



DRYDEN

Media Release

Alyssa Donais is the recipient of the 2025 Ogiimapiness (Leonard Sky) “Building Bridges” Award

DRYDEN, ON – May 23, 2025 – The Working Circle presented Alyssa Donais with the Ogiimapiness (Leonard Sky) “Building Bridges” Award, which recognizes an individual, business, or organization who has demonstrated leadership in enhancing diversity, respect, harmony, equality, and humility for others.

With the award, she also received the special gift of a Star Blanket. The blanket demonstrates great respect, honour, and admiration for the recipient. The giver of the blanket holds the individual in very high regard, and when placed on the recipient, it is wrapping them with respect and admiration. The Star Blanket also brings good dreams, prosperity, and protection.

The Ogiimapiness (Leonard Sky) “Building Bridges” Award was conceived in 2015 to honour Leonard Sky, a long-time teacher, and Elder in the Dryden Area. His Anishinaabe Heritage and Language courses at Dryden High School opened many students’ eyes to their shared history, increased their pride in their culture and language, and began building bridges and better understanding in Dryden and surrounding area. The award was previously sponsored by the Dryden Area Anti Racism Network (DAARN) and as of 2023 has transitioned to the City of Dryden Working Circle to be administered.

Alyssa is currently the Indigenous Language Lead for the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board (KPDSB) and previously taught the Native as a Second Language class at Dryden High School. In her work and outside she practices patience, kindness and a thoughtful nature while also speaking out when change is needed as well as championing her students and community Indigenous language speakers.

In her roles with KPDSB, Alyssa has made a significant impact by advocating for Indigenous language teachers. She provides essential professional development,





DRYDEN

Media Release

support, and resources, ensuring that these educators feel valued and empowered. Her work extends beyond the classroom, as she collaborates with community partners, post-secondary institutions, and the Ontario College of Teachers to encourage anti-oppressive and forward-thinking practices.

Alyssa is known for her remarkable combination of patience, kindness, courage, and honesty, within and extending outside of her professional life. She is an advocate who speaks up for what she believes in, using her voice to amplify the wisdom and experiences of community Indigenous language speakers. Alyssa challenges outdated methods and encourages a progressive, decolonized approach to recognizing teacher qualifications, ensuring that lived experience is honoured.

Her recent initiatives have already led to significant positive changes in the area of Indigenous languages within KPDSB's school communities. Alyssa supports teachers at all levels—whether they are experienced, new, fluent speakers, or learners—always treating them with respect and dignity. Her creation of community-focused newsletters, which include the voices of local communities, exemplifies her commitment to inclusive communication.

The members of the Working Circle would like to thank the community for all the nominations received and to recognize the many people who work to make our community a better place for all.

Media Contacts:

Ted Mitchell, Working Circle Co-Chair
tedjmitchell@hotmail.com

Catherine Kiewning, Working Circle Co-Chair
ckiewning@dryden.ca

