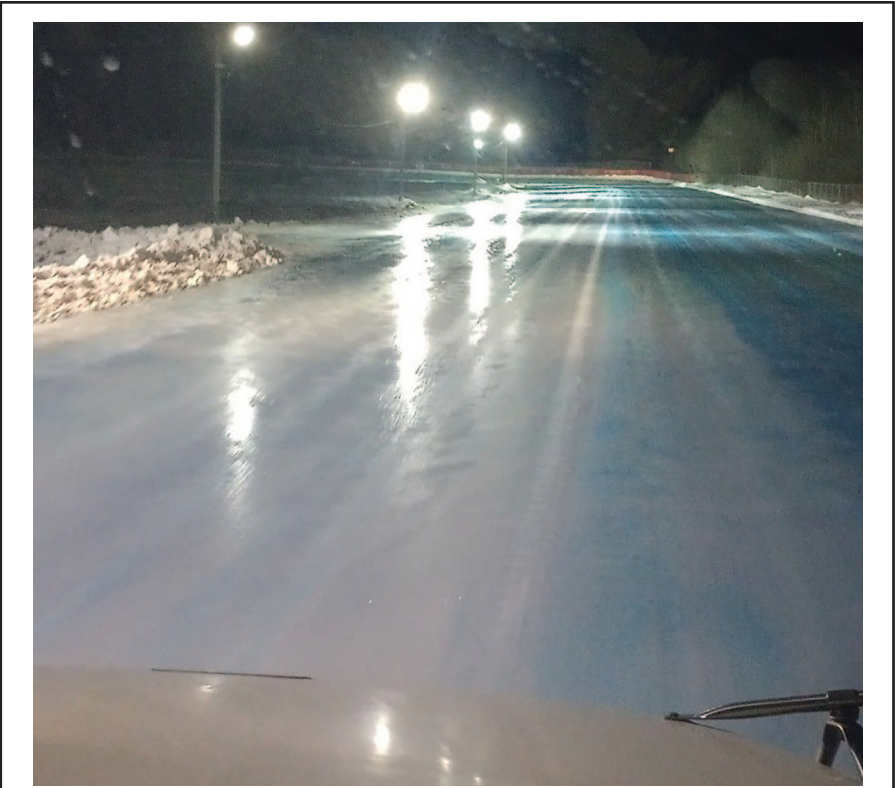
The site is under the purview of the Chippewa County Road Commission, who are supportive of the project.

“Chippewa County Road Commis-

sion is excited to continue our valued partnership with BMIC through this project within our right-of-way. We look forward to the project begin-

ning,” said Stephanie Boileau, county highway engineer.

The project will be completed by September 2025.



RACE READY — The ice is being made at the Soo I-500 track for the 56th annual race, scheduled to take place on Saturday, Feb. 1. View the full race week schedule of events on page 12.

Photo by track volunteer Kevin Pavlat

Executive Council discusses business at regular meeting

Jan. 13 Regular Meeting Reports

President Whitney Gravelle

— First GTC of 2025 is this week. Several items are on the agenda, including the blight survey, King’s Club redevelopment, Child Advocacy Center presentation, and enhanced tribal ID cards.

— Follow up meeting held with social services and BMPD about the need for foster homes in the community. Foster home shortage is going on throughout the state.

— Tourism and Recreation planning meeting was held. New tourism specialist is on board. He put together a strategy. Working on content creation.

— Legal meeting held.

— Joining Draft Kings tribal leader panel. Will meet next month.

— Line 5 work is ongoing.

Tribal Manager Rachel Lyons

— Working on procurement training, hope to host in the coming weeks.

— The lighthouse is working on getting a snowshoe trail.

— Health Center is finalizing a contract for traditional healer.

— Cultural Director position is posted.

— Survey work is set to begin on Tower Road and Lakeshore Drive.

— Grants is working to replace lightbulbs in parking lots with LED bulbs.

— Plans to revive the Whitefish Festival are in the beginning stages.

— IT has started move in to new office.

— One tenant has moved into professional housing. Two houses will be ready at the end of January. The others will be ready at the end of February.

— Working to make sure Riverview Campground is open by Memorial Day Weekend.

— Kings Club redevelopment has four quotes for demolition.

Chief Financial Officer Crystal Wilcox

— Working on 2023 audit.

— 2025 budgets have been completed and approved. Loading into the system in the coming weeks.

— Working on policy reviews. Updating and changing items as needed. These will come to council in the coming weeks.

— Posting accounting jobs.

— Attended several meetings.

Health Director Lucy DeWildt

— Provider housing is on the agenda for the 2025 application. We hope to get a few more funded this year. RFP is out for current projects.

— Furniture has been ordered for recovery center.

— Facility inventory is complete.

— A little short staffed for the next 12 weeks as some employees are going on maternity leave.

— HRSA site visit will take place in March. They are a big funder of the health center.

— Employee satisfaction survey will close on Jan. 15.

— Attended Michigan Tribal Health Director’s meeting that is held quarterly.

Human Resources Director Philip Espinoza (submitted written)

— Working on data issue between AFLAC and Colonial.

— HR met with legal for a regular check-in.

— Working on processes.

— Kronos is not working on accruals correctly. They are being audited manually.

Bay Mills Gaming Authority Richard LeBlanc

— Snow is helping to fuel business at the casino and hotel.

— Working on marketing for 2025.

— Attended several meetings, including expansion meetings and management meetings.

Bay Mills Business Holdings

Glen Philpot, NLCC

— Working on new strains.

— Retail has been slow.

— External audit went well.

New Business

1. Resolution No. 25-01-13A: Approving Tribal Prosecutor Contract w/ Jennifer Obreiter. Renew up to 2029. Approved.

2. Resolution No. 25-01-13B: Approval of Consent to Suit Terms in Services Agreement with Fishbeck - Road Safety Audit for Pedestrian Facilities in BMIC Residential Areas. Approved.

3. Resolution No. 25-01-13C: Approval to Submit BMIC Safe Route to School Project. Approved.

4. Resolution No. 25-01-13D: Approval to Submit IHS Staff Quarters FY25. Five new IHS homes. Approved.

5. Resolution No. 25-01-13E: Acceptance of Together Raising Awareness for Indian Life - \$25,000. Approved.

6. Resolution No. 24-01-13F: Waiver of Sovereign Immunity – Alpena Buick, GMC. Approved.

7. Resolution No. 24-01-13G: Support and Approval to Submit Application for the FY25 Noxious Weed Management Project.

8. Approval to Submit Grant Applications: Approved.

a. Great Lakes EJ Thriving Communities Grant Program – Tier 1 - \$150,000

b. Great Lakes EJ Thriving Communities Grant Program – Tier 3 - \$350,000

c. EPA Clean Air Act – Tribal Air - \$87,000

d. GLRI Tribal Capacity Projects - \$232,000.

e. Tribal Justice Support Program - \$145,000

9. Acceptance of Grant Funds:

a. Frontline Justice Award - \$150,000. Approved.

b. MI Department of Education Out-of-School Time - \$150,000. No match. Approved.

10. Contract Approval for Mackinac Environmental Technology Inc. - Silver Dome Clean-up. Approved.

11. Approval of the BMIC Contract Review and Approval Policy. Approved.

12. Raffle License – 25-001: Boys and Girls Club Teen Programming. Approved.

13. Raffle License – 25-002: Bay Mills Community College Annual Spring Round Dance. Approved.

14. Donation Requests: Sponsorship of Brimley Robotics Deceivers.

15. Reaffirmation of Poll Votes: Approved.

a. Approval to Submit for a State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program

b. Approval of Memo on FRF Final Budget Allocations

c. Emergency Medical Donation



GLIFWC's 2025 Summer Internship Program
is now accepting applications!

Internship Opportunities:
Administrative
Biological Services
Division of Intergovernmental Affairs
Enforcement
Public Information Office

10 Week Internships
\$15 per hour
400 Hours total
*Housing may be available

Position descriptions and how to apply can be found on GLIFWC's website

Visit the GLIFWC website for more information
www.glifwc.org
 "News & Upcoming Events" Section, Employment Tab

Looking back at the accomplishments of 2024

By Whitney Gravelle
Bay Mills President

Mino Oshki Biboon! Happy New Year to all of our family, friends, employees, elders, youth, and community members on behalf of Bay Mills Indian Community.

We've accomplished many great things and celebrated steps that will continue to provide for future generations and provide for the future prosperity of Bay Mills Indian Community. Today, I would like to celebrate the progress we have made together this year for our Tribal Nation:

- Hosted the First Lady and Second Gentlemen, welcoming them to Gnoozhekaaning and sharing our culture, language, and history with the White House.
- Completed the Zagigi Clinic, expanding Bay Mills Health Center services into Brimley Area Schools to provide critical medical and behavioral health services to students and staff in Brimley, Mich.
- Helped with the repatriation of four birch bark scrolls back to our Tribal Nation after being taken from Michigan more than a century ago.
- Established the Mashkawizii Child Advocacy Center, to assist children and families; and to improve the investigation, prosecution, and handling of child abuse particularly cases of child sexual abuse by establishing a local child advocacy center for trained professionals to conduct forensic interviews.
- Placed \$2,000,000 into the Elder's Trust Fund and Long-Term Investment Fund, ensuring they continue to serve as pillars of support for our tribal elders and citizens.
- Started development of the Community Recovery Center, a safe place for individuals to gather in sobriety and culture so that they may walk the red road and live the good life.
- Celebrated 40 years of education with Bay Mills Community College. Throughout history, BMCC has stood as a beacon of educational attainment and cultural revitalization, shaping the lives of countless individuals and uplifting our community - young and old.
- Completed and installed 12 new homes in the Plantation Hills Housing Development, 5 new homes in Spectacle Village for Professionals, and 1 home on West Lakeshore Drive to expand housing stock and to provide accessible and affordable lifestyles for our tribal citizens to live within their Tribal Nation.
- Completed paving of outstanding roads on Memorial Drive, Loons Lane, and South Little Bear Trail Circle.
- Received \$17,300,000 from the Environment and Protect Agency to launch a community solar array that will offset Bay Mills Indian Community's energy consumption.
- Celebrated Assistant Secretary Bryan Newland's work on the release of the Department of Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, securing an apology from the United States for the atrocities committed by the Boarding School Era, and the establishment of the

new national monument at the Carlisle Federal Indian Boarding School.

- Developed the Youth Development Fund Program, to support our tribal youth in participating in cultural, recreational, and educational activities.
- Revised the Tax Agreement Area of Bay Mills Indian Community expanding the agreement area into other locations where our tribal citizens live throughout Chippewa County.
- Received \$3,000,000 from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to build eight additional homes on Spectacle Lake in our Elders Complex.
- Supported reading by installing little libraries throughout Bay Mills to share adventures, and tell stories through the joy of reading at Memorial Park, Turtle Park / Tot Lot, Riverview, Four Seasons, Mukwa Health & Fitness, and the Bay Mills Health Center.
- Raised the final beam on the Bay Mills Resort & Casino Expansion project, signaling good luck for a future project that will provide economic prosperity for future generations.
- Invested \$1,000,000 into our employees across our enterprise and governmental operations by expanding paid paternity and maternity leave benefits.
- Enhanced our Employee Policies and Procedures with the enactment of the Two-Spirit Policy & Harassment Policy that reflect the values of Bay Mills Indian Community.
- Created two Rain Gardens at the Elder Complex and Bay Mills Health Center. Planted with grasses and flowering perennials, rain gardens are a beautiful way to reduce runoff, help filter out pollutants, and provide food and shelter for butterflies, song birds and other wildlife.
- Took several outstanding parcels into trust on M-221, which includes over 180 acres and acquired more land holdings for Bay Mills.
- Cleaned up several historical dump sites and brownfields on Bay Mills Indian Community's land, removing more than 100,000 pounds of trash and debris.
- Took down several abandoned buildings at Passmores and Chippewa Landing.
- Was awarded a generous grant from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community to construct a Firekeeper's Lodge. To preserve our most sacred tradition of firekeeping.
- Completed construction on key governmental buildings including the New Tribal Governance Center, Justice Center, and Commodities Building.
- Received approval from the Bureau of Indian Affairs on changes to our Land & Leasing Ordinance pursuant to the HEARTH Act, previously approved by the General Tribal Council, which will allow Bay Mills to streamline leases and increase sovereign control over the issuance of leases.
- Received the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation for outstanding historic preservation achievement at the

Gnoozhekaaning Museum - Point Iroquois Lighthouse.

- Hosted a screening of "Bad River - A Story of Defiance" in partnership with Lake Superior State University Arts Center.
- Created a community signage plan, and began developing improved wayfinding signage across our Tribal Nation.
- Finished the Boys & Girls Club of Bay Mills expansion to provide more space for tribal youth.
- Increased tribal citizen input through strategic survey implementation for various initiatives, including outdoor recreation, blight, and governmental operations.
- Celebrated the launch of the first Community Birch Bark Jiimaan and Dugout Canoe where participants learned the history of canoe making.
- Completed the fourth annual Wild Rice Seeding program throughout Spectacle Lake, the Waishkey River, and the Back Bay to promote traditional foods and food sovereignty.
- Hosted the second Manoomin / Wild Ricing Camp bringing back traditional ricing teachings to our community.
- Strengthened cultural programming and teachings through the implementation of community workshops for tribal citizens.
- Made major infrastructure improvements to our enterprise operations at Bay Mills Resort & Casino, Four Seasons, Bay Mart, and Northern Light Cannabis Company.

Chi miigwetch - thank you - to everyone that was involved in these accomplishments, to everyone that believed in us, and to everyone that supported us. It is only by working together that we can build the future we want to see for our Tribal Nation. None of this would be possible without you - and for that I am immensely grateful.

In addition to all the other projects taking place, we will also be working to undertake the items discussed at the General Tribal Council meeting in January, whereby the GTC provided feedback on the Kings Club Redevelopment Plan, review of the Blight & Abandoned Lots Survey, and a conversation about pursuit of Tribal Enhanced ID Cards. The Blight & Abandoned Lot Survey was our most participated survey with over 200 responses, and a summary was provided at the GTC. In addition, other updates provided included that The Legal Department and I have been stalled for months in our negotiation meetings with the Cannabis Regulatory Agency to discuss the status of a Cannabis Compact with Bay Mills Indian Community. At the end of December, we had a side meeting with CRA and the Governor's Tribal Liaison as an attempt to get these back on track. We are still prepping NLCC for entry into METRC, updating their standard operating procedures, forms, and regulations as it will only be a matter of time before they are in METRC. The Legal Department continues to work on language as well for the Michigan Department of Treasury as it relates to taxation on marijuana products.

Another update is regarding the litigation

involving the Great Lakes Fishing Decree.

As you may recall, on August 24th the Western District Court ordered effective the 2023 Great Lakes Fishing Decree. The judge overruled all of the objections from the amici sports groups and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and the Amici / Sports Groups filed to appeal the Great Lakes Fishing Decree on October 16th. An inter-tribal brief was submitted on February 20th responding to the sports groups / amici on their appeal of the Great Lakes Fishing Decree. On April 3, 2024 the Sault Tribe also filed their brief on appeal, and our response to Sault Tribe's appeal was filed on May 31st.

The Legal Department and I attended the oral arguments for the appeals against the Great Lakes Fishing Decree last week before the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals. In the Sault Tribe's appeal, the panel was skeptical of why Sault was asking for a departure from the law of the case, and seemed to generally accept the proposition that the district court was required to use its powers in equity to enter the Decree. The panel also asked Sault Tribe questions about why they had not forfeited their argument that the Decree operated as an injunction, and asked Sault what prejudice they suffered as a result of their purely procedural arguments. In the CPMR appeal, the judges kicked off the argument by noting that the panel was particularly interested in questions of jurisdiction. The panel asked CPMR tough questions about why it should be able to appeal as a nonparty when, according to Judge McKeague, the court had directed CPMR to move to intervene.

You can view the new Decree and Regulations by visiting the Bay Mills website or the CORA website. Bay Mills Biological Services Department will also be hosting office hours to assist treaty fishers with the new electronic reporting system. You can set an account up by visiting <https://corafish.org/> or contacting Paul Ripple at pripple@baymills.org or 906-248-8649.

Bay Mills Indian Community has undergone rapid growth in the last several years, from infrastructure to services improvements. We appreciate everyone's patience as we have handled an overwhelming number of projects. In the coming year, the Executive Council will continue to work on expanding services provided by tribal government, improve our business operations, and provide greater benefits for our employees. Our teams continue to work to find solutions to improving child care services, engaging in energy and broadband opportunities, treaty resource conservation, and updates to tribal laws.

Please check out our tribal website or the official Tribal Chairperson Facebook Page for regular updates about what is going on here at Bay Mills. Please don't hesitate to call, email, or stop by for a visit to share your thoughts, questions, and concerns with me.

OPINION

The simple joy of snow

By Tom Purcell

I love the snow.
I love how it forces us to slow down and take pause.
I especially love how a good snowfall puts Washington, D.C. into panic mode, as it has again this week, causing federal office buildings to shut down.
I lived in the D.C. region for about eight years and the response to snow in the nation's capital was way different from how it is in places like Pittsburgh.
You see, Washington, D.C. is full of self-appointed experts who are eager to tell the rest of us how to live.
These uber-smart people can't stop meddling with our appliances, furnaces, air conditioners and water heaters — they keep driving up the cost of every one of them with their never-ending mandates.
But when a few flakes of snow fall on the ground, they fall to pieces.
That's because they lack the common sense of people from the Midwest — what they refer to as "Flyover Country."
And so it is that the same people who tell us that toilet paper and bottled water are ruining the environment flock to supermarkets to hoard toilet paper and bottled water.
Washingtonians aren't used to having to deal with reality.
In Washington, a lobbyist can make a fine living by spewing out bogus numbers and arguments to convince policymakers to write laws that favor the organizations he represents.
Our government doesn't care much for reality, either. If it needs more money, it just prints more.
When our lawmakers gave us an ethanol-subsidies program that screwed up our corn market and drove up food costs, were there consequences?
Nope, just a couple of shoulder shrugs and some comments about their intentions being good.
Outside of Washington, D.C., however, people have no choice but to live in reality.
When record snows fall in the heartland of America, a person's first instinct is to do what he must to keep the snow from affecting his family's wellbeing.
We Pittsburghers know we can't control the cold and snow, but we can control how we respond to them. And we respond with joy.
Our kids immediately appear atop the steepest hills with a variety of sledding devices, then spend many hours letting nature whip them down the slope.
Our grownups happily abandon their typical routines to clear the driveways of our elderly neighbors or bring them a pot of soup.
Then we clear our sidewalks and driveways so the postal carrier or Amazon driver doesn't fall.



We are invigorated by the crisp air and a good sweat. We rarely miss the opportunity to engage in snowball contests, no matter our age.
We do this because the snow brings out the best in us.
As I write this column, my entire yard, and all of the woods that surround it, are coated with a thick layer of snow.
My four-year-old labrador, Thurber, is happy to go outside and play on any occasion, but there is something about the snow that brings out even more joy in him — an infectious joy that makes me laugh out loud.
And since I planned ahead for the realities of winter — my snowblower is tuned and my 4x4 Toyota truck eats snow-covered roads for lunch — I haven't a worry in the world.
Now if you'll excuse me, it's time for this snow-loving Midwesterner to go outside and toss my dog his favorite ball!
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Talk of the U.S. taking Greenland leaves me cold

By Christine Flowers

Right after graduating from high school, my father enlisted in the Army. He had no idea they would be sending him to the other end of the world, a place where there were six months of darkness and six months of midnight sun.
Teddy Flowers — an 18-year-old Philly boy with an obsession for scrap-ple and the dulcet sounds of rhythm and blues, this kid who played the harmonica on his front step and smoked Marlboros while still in his altar boy cassock — found himself communing with Eskimos.
At least, that's what he wrote to my mother, his sweetheart of a year, the woman he would eventually marry. I'm not sure that the inhabitants of Greenland were actually Eskimos, but I do know that they were as foreign to him as this street kid from 49th street was to them.
This was back in 1957, a few years after Greenland became part of Denmark. I remember as a child thinking that it was kind of strange that this giant piece of ice and snow was owned by that tiny little peninsula north of Germany.
I also remember thinking, as most of us have, that Greenland is a slab of ice, while Iceland has thermal baths. Geography has a strange sense of humor.
I haven't much thought about Greenland in the last 40 or so years of my life. But our incoming president

has somehow decided to make this remote and gargantuan chunk of ice the topic du jour.
In a recent press conference, he floated the idea of buying Greenland, even though to my knowledge it's not up for sale. He also intimated that if the Danes wouldn't fork it over, we might take it by force.
I thought I was watching stand up comedy when I saw that. Ha ha, force a country to give up land, ha ha, and if they don't want to, ha ha, let's just consider going all Sudetenland on them.
Many of my friends viewed it differently. They tried to explain to me that Trump was playing "3D" chess, meaning that he was so much smarter than we were and so just let him do his thing.
It's what Salena Zito has called the "People who hate Trump take him literally but not seriously, and those who love him take him seriously but not literally."
Since I neither love nor hate him, I guess that means I have to figure out my own way through this mess. And mess it is.
You don't suggest that a sovereign nation, like Canada, for example, can be annexed to the United States. Foreign policy involves treating your allies with at least as much respect, and hopefully much more, than your enemies.
I understand Denmark isn't exactly one of our go-to countries when we think of national security, but it's a

member of the European Union, and deserves not to be the victim of some diplomatic "Flip Your Real Estate" show.
There are also more important things to worry about, like cabinet nominees, the economy and the immigration crisis. After all, those were the things that Trump campaigned upon, not the fate of a giant ice cube.
But still, there are people who will insist that debating the fate of Greenland is a legitimate national security topic, even though we still have bases there and are in no danger of being evicted.
If my father were still alive, I'm certain he'd be as puzzled as I am about this whole dust-up.
This is the imaginary conversation I can hear him having with my mother as he was sitting in his frigid barracks back in 1957:
Teddy: It's really cold, Lou.
Lucy: I'm sorry honey. You'll be home soon.
Teddy: Not soon enough. It's an ice-box.

Lucy: I know! And they call it Greenland!
Teddy: The Danes have a wierd sense of humor.
Lucy: The Danes?
Teddy: Yeah, Denmark owns it.
Lucy: Well they can have it!
Teddy: You know it sweetheart. Only a fool would want to own a giant Icebox ... plus they speak this crazy language.
Lucy: Well honey maybe one day some visionary will ignore the principal of national borders and just annex it for the U.S. and they'll learn to speak English!
Teddy: Maybe one day Philadelphians will too.
My dad had a sense of humor. I suppose I'll have to have one too, from now on.
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Bay Mills News

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This publication is owned and operated by Bay Mills Indian Community.
Opinions expressed on this page are those of the relevant contributors.
The next deadline is Thursday, April 17 at 4 p.m.
Submissions may be emailed to: newspaper@baymills.org.

LSSU releases annual “Banished Words List”

SAULT STE. MARIE – A new year brings the promise of fresh beginnings, but it is also the perfect moment to reflect on the words and phrases that may have worn out their welcome. Lake Superior State University proudly reveals the 2025 edition of its Banished Words List, a quirky tradition that dates back to 1976, when former LSSU Public Relations Director Bill Rabe and his colleagues delighted word enthusiasts with the first “List of Words Banished from the Queen’s English for Mis-Use, Over-Use and General Uselessness”.

Each year, this lighthearted list shines a spotlight on words and terms that are overused, misused, or simply unnecessary. It offers a moment to laugh, pause, and consider how we can be more mindful of the language we use every day.

“Words matter! Old habits can be hard to break and we’re happy to serve as a resource for the court of public opinion on what should continue to be part of the English language and what needs to be put to rest,” said Lake Superior State President, Dr. David Travis.

LSSU received submissions from across the globe this year, including entries from Canada, Australia, Denmark, Germany, India, South Africa, and the United States. The fact that some of the same banished word suggestions came from different parts of the world underscores the universal struggle of dealing with challenging words and phrases.

Here are the 2025 words and phrases selected for banishment, along with the reasons they made the list:

* Cringe

While “cringe” once packed a punch, it has now overstayed its welcome. Overuse has dulled its impact, and ironically, using it might now cause the very reaction it describes. “Saying someone ‘caused you to cringe’ or stating that ‘you cringed at something’ is a pretty easy and proper way to use the word,” writes Ash from Newton, Alabama. “Hearing someone say ‘someone is so cringe’ makes me cringe!”

* Game Changer

How many times can a game change before it is no longer recognizable? This phrase, often used to describe anything remotely innovative, is as tired as a well-worn cliché. “Nothing is a game changer if everything is a game changer,” writes Patrick of Washington, DC.

* Era

Unless you are Taylor Swift, it might be time to leave “era” behind. The term’s overuse has made every fleeting moment feel like it demands a historical marker. Leah of Holland, Michigan submits, “Thanks to the name of Taylor Swift’s tour, now there is an ‘era’ for everyone and everything! ‘He’s in his fatherhood era,’ ‘She’s in her pottery-making era,’ etc., etc.. It’s overused and tiring.”

* Dropped



Once edgy and cool, “dropped” has become more of a letdown. Whether it is an album, a trend, or a product, this term has fallen flat. “Books, music, and all kinds of unnecessary things are currently being ‘dropped’ rather than introduced, released, or offered for sale. Banished for overuse, misuse, abuse, and hurting my head when all that “dropping” stuff lands on me!,” laments Susan of Littleton, CO.

* IYKYK (If You Know, You Know)

Internet slang and texting abbreviations are often fan-favorites of Banished Word submitters each year. Cryptic and exclusionary, this phrase offers little clarity or substance. If you know,

you might agree it is time to let this one go. Amy from Redford, MI feels this phrase should go for being both irritating and nonsensical.

* Sorry Not Sorry

A half-hearted apology masquerading as bold honesty, this phrase feels as disingenuous as it sounds. Banished Word enthusiasts recommend just saying what you mean or in at least one case showing a little kindness. Sabrina from Wrenshall, MN writes, “It is really tiring to hear, and it is giving people another reason to be jerks to one another.”

* Skibidi

This viral word may have resonated with a younger crowd, but for many it is just noise. Agatha from Denmark explains, “Nobody cares about a Skibidi toilet, Skibidi fizz, or Skibidi Ohio fanum tax. At this point, nobody even knows what it means and it just annoys people.”

* 100%

Is it possible to be over-enthusiastic about retiring the phrase “100%”? Absolutely! Its overuse has left no room for nuance or doubt. A phrase predominantly nominated for its overuse, some felt it was simply not applicable. “Since when should a percentage be used to describe your agreement in a conversation?” asked Stephen from Sudbury, Ontario.

* Utilize

A classic offender, “utilize” proves that longer is not always better. Why complicate things when “use” works just fine? Everett from Cumby, Texas encourages readers to “Write like you talk,” and added, “Lord, I hope you don’t talk like that.”

* Period

Yes, we understand your point—no need to verbally punctuate it. Overuse has turned this into a period we are ready to end. Theresa from Detroit, MI, recommends that we banish this word by putting it in a bottle and sending it out to sea.

As LSSU celebrates the 49th year of this playful tradition, the whimsical Banished Words List continues to highlight the dynamic nature of communication and how words and phrases strongly affect our everyday life.

To nominate a word or phrase for the 2026 Banished Words List, or to learn more about the tradition, visit lssu.edu/traditions/banishedwords.

Cloverland Electric announces director election petition process

SAULT STE. MARIE — Cloverland Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit electric utility owned and democratically controlled by the members it serves. As a member-owner, you have a voice in the co-op through the members you elect to serve on the board of directors. The service area is divided into three districts. Each district is represented by three directors elected by the members of that district to serve a three-year term.

Director candidates must meet the director qualifications outlined in Cloverland’s bylaws (available on cloverland.com) and file a petition for nomination with valid signatures of at least 25 members from his/her district.

For a petition and information packet, please leave a message at 906-632-5143. Nominating petitions and supporting documents must be electronically submitted or returned to the co-op’s administration office at 725 E. Portage Avenue in Sault Ste. Marie by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 28.

A business or other entity (association, corporation, partnership or governmental unit) must designate the representative authorized to cast a vote on behalf of the entity and file the designation on its letterhead with the cooperative by the date of record, March 28.

Ballots mail April 28, 2025 and voting ends May 30, 2025. Members can vote by mailed ballots or electronic voting. Director candidate information will be presented on Cloverland.com, Cloverland’s social media channels and the May/June Connections. Election results will be presented at the annual meeting of the members Thursday, June 5.

International Bridge Walk scheduled for June 2025

SAULT STE. MARIE — The International Bridge Administration, along with Chambers of Commerce of Sault Ste. Marie Michigan and Ontario, have announced the next International Bridge Walk for Saturday, June 28.

The 2024 walk, which had been slated for June 29, was cancelled due to inclement weather.

“We deeply regret the cancellation of the 2024 walk,” said International Bridge General Director Peter Petainen. “But with heavy rains and a number of thunderstorms in the area, we acted out of an abundance of caution to put the safety of participants first.”

Sault Michigan Chamber Director Tony Haller and Sault Ontario Interim CEO Don Mitchell expressed thanks to everyone who worked to prepare for the 2024 bridge walk.

“I want to say how impressed I was with the turnout for the bridge walk in spite of the inclement weather,” Mitchell said. “Thanks, everyone, and I hope to see you all next year at International Bridge Walk 2025.”

Planning is already under way for this year’s walk. To keep up on developments, check www.facebook.com/ssmbridgewalk.

“We’re looking forward to a bigger and better event next year,” Haller said.

American Mariner closes out Soo Locks shipping season

SAULT STE. MARIE — Just before 3 a.m. on Jan. 16, the American Mariner entered the approach for the Poe Lock carrying the final 26,163 tons of cargo wrapping up the 2024-25 Navigation Season. During the 10-month navigation season, ships carried about 68 million tons of cargo through the Soo Locks energizing the nation's economy. The locks will be closed through 12:01 a.m. March 25 to perform seasonal critical maintenance.

“Every year, the Corps of Engineers uses the non-navigation winter period to perform maintenance and keep the Soo Locks operating,” Maintenance Branch Chief Nicholas Pettit said. “The Soo Project Office team works long hours in extreme conditions to complete a significant amount of maintenance during this annual closure period. The work they perform is unique, especially given the harsh northern Michigan winter conditions they work in.”

The team will install a temporary panel bridge across the Poe Lock. This panel bridge will provide the ability to mobilize materials and equipment to the job sites throughout the winter closure. Soo Project Office maintenance crews will fabricate and replace anchorages on gate 3, commission the temporary dewatering system, fill in nonoperational ship arrestor recess on the downstream end, flush and clean the hydraulic systems for the rehabilitated ship arrestor systems, navigation button rehabilitation, remove underground storage tanks and repair the winter work bridge recesses. The Poe Lock will not be dewatered this year for the scheduled maintenance.

In addition to the above, crews also will perform a wide range of other maintenance tasks from replacement of pier fender timbers to inspections and preventative maintenance on electrical and mechanical systems on both the Poe and MacArthur Locks.

“The Soo Project team is well versed in planning and executing complex maintenance and repairs. The cold climate and physical site constraints add an intensity that requires strategic logistical planning and controls to ensure safety and success,” Soo Locks Operations Manager LeighAnn Ryckeghem said.

Contractors will be working on the Poe Lock upstream stop log recess repairs. Kokosing Industrial Inc. of Cheboygan, Michigan, was awarded the contract September 23, 2024, for \$2.7 million. This winter Kokosing will perform a full rehabilitation and repair of the upstream stop log recesses including removal of unsound concrete, repairs, installation of new concrete, steel corner protection and steel wall armor section. To complete this work, the contractor will install coffer cells and dewater the construction area to work on the recesses.

“Kokosing mobilized to the Soo Locks on Jan. 11 and are scheduled to complete all repairs by March 12,” said Contracting Officer’s Representative Alicia Krouth.

The Soo Locks currently have two operating locks: the Poe Lock, scheduled to reopen March 25, and the MacArthur Lock, scheduled to reopen in April.

More than 4,500 vessels, carrying up to 80 million tons of cargo, maneuver



through the locks annually. Iron ore, coal, wheat and limestone are among the most frequently carried commodities.

Opened in 1969, the Poe Lock is 1,200 feet long. The MacArthur Lock was opened in 1943 and is 800 feet long.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, maintains a navigation system of 81 harbors, including the Great Lakes Connecting Channels that join lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, St. Clair and Erie.

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Vaccinations urged as respiratory cases rise in Michigan

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services encourages Michigan residents to get vaccinated, as increases in flu, COVID-19 and RSV activity have been observed and are expected to continue.

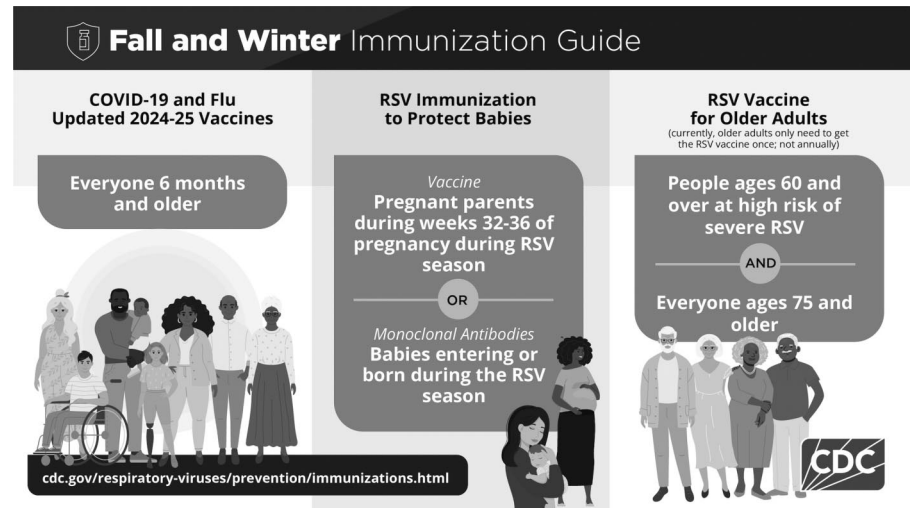
At the end of December, trends in respiratory illness reached the highest levels so far this season at both the national level (6.8% of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness) and in Michigan (4.5%). Michigan activity typically lags a few weeks behind the national trend, meaning the next few weeks are likely to see increasing local activity, especially as children return to school after the December holidays.

The majority of Michiganders are not up to date on the vaccinations that protect against these infections. Only 11% of Michigan residents have been vaccinated this season for COVID-19 and 23.6% have been vaccinated for influenza. It is not too late to get vaccinated against the flu, COVID-19 and RSV. All three of these vaccines can help protect against severe respiratory illness and can be given at the same time. Nationally, 11 children have died from influenza during the 2024-25 flu season; none of the children were from Michigan.

“With many respiratory viruses circulating and Influenza cases rising, it is crucial for Michigan residents to get vaccinated to protect themselves and their families,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive. “COVID-19 and flu vaccines are effective at preventing serious outcomes, including hospitalization and death. It is not too late to protect yourself and your family this season.”

According to state data, as of Dec. 28, approximately 2.5 million people have received their flu vaccine this flu season. This is well below the 4 million doses of flu vaccine that were expected to be administered this season. Vaccination coverage rates are highest among older adults, while they remain lowest for school-aged children (14.9% coverage for ages 5-12 and 7.7% coverage for ages 13-17) and college-aged young adults (10.9% coverage).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the annual influenza vaccination for all persons 6 months and older, with rare exceptions. Getting vaccinated now, as respiratory virus activity is increasing, can still provide protection. Flu activity usually peaks in February, but significant flu activity can continue into May. It takes about two weeks after the vaccine is administered before the body builds up enough immunity to protect from severe



illness from the flu. If eligible, Michigan residents should receive their flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines today to help protect from potentially severe consequences from these illnesses.

Vaccination is particularly important for these younger age groups as children return from the holiday break. It is also important for individuals at higher risk of developing serious complications — including young children, adults ages 65 years and older, people with certain medical conditions and pregnant persons. Speak to a health care provider to discuss vaccination and determine which flu vaccine is best for you. Additional information about recommendations can also be found by visiting ACIP Recommendations Summary | Influenza (Flu) | CDC.

Vaccines are an essential health benefit under the Affordable Care Act and are covered with no out-of-pocket costs by most health plans in Michigan. Those with questions about their health insurance can contact the Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) at 877-999-6442, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or online at Michigan.gov/HealthInsurance.

Flu, COVID and RSV vaccines are widely available at local health departments, physicians' offices and pharmacies around the state. Find a location by using the Vaccine Finder. Visit Michigan.gov/COVIDFluRSV for more information or visit IVaccinate.org to find answers to vaccine questions. Visit Michigan.gov/flufocus for updates on flu and respiratory illnesses in Michigan.



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Tribes, environmental groups urge Michigan Appeals Court to reverse Enbridge Line 5 tunnel permit approval

LANSING — On Jan. 14, attorneys representing several tribal nations and environmental groups asked the Michigan Court of Appeals to reverse the Michigan Public Service Commission’s December 2023 order approving a permit for Enbridge to build a tunnel for its Line 5 oil pipeline beneath the lakebed of the Straits of Mackinac, calling it “flawed.” Separate legal challenges were brought before the Commission by the tribes and environmental groups, who appealed the Commission’s decision to greenlight the permit. Those appeals were consolidated and argued today before the Court of Appeals.

The Bay Mills Indian Community, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, and Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi have lived on the lands of present-day Michigan since time immemorial and hold deep spiritual, cultural, and economic connections to the Straits of Mackinac. They argue that the Commissioners unlawfully barred key evidence about the public need for Line 5 and about the risk of future oil spills along the pipeline’s length.

“Michiganders do not need this pipeline to keep pumping oil through the heart of the Great Lakes,” said Attorney Adam Ratchenski for Earthjustice, which is representing the Tribes alongside the Native American Rights Fund. “The Commission was so eager to rubber-stamp this massive project for Enbridge that they



refused to consider the atrocious record of oil spills along this failing pipeline while making a decision that would secure its operation — and all the pollution that comes with it — for up to 99 years.”

The Environmental Law & Policy Center and Michigan Climate Action Network asserted in court that the Commission failed to consider that Enbridge’s proposed project poses a dangerous threat for a catastrophic oil spill in the Great Lakes, increases climate change impacts, and undermines Michigan’s clean energy transition goals. They urged the Court of

Appeals to set aside the Commission’s permit decision and require further review and analysis of environmental impacts and alternatives consistent with the requirements of the Michigan Environmental Protection Act.

The reality is that we are moving away from fossil fuels. We have to, if we are to have any chance of avoiding a climate disaster,” said Denise Keele, MiCAN’s executive director. “The last thing we need in Michigan is construction of a new fossil fuel infrastructure like a new pipeline under the Straits, which would lock in more reliance on oil. The Commission’s initial approval of the Enbridge tunnel project must be reversed if we want a realistic shot at shifting to clean energy in Michigan and ending our reliance on dirty fossil fuels.”

“Today we argued that the Commission must require Enbridge to properly quantify and evaluate greenhouse gas pollution and climate change impacts in line with the Michigan Environmental Protec-

tion Act,” said David Scott, Senior attorney at ELPC. “The Commission must also fully and fairly assess the public need and feasible alternatives to the proposed tunnel that would avoid climate risks and conserve Michigan’s natural resources. The Commission failed to do that before approving the permit.”

“Enbridge’s Line 5 tunnel proposal is a desperate effort to suck the last few pennies of corporate profit from an aged-out pipeline, while socializing the cost of vast new fossil fuel infrastructure,” said For Love of Water (FLOW) Legal Director Carrie La Seur. “If Enbridge really cared about oil spills, it would respect Governor Whitmer’s statesmanlike decision to protect the Great Lakes by withdrawing the easement. FLOW argued today that the MPSC’s analysis of tunnel alternatives is fatally flawed, because it ignores the likelihood that market realities will shut down the pipeline long before consumers have paid for a multi-billion dollar tunnel through price hikes.”



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ROUND DANCE & TEACHINGS

February 22, 2025

Brimley Area Schools
 7134 S M 221, Brimley, MI 49715

<p>Agenda *Times are subject to change</p> <p>4pm - Round Dance Teachings Followed by Feast</p> <p>7pm - Pipe Ceremony Singing & Dancing</p> <p>Vendors</p> <p>First Come - First Serve Fee: Spot Dance Donation Tables provided - One Table Limit Doors open at 1pm for Set-up Vendor Questions: Contact LaTara at lleblanc@bmcc.edu</p>	<p>MC & Teachings by</p> <p>Bud Daywayigan Day</p> <p>Strickman</p> <p>Koonce Santos-McCauley</p> <p>Singers</p> <p>Raistlin Awonohopay (Summercloud) Donovin Awonohopay (Summercloud) Kno Mēkon Pyawasit (Smokeytown) Bernie Lemieux (Smokeytown) Niizhoo Sullivan (Hay Creek) Nathan Roy (Bear Creek) Cameron Bear (Young Spirit) Caden Pego (Mountain Town, Crazy Spirit)</p>
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EUP Regional Science Fair winners announced

SAULT STE. MARIE — The EUP Intermediate School District and EUP MiSTEM Region held the annual EUP Regional Science & Engineering Fair for grades K-8 on Dec. 12, 2024, at Lake Superior State University. Schools that participated in this event were: Brimley, Cedarville, JKL Bahweting, Pickford, Rudyard, Sault-Lincoln Elementary, Sault Area Middle School, St. Ignace, and St. Mary's. This year, 221 students advanced from local school district Science and Engineering Fair events to represent 142 projects in the regional event at LSSU.

Students were asked to present their ideas, methods, and results and to discuss their overall project. Judges then evaluated the project based on pre-set judging criteria. The judging panel consisted of members of our local community, governmental entities, MI Works, Soo Coop Credit Union, LSSU faculty, as well as EUPISD staff. Although all the projects were great, and it was a difficult decision for judges, the following students placed in the top three:



KINDERGARTEN

- 1st Place: Danny English (Rudyard)
- 2nd Place: Ruby Krueger (Rudyard)
- 3rd Place: Henry Marquart (Cedarville)

FIRST GRADE

- 1st Place: Greyden Herschell (Pickford)
- 2nd Place: Group Presentation: Elaina Neinaber, Theo Payment, Dakota Wilson (Cedarville)
- 3rd Place: Asher Brood (Pickford)

SECOND GRADE

- 1st Place: Nolan Gerzetich (Sault Lincoln)
- 2nd Place: Eloise Paulus (Sault Lincoln)
- 3rd Place: Carson Duncan (St Ignace)

THIRD GRADE

- 1st Place: Jaylin Bishop (Pickford)
- 2nd Place: Thomas Bendickson (Sault Lincoln)
- 3rd Place: Warren Titus (Brimley)

FOURTH GRADE

- 1st Place: Liam Maudrie (St. Ignace)
- 2nd Place: Linus Mosey (St Mary's)
- 3rd Place: Sophia Williams (Rudyard)

FIFTH GRADE

- 1st Place: Harper Herschell (Pickford)
- 2nd Place: Group Presentation: Stella Engle and Silas law (St Ignace)
- 3rd Place: Group Presentation: Lillian Plank, Tessalie Heckman, and Molly Lohff (Cedarville)

SIXTH GRADE

- 1st Place: Atlas Kroeger (Sault Middle)
- 2nd Place: Group Presentation: Jalen Matelski and Jace

- LaPonsie (St Ignace)
- 3rd Place: Jackson Ball (JKL)

SEVENTH GRADE

- 1st Place: Henry Edwards (Pickford)
- 2nd Place: Ivan Grogan (St Ignace)
- 3rd Place: Clara Niehbur (JKL)

EIGHTH GRADE

- 1st Place: Group Presentation: Liam Roe, Luke Roe, and Kylee Sheilds (JKL)
- 2nd Place: Group Presentation: Frank Chipman-Bergsma and Elliot Povey (Sault Middle)
- 3rd Place: Molly Escherich (JKL)

*First place winners were awarded with a trophy, second place received a plaque, and third place received a medal.

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Walking On

Noann Roberta Campbell

Noann Roberta Campbell, 89, passed peacefully at - MyMichigan Medical Center in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on the afternoon of Jan. 14, 2025. She was born in a little white house in St. Ignace, Michigan, on Dec. 23, 1935, to her parents, the late John Rich and Virginia Evelyn (Beamish) McFadden .

Noann's younger years were spent in parochial school where she boarded with other children, under the care of nuns. While there, she enjoyed writing letters back and forth with her mother. She later graduated from Brimley High School. Noann met her husband, Lloyd W. Campbell in Brimley, Mich., and they married Sept. 4, 1953, in Elgin, Illinois. Lloyd was in the United States Navy and on March 5, 1956, in Port Lyauty, Morocco, they had a daughter, Candy Sue. They returned to the states in October of 1956. In 1962, they opened their own business, Ability Glass & Mirror, in Palatine, Illinois, which grew into a wholesale picture frame outfit, Palatine Frame & Molding. In 1968, they built their retirement cabin at Salt Point in Brimley and in 1983, they sold their business and retired here while they wintered in Bradenton, Florida. Their daughter Candy married and in 1980 had a son, Lloyd Robert. While Candy was carrying him, it was found that she had leukemia. Noann's primary focus then became her daughter and grandson's wellbeing. Sadly, on June 25, 1991, Candy lost her battle with leukemia. Noann and Lloyd W then "inherited," in her own words, their grandson Lloyd Robert. Upon their grandson's request, they decided to move to their retirement cabin in Brimley full time. Ever the nurturer, Noann made the decision to dedicate her golden years to ensuring the safety and happiness of her grandson. She spent her time teaching him the names of the birds that would visit their feeders, how to cook and bake, which flowers would work best together in the garden, and how to fetch her a beer (which, he says, he had down pat by the age of three).

Noann boasted of her skills in cleaning, organizing, and most importantly, entertaining. Over the years, many guests came, laughed, and left; always invited back and intending to return. Noann loved nothing more than for the people she cared most about to be enjoying themselves and making fond memories together. She held tightly to these times, even into her later years. This was made easy for her as she had so many friends, acquaintances and otherwise, that were drawn to her natural warmth and wit. Noann's dear husband Lloyd W. unfortunately passed on Dec. 26, 2013. She then spent another handful of years at their cabin in Brimley while grandson Lloyd Robert moved next door to help take care of her; the same as she had for him. After some time, she had decided she wanted an apartment in Sault Ste. Marie. Her final years were spent there, with frequent visits, doctor's appointments and dinner deliveries made by her grandson Lloyd Robert.

To all of Noann's friends, here and gone, we thank you for your love, support and laughter over the years. As preemptively written by Noann herself, as she was always prepared, "You all have made me very, very happy with all the years of friendships and thoughtfulness. Thank you very much!"

In lieu of flowers, Noann would have appreciated a donation to The Chippewa County Animal Shelter, 3660 S Mackinac Trail, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783. However, the next time you're at The Cozy Inn, please raise a glass in her honor!

Family Life Funeral Homes assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

Patricia J. Brighton

Patricia J. Brighton, 93, of Brimley, Mich., died on Jan. 14, 2025. Her final days were spent peacefully in hospice, surrounded by her children. She was born in Kalamazoo, Mich. on March 19, 1931, to Philip and Dorothy (Welch) Robischung.

Pat attended Nazareth Academy and West Michigan University in Kalamazoo, before moving to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, after her marriage in 1953. She worked for several years for the post commander at Camp Lucas and then moved to Brimley for eight years. It was there that she was asked to climb a fire tower and watch for fires for the USDA Forest Service. That job was short-lived as she was offered a position in their local office as a secretary, returning her to the Soo in 1963. She continued working for the Forest Service for 29 years of federal service. In 1991, she retired from a job that not only she liked, but that she made many lifelong friends doing.

In 2000, Pat moved to her summer home at Bay Mills Point, which she winterized and added an addition, personally designing and measuring everything in detail. She often said how happy she was at "Brighton Beach" and how moving there was one of the best decisions of her life. She lived there year-round, appreciating her home, church and community.

Pat was a member of the Soo Penny Ante Investment Club, founding member (and board member) of the Northern International Crime Stoppers for 24 years, dedicated blood donor, volunteer for the CC Hall spaghetti night dinners, member of the LSSU Elders and was a founding member of the BMBs (Bay Mills Bunch), whom she cared for quite deeply. Over the years the group of close friends met weekly for breakfast at the Bay Mills Casino, dinner on Sundays at the Cozy Inn and enjoyed gatherings to celebrate birthdays, holidays and other special occasions.

Throughout Pat's life, she enjoyed her many friends, travel, family visits, gardening, feeding her birds and her many beagle dogs - especially her beloved Shadow. She was an avid fan of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race and followed it faithfully every March.

Pat is survived by her son, Mark Brighton of Manistique, Michigan; daughters, Lisa Brighton of Berkley, Michigan and Terri Brighton of Havelock, North Carolina; granddaughters, Amber Onizuk and Ashley (Christopher) Behm; and five great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Philip and Dorothy; and former husband, Jack Brighton.

Pat's final resting place will be at Mission Hill Cemetery in the spring, 2025.

Memorial contributions may be left to the Chippewa County Animal Shelter, 3660 S. Mackinac Trail, Sault Ste. Marie, 49783, Hospice of the EUP, 308 W. 12th Ave., Sault Ste. Marie, 49783 or Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic Church, 12014 W. Lakeshore Drive, Brimley, Michigan, 49715.

Family Life Funeral Homes assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

Danny Alvin Hancock

Danny Alvin Hancock, 63, of Kincheloe, Mich., passed away unexpectedly on Jan. 13, 2025. He was born April 18, 1961, in Hazel Park, Michigan, to Arvitt and Faye (Mawhinney) Hancock.

Danny grew up in Royal Oak, Mich., where he had a worry-free childhood. Later in life, he moved to the Upper Peninsula where he settled in Kincheloe. He worked at Super Value as a butcher and then eventually worked at the Kinross Co-op until he retired in 2023.

Danny could be found fishing, playing his bass guitar, or hanging with his dog "Otis". He was always hoping to get lucky off scratch off tickets. He had a great sense of humor; he was witty and sarcastic. He always had a story to tell! He loved riding the backroads while listening to classic rock, and he kept an eye out for bigfoot every time. He loved good whiskey, but he loved watching the Detroit Lions play football more. Nothing could top his love for being a Papa though; his grandchildren meant the world to him.

Danny is survived by his daughters, Jolene Pine of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., Madelynn (Barton) St. Peter of Dafter, Mich.; sisters, Jan (Lewis) Chambers of Kincheloe, Mich., Meri (Brian McMillan) Hancock of Rudyard, Mich.; grandchildren, Drew St. Peter, Jackson Pine; friends, Al Mahanna, John Miller; and best friend, Stephen Parish.

Danny was preceded in death by his parents, Arvitt and Faye; sister, Paula Noble; uncle, Bill Mawhinney; friends, Robert Berkland, Pam Mahanna; and his beloved dog, Gibby.

A Memorial Service will be held Feb. 1, 2025, at the Kinross Township Hall, 4884 W Curtis St, Kincheloe, MI 49788, from 2 p.m. - 5 p.m..

Family Life Funeral Homes assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

Timothy James Sawyer

Timothy James Sawyer, 77, of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, passed peacefully at home Saturday evening, Jan. 4, 2025. He was born on Jan. 2, 1948, in Mexico, Missouri, to James and Margaret (Cadenbach) Sawyer.

Tim graduated from Flushing High School. Upon graduation, he was drafted into the United States Army where he was a Combat Engineer in the Americal Division, serving in Chu Lai, Vietnam. He was awarded the National Defense Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and Good Conduct Medal. After serving his country, he earned his psychology degree from Northern Michigan University. He then went on to obtain his PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Nevada. He began teaching at Lake Superior University in 1976, until his retirement in 2001. He thoroughly enjoyed the many students he taught and mentored throughout his career.

Tim valued his family more than anything. He spent many wonderful years with his wife Connie prior to her passing in 2007. He enjoyed his weightroom and daily walks, working in his shop on projects, and using his tractors on the property with his family.

Tim is survived by his sons, Daniel (Sandy) Sawyer and James Sawyer; grandson, Terek Sawyer, all of Sault Ste. Marie; daughter, Michelle (Jay) Rendon; sister, Esther Sawyer of Flushing; grandsons, Derek (Jordann), Adam (Gabrielle), Jacob (Annaleis) Jennings all of Davison, Michigan; and six great-grandchildren.

Tim was preceded in death by his wife, Connie, after 38 years of marriage; parents, James and Margaret; sister, Susan Robinson; and beloved brother, James "Sandy" Sawyer.

Per Tim's wishes no formal service or funeral will be held. There will be a private family Celebration of Life at a later date.

Family Life Funeral Homes assisted the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

IRS tax season officially kicks off on Jan.27

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service has announced that the nation’s 2025 tax season will start on Monday, Jan. 27, 2025, and will feature expanded and enhanced tools to help taxpayers as a result of the agency’s historic modernization efforts.

The IRS expects more than 140 million individual tax returns for tax year 2024 to be filed ahead of the Tuesday, April 15 federal deadline. More than half of all tax returns are expected to be filed this year with the help of a tax professional, and the IRS urges people to use a trusted tax pro to avoid potential scams and schemes.

The 2025 tax filing season will reflect continued IRS progress to modernize and add new tools and features to help taxpayers. Since last tax season, the improvements include more access to tax account information from text and voice virtual assistants, expanded features on the IRS Individual Online Account, more access to dozens of tax forms through cell phones and tablets and expanded alerts for scams and schemes that threaten taxpayers.

The IRS has also expanded features and availability of last year’s Direct File program. This year, Direct File will be available starting Jan. 27 to taxpayers in 25 states. In addition, the IRS Free File program opens today. Available only on IRS.gov, IRS Free File Guided Tax Software provides millions of taxpayers nationwide access to free software tools offered by trusted IRS Free File partners.

The IRS is also working to continue the success of the 2023 and 2024 tax filing seasons made possible with additional resources. The past two filing seasons saw levels of service at roughly 85% and wait times averaging less than 5 minutes on the main phone lines, as well as significant increases in the number of taxpayers served at Taxpayer Assistance Centers across the country. Based on the IRS’ current plan and funding levels, the agency will work to provide similar levels of performance on these key service metrics in the upcoming filing season.

“This has been a historic period of improvement for the IRS, and people will see additional tools and features to help them with filing their taxes this tax season,” said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. “These taxpayer-focused improvements we’ve done so far are important, but they are just the beginning of what the IRS needs to do. More can be done with continued investment in the nation’s tax system.”

The Get Ready page on IRS.gov highlights steps taxpayers can take now to streamline the filing process and the many resources available to interact with the IRS before, during and after filing their federal tax return.

Direct File opens Jan. 27 for taxpayers in 25 states

On the first day of the filing season, Direct File will open to eligible taxpayers in 25 states to file their taxes directly with the IRS for free: 12 states that were part of the pilot last year, plus 13 new states where Direct File will be available in 2025. During last year’s pilot, Direct File was available in Arizona, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington State and Wyoming. For the 2025 tax filing season, Direct File will also be available in Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Direct File will include new features this year to make filing taxes quicker and easier. Similar to commercial tax software, a data import tool will allow taxpayers to opt-in to automatically import data from their IRS account, including personal information, the taxpayer’s IP PIN and some information from the taxpayer’s W-2.

This year, Direct File users can try a new chat bot to help guide them through the eligibility checker. Live chat will again be available in English and Spanish, and users can opt into additional authentication and verification, which will allow customer service representatives to provide more information.

Also, this year, Direct File will cover more tax situations. During the pilot, Direct File supported taxpayers claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Credit for Other Dependents. This year, Direct File will also cover taxpayers claiming the:

- Child and Dependent Care Credit
- Premium Tax Credit
- Credit for the Elderly and Disabled
- Retirement Savings Contribution Credits

In addition to covering taxpayers claiming the standard deduction and deductions for student loan interest and educator expenses, this year, Direct File will support taxpayers claiming deductions for Health Savings Accounts. The Treasury Department estimates that more than 30 million taxpayers will be eligible to use Direct File across the 25 states.

Direct File is a web-based service that works on mobile phones, laptops, tablets or desktop computers. It guides taxpayers through a series of questions to prepare their federal tax return step-by-step. Last year, thousands of Direct File users got help from IRS customer service representatives through a live chat

feature in English and Spanish. Once taxpayers have completed their federal tax return, the Direct File system automatically guides them to state tools to complete their state tax filings.

Although the IRS will not begin accepting tax returns until Jan. 27, taxpayers have several options available now to get a head start on their taxes.

Almost everyone can file electronically for free by using IRS Free File, available only on IRS.gov. Now in its 23rd year, Free File offers free tax preparation software from eight companies in the public-private partnership between the IRS and Free File Inc. As part of this partnership, tax preparation and filing software partners offer their online products to eligible taxpayers for free. To access these free tools, taxpayers must start from the IRS Free File page on IRS.gov.

This year, eight private-sector partners will provide online guided tax software products for taxpayers with an Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of \$84,000 or less in 2024. Additionally, one partner will offer a product in Spanish.

Although the IRS official tax filing season begins later this month, IRS Free File providers will allow taxpayers to prepare and file returns now and hold them until they can be electronically filed on that date. Many other software companies offer a similar option.

In addition to Free File and Direct File, the IRS reminds taxpayers there are important programs available to help taxpayers:

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance/Tax Counseling for the Elderly. Taxpayers can find organizations in their community with IRS certified volunteers that provide free tax help for eligible taxpayers including working families, the elderly, the disabled and people who speak limited English.

MilTax. A Department of Defense program, MilTax generally offers free return preparation and electronic filing software for federal income tax returns and up to three state income tax returns for all military members, and some veterans, with no income limit.

As part of ongoing IRS improvement efforts, the agency is working to build on the success of the 2023 and 2024 filing seasons.

The IRS is once again working to provide taxpayers expanded help in-person through more hours at Taxpayer Assistance Centers nationwide. The IRS also will be focused on continuing high levels of service on its main taxpayer phone lines, with a goal of up to 85% level of service.

The IRS also continues to urge taxpayers to visit a trusted tax professional for help with their taxes or visit IRS.gov first. As part of IRS improvement efforts since 2022, the agency continues to add and expand a variety of online tools and services to help people with their taxes.

Last year the IRS began using online chatbots for various functions. These chatbots use either guided help through choice buttons or an open text box for a customized question. The chatbots use natural language processing and understanding to interpret the input from the taxpayer to provide an appropriate response. To launch the chatbot, the taxpayer simply clicks on the “Chat” button in the lower right corner of the webpage. Currently taxpayers can use chatbots from eight webpages.

Taxpayers should check Where’s My Refund? on IRS.gov. Most refunds are issued in less than 21 calendar days. Taxpayers can use Where’s My Refund? to check the status of their 2024 income tax refund within 24 hours of e-filing. Refund information is normally available after four weeks for taxpayers who filed a paper return. Information on Where’s My Refund? will update overnight so there is no need to check the tool more than once a day.

The easiest, safest and fastest way to receive a refund is to file electronically (e-file) and select direct deposit. According to Treasury’s Bureau of the Fiscal Service, paper refund checks are 16 times more likely to have an issue, like the check being lost, misdirected, stolen or uncashed. People should check FDIC and National Credit Union Administration websites if they don’t have a bank account. Veterans can use the Veterans Benefits Banking Program to find participating financial institutions.

The IRS also notes that starting Jan. 1, 2025, people will no longer be able to buy paper Series I savings bonds with their tax refund. Instead, Series I bonds are available in electronic format in TreasuryDirect.

More than half of taxpayers turn to a tax professional for help filing a tax return. While most tax preparers deliver exceptional and professional service, selecting the wrong preparer can lead to financial harm.

Taxpayers should review the tips for choosing a tax preparer and learn how to avoid unethical “ghost” return preparers. Taxpayers can also use the IRS Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications to find trusted professionals. The IRS also reminds taxpayers that choosing someone affiliated with a recognized national tax association is always a good option.

Tax professionals accepted into the IRS electronic filing program are authorized IRS e-file providers, qualified to prepare, transmit and process electronically filed tax returns.

I-500 Race Week schedule announced

Sunday, Jan. 26

The 2025 Walsh Service Solutions Mini-5 Kids Snowmobile Races Officially Kick Off the 56th Running of the International 500 Snowmobile Race Week.

For the first time ever, the Mini-5 Kids Races will take place on the front stretch, at the start/finish line, of the Legendary 1-Mile Ice Oval, a miniature version, which will be laid out for the kids. Aspiring young riders get their chance to race in their very own events.

Registration and Rig Parking begins at 1 p.m., on race day as the Kids Snowmobile Races start at 3 p.m. It's absolutely free to attend and everyone goes home a winner.

Monday, Jan. 25

ALL teams that are racing on the legendary 1-Mile Ice Oval will Load In and begin the technical inspections in preparation for the rest of race week.

I-500 management, staff and volunteers make those imperative final preparations in anticipation of race week.

The Meet The Riders Autograph and Picture Session, which will be located at the Entrance to the Lock City Home Center Press Center / Joe Moniz Memorial Broadcast Booth, will go from 5-7 p.m.

Also happening at the same time, the smooth ice surface also allows the general public to skate on the famous one mile oval during Monday's Skate Night at the Track.

Tuesday, Jan. 26

This is a special day as the I-500 and Sault Ste. Marie city officials have proclaimed opening day to be forever known as BUD CLARKE DAY. For the first time of the 56th Soo I-500 Race Week, sleds officially get out onto the track.

The exciting return of the G.F.L. Environmental Formula III's Soo Shootout

along-with the Wheeler Upfitters Soo Vintage Shootout will take to the legendary 1-Mile High-Banked Ice Oval. The Vintage Sleds that are 30 years old (1995) and older will feature seven classes of competition.

Afterwards, from 9-10 p.m. (Could Start Earlier), the OPTIONAL and quickly becoming very popular Practice Session will wrap up the evening

Wednesday, Jan. 27

The best riders in the world begin the grueling process of attempting to qualify for the I-500 on perhaps, the busiest day of the week, other than race day.

In addition to being the First Day of Wheeler Trucking Qualifying presented by Owosso Speedway to begin setting the 38-Sled field for the 56th Running of the race it's also Day of Qualifying for Meijer Pro Shootout IV and race day for the Kokosing-Alberici-Traylor Old 600 Modifieds who will partake in the K.A.T. Old 600 Modifieds Shootout IV.

Thursday, Jan. 30

Thursday is action packed as it is the final day of Wheeler Trucking Qualifying presented by Owosso.

Speedway for the I-500 as well as Final Round of Qualifying for the MPS, followed later in the evening by the Meijer Pro Shootout IV, which, for 2025, will be under a New Format. Plus, it's a pivotal event and the only opportunity for teams to get Track Time, under Race Conditions, for the big race.

Then let the fun begin in Sault Ste. Marie as the city becomes host to the mid-west's largest "WINTER PUB CRAWL"! Officials will open the heated hospitality tent to visitors with live music and plenty of beverages on hand. Join the Midwest's premier winter party at the I-500 venue.

Visit the many bars, saloons, and

lounges in the community who offer maximum fun for race fans and sled-heads. Drinks, food specials and fun are on tap throughout the Sault area. Join the atmosphere of snowmobile race central. Shirts are on sale for those who want to participate in the Pub Crawl.

Friday, Jan. 31

It's an "off day" at the track as I-500 Officials work overtime to get the 1-mile ice oval ready for 500 miles.

In the meantime, the 56th Soo I-500 Riders Registration (10 a.m.-2 p.m.) has been moved for 2025 as it will be held at the track, in the V.I.P. Suite, located in the Upper Floor of the Lock City Home Center Press Center / Next to the Joe Moniz Memorial Broadcast Booth.

The all important Riders Meeting (3 p.m.) will still be conducted at Kewadin Casinos Hotel & Convention Center.

Later in the evening is the 13th Edition of the Miss International 500 Pageant inside the Dream Makers Theatre within Kewadin Casinos – Sault Ste. Marie, located just four miles east of the track.

On the day of the pageant, the day before the 56th Running of the I-500, contestants are introduced to the audience in the form of a fashion show. Each contestant will wear either a costume or uniform that reflects her personality, hobbies, career aspirations, or sports affiliations. There is also an onstage interview for all the ladies to share their thoughts and win the hearts of the crowd.

In the final event, contestants model a floor-length evening gown; complete with winter accents (Faux Fur, Ugg-Like Boots, Etc.) that pair perfectly with the theme of the race.

The I-500 Pageant starts at 7 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 1

Saturday is RACE DAY! Spectator Gates Open at 8 a.m., as spectators can enjoy the heated hospitality tent all day, race day. Stop by the vendor tent, trailers, and booths for food, fun and a host of products for snowmobile and race enthusiasts. Opening Ceremonies start at 8:45 a.m., with rider introductions at 9:30 a.m.

Then, after the Invocation and National Anthem(s) the Green flag drops promptly at 10 a.m.

Approximately 90 minutes after the checkered flag flies on the race, the awards banquet will be held at the Dream Makers Theater inside Kewadin Casino.

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2025 Black Lake sturgeon season begins Feb. 1

CHEBOYGAN — The 2025 lake sturgeon fishing season on Black Lake in Cheboygan County, Michigan, will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 1. All anglers must register online in advance to participate in the fishing season, and those age 17 or older must have a valid Michigan fishing license.

The harvest limit for the 2025 season on Black Lake is six lake sturgeon. Officials will close the season when one of two scenarios occurs:

- * The sixth fish is harvested.
- * Five fish have been harvested at the end of any fishing day.

Fishing hours are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day of the season. The season will end either at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 5, or when one of the above scenarios is met, at which point anglers will be notified via text message and on the ice by DNR personnel that they must immediately stop fishing for lake sturgeon.

Anyone who wants to participate this year must register online by Jan. 31. Get more registration and season information at Michigan.gov/Sturgeon.

Participating anglers must bring their own bright red flags (1-foot diameter or larger) to hang on their fishing shanties. Season officials emphasize that anglers are required to hang one or more flags in highly visible locations on their shanties so DNR personnel can readily identify which anglers are sturgeon fishing.

Anyone harvesting a lake sturgeon must immediately contact DNR personnel on the ice. Official registration of each harvested fish will take place at a DNR trailer located on or near the ice at the end of Zollner Road in the northwest part of Black Lake. Harvest registration may include an examination of the fish's internal organs and removal of a piece of fin tissue for DNA analysis or aging.

Lake sturgeon rehabilitation efforts in Black Lake over the last two decades have been a successful collaboration between the DNR, Sturgeon for Tomorrow, tribal agencies, Michigan State University and Tower-Kleber Limited Partnership. This population has increased in the past 20 years due to lake sturgeon rearing and stocking



Ice fishing on Black Lake: The 2025 lake sturgeon fishing season on Black Lake in Cheboygan County, Michigan, will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 1. All anglers must register online to participate in the season.

efforts and research and protection of spawning adults, and this trend is expected to continue.

Ice conditions may vary greatly, and anglers should always use extreme caution when ice fishing. The Black Lake sturgeon season start date will not be postponed due to weather or other conditions. The season may be canceled up to 48 hours prior to the start of the season if circumstances pose a significant safety risk to anglers and staff (per Fisheries Order 240). The DNR will post any updated information to the department website and notify anglers via text message and email if any changes occur.

Visit Michigan.gov/IceSafety for tips to stay safe on the ice.

DNR offers outdoor adventure safety tips

Present winter conditions vary throughout the state and based on weather forecasts, will continue to fluctuate. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources reminds everyone to put safety first when enjoying favorite outdoor winter activities.

"People often get caught up in the excitement of the moment and overlook winter safety," said Lt. Tom Wanless, with the DNR Law Enforcement Division's Recreational Safety, Education and Enforcement Section. "This is a beginning of the season reminder to please keep safety in mind this winter."

Before heading out, make sure to:

- * Dress for the weather. Wear light layers that can easily be added or removed – it is possible to overheat even during the winter.
- * Check the weather forecast and road conditions.
- * Carry appropriate equipment for your activity, such as a flashlight, rope, ice picks or ice claws.

- * Have spare equipment available in case something breaks.

- * Stay hydrated and fueled – bring water and snacks.

- * Bring a buddy.

- * Tell others where you will be, how long you plan to be gone and schedule check-in times.

- * Carry a two-way communication device that receives service in remote areas.

- * Take an honest assessment of your health – if you're not feeling well, don't go out.

Wanless said there are additional key things to remember.

Always use extreme caution around ice, as there is no perfectly reliable way to determine ice strength. Wear a personal floatation device and carry ice picks in an easy to reach location.

Ice Safety Tips

- Your safety is your responsibility! There is not a reliable "inch-thickness" to determine if ice is safe.

- You can test ice thickness and qual-

ity using a spud, needle bar or auger.

- Strongest ice: clear with bluish tint.

- Weak ice: ice formed by melted and refrozen snow. Appears milky.

- Stay off ice with slush on top. Slush ice is only half as strong as clear ice and indicates the ice is not freezing from the bottom.

- A sudden cold front with low temperatures can create cracks within a half-day.

- A warm spell may take several days to weaken ice, and cause the ice to thaw during the day and refreeze at night.

- Ice weakens with age.

- If there's ice on the lake but water around the shoreline, be extra cautious.

- Stronger the current on the lake, the more likely the ice will give to open water.

- Avoid areas of ice with protruding debris like logs or brush.

- Keep an eye out for dock bubblers or de-icers as the ice near these mech-

anisms will be unsafe. Always check the ice and be aware of your surroundings.

In Michigan, all snowmobile operators ages 12 to 16 must obtain a Michigan-approved snowmobile safety certificate to operate without a legal guardian or to cross a highway or street. Earn a snowmobile safety certificate or purchase a trail permit at Michigan.gov/Snowmobiling.

The DNR's Ride Right snowmobile safety campaign emphasizes the importance of riding at a safe speed, sober and on the right-hand side of the trail to help ensure that you "Ride home safe to your family and friends."

Speed is the main factor in fatal and serious injury snowmobile accidents. There were 19 snowmobile fatalities across Michigan during the 2022-23 season, and four deaths during the 2023-24 season. Find more safety tips and snowmobile rules and regulations at Michigan.gov/RideRight.

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2024 elk hunting season: Outcomes and highlights

With the wrap of Michigan's 2024 elk season, hunters saw challenging conditions during Hunt Period 1 and improved outcomes in Hunt Period 2. More than 250 licenses were issued across both periods, and hunters harvested 180 elk in all.

Hunt Period 1

The season began in late August and spanned 12 days throughout September. High temperatures during the fall hunt reduced elk movement during the day, making it difficult to locate elk during hunting hours. Additionally, the heat deterred some hunters from participating out of concern about meat spoilage and heat-related conditions.

Michigan's early season is designed to remove elk living outside of the designated elk management area, which is primarily the Pigeon River Country State Forest. There are 100 licenses issued for Hunt Period 1: 30 any-elk licenses and 70 antlerless-only licenses.

Despite the challenging weather, Hunt Period 1 proved to be successful for 59% of hunters, who harvested 24 bull elk and 35 antlerless elk, including two calves. This harvest rate is the lowest documented, falling below the average of about 74% since 2007.

This particularly low success rate in Hunt Period 1 likely can be attributed to heat-related factors. High temperatures are not unusual for this time period, but daily highs this year were consistently above 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

Hunt Period 2

Winter conditions brought fresh snow and cooler temperatures, leading to better results during the December hunt.

There were 160 elk licenses issued for this hunt period: 110 antlerless licenses and 50 any-elk licenses. Over the nine-day December season, hunters harvested 46 bulls and 75 antlerless elk, including eight calves. The hunter success rate of Hunt Period 2 was 75%, which is in line with the five-year average success rate of about 79%.

"Snowfall during the December hunt provided much-needed assistance to hunters, allowing for improved tracking conditions and a successful conclusion to the season," said Angela Kujawa, Michigan Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist. "Overall, the 2024 elk season showcased the dedication of our hunters and their important contribution to maintaining a healthy and sustainable elk population in Michigan."



More than 250 licenses were issued across both periods of the 2024 Michigan elk hunting season, and hunters harvested 180 elk in all. Pictured here is one of the successful elk hunters, Alex Mshar of Lewiston.

During Hunt Period 2, there was snowfall for the first couple days of the hunt, which made locating and tracking elk easier and led to higher hunter success.

The late season is used to manage overall elk population numbers across the entire elk management unit. In 2024, hunters in hunt periods 1 and 2 harvested 180 elk, including one Pure Michigan Hunt winner.

Learn about elk management, regulations, hunting and viewing locations and more resources at Michigan.gov/Elk.

Sault Ste. Marie International Bridge board gets year-end updates

SAULT STE. MARIE — The Sault Ste. Marie Bridge Authority board of directors, the bi-national body that supervises operations of the International Bridge, heard reports on a recent bridge inspection at the board's regular meeting in November.

The SSMBA board reviewed and officially accepted the results of the fracture critical member (FCM) inspection of the bridge. These inspections provide a closer look at bridge components that are critical to the structural integrity of the bridge. A team of bridge engineering experts from the lead firm of Hardesty and Hanover (H&H) of Okemos, Mich., along with their Canadian partner firm, WSP Canada Group Ltd. of Mississauga, Ontario, conducted the inspection of the bridge this summer and presented their findings at Thursday's meeting.

"The bridge's ongoing maintenance is outstanding, keeping all major elements of the structure in good to fair condition overall," said H&H engineer Mark Helinski. "Our inspection found no significant new issues or significant changes from previous years."

H&H noted some items, such as corrosion, pain loss and rocker link maintenance, to be addressed. The International Bridge Administration staff has included this work in future scheduled maintenance.

"These results continue the International Bridge's excellent history of maintenance," said Karl Hansen, IBA bridge engineer. "Our dedicated staff is diligently protecting the public investment in the bridge. We've been able to prioritize and address any concerns found in these inspections in a timely way, either through monitoring, contracted repairs or in-house repairs."

The International Bridge is inspected every year, with the fracture critical inspection alternating with a routine inspection that looks at the entire bridge every other year. Additionally, the bridge's required five-year underwater inspection of 15 submerged piers in the St. Marys River began this year. Ten piers were inspected in June, while five Canadian-side piers will be inspected next spring. The inspected piers continue to be in fair condition, with no appreciable changes from prior inspections.

IBA maintenance staff wrapped up a busy and successful year, completing 86 percent of the routine maintenance work items from the 2022 FCM report. Good weather in the fall also allowed them to address 74 percent of routine maintenance work items identified in the 2023 routine detailed inspection, setting staff up well to achieve their goals for 2024-2025.

In addition to routine maintenance work, IBA maintenance staff cleaned and coated about 440 feet of the green pedestrian rail on the U.S. approach. Staff also repaired a large section of delaminated concrete on a lower pier base. This complex project involved removing and replacing four cubic yards of concrete in an area under the bridge inaccessible to vehicle traffic. Staff descended more than 100 feet on movable scaffolding, removed the bad concrete and then pumped the new concrete down from the bridge deck.

The IBA's maintenance staff also completed an unscheduled bridge deck project with assistance from Michigan Department of Transportation staff. An epoxy friction surface

was applied to almost 45,000 square feet of deck surface in late July. The total project cost was \$229,735, a savings of \$137,265 over the estimate for similar work performed by a contractor.

In other business, the board elected officers for the coming year. The SSMBA board consists of up to eight members: four Michigan members appointed by the governor and four Canadian members appointed by The Federal Bridge Corporation Limited, a crown corporation located in Ottawa, Ontario.

Board member Natalie Kinloch of Apple Hill, Ontario, was elected as the 2025 chair of the SSMBA board of directors. The other Canadian members are Karen Richards, Thye Lee and Rémi Paquette.

Linda Hoath of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, was elected vice chair for 2025. The other U.S. representatives are Nicholas White, Scott Shackleton and Thomas Buckingham Sr.

The board set its 2025 meeting dates for Feb. 20, May 22, Aug. 14 and Nov. 20.

Mackinac Bridge Authority approves credit card convenience fees, lower deposit limits for MacPass

ST. IGNACE — Recognizing the increased costs for credit and debit card transaction fees, the Mackinac Bridge Authority has approved collecting a 2.3 percent convenience fee for tolls paid by credit cards to recoup some of those expenses.

Authority members cited the rising costs of transaction fees from credit card companies, which totaled \$341,761.51 in 2024, as the reason for the new convenience fees. The current average credit card fees for tolls paid is 3.07 percent; roughly 12-13 percent of all tolls are paid by credit card.

"Though this convenience fee will not cover all credit card processing costs, it will help defray those costs in a way that will allow us to continue directing most of our toll revenues to the never-ending job of maintaining and operating the Mackinac Bridge," said Authority Chairman Patrick "Shorty" Gleason.

The convenience fee will add roughly \$0.09 for the typical \$4 toll for passenger vehicles. The new fee took effect Jan. 1, 2025.

Customers who pay in the toll lanes can avoid the credit card fees by paying cash. MacPass holders can make deposits with cash or electronic checks to avoid the fees.

To make it easier for customers to open and refill their MacPass commuter toll program accounts, the Authority also reduced the initial account minimum deposit from \$80 to \$40, and refill deposit minimums from \$50 to \$20. Those changes are expected to take effect Dec. 1, or as soon as possible.

Noting the relatively higher credit card processing fees for American Express, currently at 4.79 percent, the Authority also approved discontinuing acceptance of those credit cards for payment effective on Jan. 1, 2025.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AOT Hours Change for Winter

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
 Saturday 11 a.m - 6 p.m., CLOSED Sunday

Reminder: Inclement Weather Policy

Just a friendly reminder about the Inclement Weather Policy. Please remember if Bay Mills Community College, Ojibwe Charter Schools, AND Brimley Area Schools ALL have announced a closure OR delay, BMIC Tribal Government will AUTOMATICALLY delay the start of the work day until 10 a.m. A determination of a full closure will be made by 9 a.m. and conveyed via an all-users email, Facebook, etc. If you have any questions on this, please feel free to reach out to your immediate supervisor.

BMIC Members reminded about Purchased Referred Care

If you or a family member seek emergency medical care you must inform the office within 72 hours of your care by calling them to get help with payment. Elders have up to 30 days to contact PRC. This includes visits to the emergency room or use of an ambulance. You can reach them by contacting 906-248-8326.

Have you moved? Update your address!

Bay Mills Tribal Enrollment office asks all tribal citizens to maintain a current address with their office. An online form can be found at www.baymills.org.

Walking path is closed to motorized vehicles

BMIC has developed a pedestrian/bicycle path connecting both sides of the Reservation. This path is for pedestrians and bicyclists only, and our existing tribal ordinances prohibit motorized vehicles from using this path. Signs have been posted. Please be aware that BMPD has been directed to strictly enforce this rule along that pathway to protect walkers, runners, cyclists, and the path itself. If you ride an ATV, ORV, dirt bike, motorcycle, golf cart, etc on this path, you should expect to receive a ticket and pay a fine.

**Bay Mills Indian Community
CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEE
POSITIONS OPEN**

Tasks

- ✿ Attend meetings once a month or on an emergency basis
- ✿ Maintain confidentiality of meetings
- ✿ Give input on Child Welfare Cases for BMIC
- ✿ Be an enrolled member of the Bay Mills Indian Community

How to apply

- ✿ Write a letter of interest to Bay Mills Executive Council sharing your qualifications and requesting to join the Child Welfare Committee.

APPLY BY FEB. 1ST

Tribal Administration Address:
12140 W Lakeshore Dr, Brimley, MI 49715

The AMA/COP/EUP/IOSCO Bus Driver Training Consortium announces a:

BEGINNING BUS DRIVER TRAINING

**February 14, 2025: 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
 February 15, 2025: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.**

Location

St. Ignace Area Schools
 W 429 Portage Road
 St. Ignace, MI 49781

- \$45 per driver (lunch is included both days & dinner on Friday)
- Drivers must attend both days of training
- Because of class size limitations and lunch costs, districts will be billed for no shows.

Please complete the registration form & mail or fax to:
 EUPISD, Attn: Tracy McCord, 315 Armory place, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783
 Fax (906) 632-1125 or register on line at:
<https://www.eupschools.org/Page/3042>
 Registration forms must be completed *and* signed by the transportation supervisor

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