



**Mikinakoos**  
Children's Fund



# Annual Report

## 2024 - 2025

# Letter From the Board Chair

First and foremost, I want to express my most heartfelt thanks to each and every person who supported Mikinakoos Children's Fund this year. Your contributions have made a true difference in the lives of children in remote First Nations communities.

We experienced a lot change to the organization in the last 12 months. This year we said good-bye to our dear friends Emily Shandruk, Executive Director, and Kielly McDonough, Marketing & Database Manager. We sincerely thank them for their hard work and dedication during their time with Mikinakoos. In November, we welcomed Stephanie Paxton as our new Executive Director. She has brought a wealth of fundraising and leadership knowledge to our organization. We also welcomed Will Scholz, who spearheads our marketing initiatives from Southern Ontario. Despite this transition, we are proud to say that Mikinakoos continued to assist children across the 33 First Nations communities we serve in a full and meaningful way.

From celebrating student achievements to preparing kids for a successful return to school, each season brought meaningful opportunities to connect and give. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters — including Sprucegrove Foundation, PepsiCo, TD Ready Commitment, the Knights of Columbus, WestJet and others — we expanded our reach significantly. Our Winter Coat Drive more than doubled in size, providing over 1,400 coats to children in communities across the region. We were also able to deliver warm clothing and hockey gear to Cat Lake First Nation in support of a local youth tournament — a joyful and memorable experience.

These accomplishments are a testament to the strength of collaboration and the shared commitment to ensuring northern children have the tools, care, and recognition they deserve. We're excited to build on this momentum in the year ahead.

As I think back to all that we accomplished throughout 2024-2025, I am overwhelmed by the support, commitment, kindness, and generosity I see from each and every one of our supporters. Support from donors such as YOU makes the true difference in how we can affect real change for children in First Nations communities.

Kitchi Meegwetch!

**Colleen Martin**  
Board Chair for Mikinakoos Children's Fund







## Our Team

2024 was a year of tremendous growth and change for the small yet mighty team at Mikinakoos.

After years of dedicated leadership, Emily Shandruk, Executive Director concluded her time at Mikinakoos. We welcomed Stephanie Paxton, an experienced nonprofit veteran, as our new Executive Director.

We also welcomed Will Scholz as our new Marketing and Database Manager, stepping in for Kielly McDonough.

### **Stephanie Paxton**

Executive Director

### **Paula Bernier**

Supply Chain Manager

### **Will Scholz**

Marketing and Database Manager

## Our Mission

To improve the quality of life for First Nations Children in remote northwestern Ontario, while meeting their immediate physical needs for food, clothing and basic amenities

## Our Vision

A world where every First Nations child is lifted from poverty and lives the good life as described by First Nations teachings.

## Our Programs

We work across 33 First Nations communities in Northern Ontario to administrate our three major programs:

1. **Backpack Program**
2. **Warm Clothing**
3. **Healthy Living**

# Year at a Glance

## Our Impact



**Over 2,000** Youth Supported



**Twelve Communities** Served



**21 Shipments** of Supplies  
Distributed

"Donations that allow students to be active have a major impact on the physical and mental health of community members both young and old"

- **Michael Kecskeméti**  
**Nibinamik First Nation**



## Key Milestones

### March

**\$3,500** provided to Bearskin Lake for volleyball tournament

### June

North Star Air golf tournament raised **\$18,500** for Mikinakoos

### September

**150 back-to-school backpacks** sent to Keewaywin by Sprucegrove Foundation

**300 backpacks** sent to Fort Hope First Nation thanks to PepsiCo on NDTR

### November

**1400 winter coats** provided through Giving Tuesday fundraiser

### February

West Jet donates **1,300 pounds** of hockey gear to Cat Lake First Nation

# Warm Clothing Program Highlights

## 1,400+ Winter Coats Funded by Mikinakoos, TD and Knights of Columbus

Back in 2023, Mikinakoos distributed 480 winter coats across 18 First Nations communities. In 2024, we set a goal of beating this record, and thanks to our generous donors, meaningful partnerships and community support, Mikinakoos effectively tripled that number!

The success of this GivingTuesday coat drive was largely due to three main groups of supporters. First and foremost, **Mikinakoos donors raised an incredible \$11,372**, coming out in droves to support our mission.

We also received an incredibly generous **\$25,000 donation from the TD Ready Commitment Fund** as part of a two-year donation commitment.

Last but certainly not least, we teamed up with the Knights of Columbus Thunder Bay chapter, who matched the number of winter coats purchased for First Nations children in remote communities, **doubling the initiative's impact from 700 to 1400 coats**. This marked the second year of partnership between Knights of Columbus and Mikinakoos - and it's been an incredible success so far!

Miigwetch to everyone that made this fundraiser a success!







# Backpack Program Highlight

## PepsiCo Backpacks

On National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, we had the honour of speaking at PepsiCo Canada's headquarters in Mississauga, ON on the history and significance of this important day. Afterwards we worked alongside volunteers to assemble backpacks for the Indigenous youth of Fort Hope First Nation — where a devastating fire recently destroyed their school.

By the end of the day, our teams had smashed our goals and packed **300 backpacks** with notebooks, pens, water, and non-perishable snacks.

## Keewaywin Graduation Feast

In June, members of school administration from Keewaywin First Nation reached out to Mikinakoos requesting our help in procuring food for an upcoming grade 8 graduation ceremony.

Our Supply Chain Manager, Paula, personally delivered **over \$1,000 worth of fresh fruit, vegetables and other healthy, non-perishable snacks** to Keewaywin to celebrate the academic achievements of the community's youth. Everyone left the event with a full stomach and big smiles!



# Healthy Living Program Highlights

## Bearskin Lake Volleyball Tournament

In March 2025, Mikinakoos was contacted by the community in Bearskin Lake First Nation requesting support in funding their upcoming youth volleyball tournament.

Thanks to the ongoing support of our monthly donors, Mikinakoos was able to contribute **\$3,500** to cover their administrative fees and help subsidize additional costs including equipment and refreshments.



## WestJet Donates Hockey Gear to Cat Lake First Nation

For the fourth consecutive year, Mikinakoos received a generous donation from Canadian airline **WestJet**, directly benefiting youth in the remote First Nation community of Cat Lake. This year's initiative saw an impressive **1,300 pounds of gear** collected from local hockey communities in the Oakville and Milton areas, reinforcing the commitment to making sports accessible for Indigenous youth.

The Mikinakoos team personally travelled to Cat Lake to deliver the hockey gear, along with several hundred pounds of clothes, much to the children's delight.





# Supporter Spotlights

## SpruceGrove Investment Management - Corporate Donor

The Sprucegrove Foundation is one of Mikinakoos' newest and most engaged corporate partners. In May 2024 they arrived with a splash, committing \$10,000 to Mikinakoos quarterly for the next year.

"We believe in the power of community and are committed to standing alongside Mikinakoos as they continue their vital work. We are contributing to a future where every child has access to the essentials they need for a healthy and fulfilling life."

- **Sabu Mehta**  
**Chair of the Sprucegrove Foundation**

## Backpack Event

Thanks to the Sprucegrove Foundation, 150 backpacks filled with essential school supplies and snacks were distributed to students in Keewaywin First Nation in September 2024.

Accessible only by air or winter roads, Keewaywin faces significant challenges in obtaining everyday items. The distribution of these supplies was crucial for students as they began the new school year and helped ensure they have the resources they need to succeed.





# Supporter Spotlights

## North Star Air - Corporate Donor and Fundraiser

North Star Air is a longtime supporter of Mikinakoos. In 2024/2025, North Star Air provided essential logistical support by sending several key shipments of clothing to remote communities. Their support was crucial in transporting Mikinakoos staff to these communities through the provision of no-charge chartered flights.

### 2024 Annual Charity Golf Tournament

In 2024, North Star Air held their third annual Charity Golf Tournament in support of Mikinakoos, **raising over \$18,000** to support youths in remote First Nations communities. The funds raised went to support Mikinakoos' core programming - our backpack, healthy living and warm clothing programs.



### Mikinakoos Monthly Donor Spotlight

“As I have contributed over the past few years, I have watched Mikinakoos Children's Fund expand to meet identified children's needs. (Mikinakoos is) an organization that retains highly motivated, accessible and qualified staff and their goals are based on the needs identified in the communities they support. I have been made to feel like a partner in meeting the needs of children in the north and removing barriers to their well being.”

- Susan V. on 'why she gives'

# Annual Financial Overview

<b>Total Income</b> \$330,827.74	<b>Total Expenses</b> \$234,417.68	<b>Net Surplus</b> \$96,410.06
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Income Type	Total - \$330,827.74
Non-profit Income (donations, grants, fundraising)	\$303,327.74
Service Revenue (FEDNOR partnership)	\$27,500.00

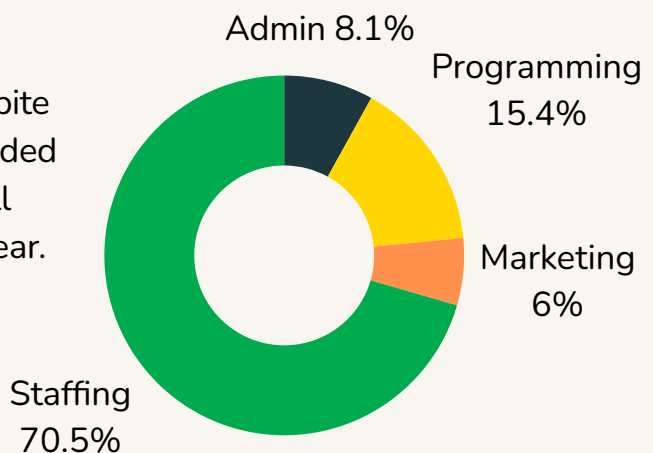
Expense Type	Total - \$234,417.68
Staffing Costs	\$165,302.28
Programming Expenses (supplies, shipping, etc.)	\$36,122.84
Marketing and Promotional Costs	\$14,139.33
Professional Services & Other Admin	\$18,853.23

## In Summary

In 2024–25, most of Mikinakoos' spending went to programs, staff, and supplies. Despite a slow year due to staffing changes, we ended the year with a \$96,410 surplus, which will help us support even more children next year.

We're grateful to our donors, partners, and funders for making this work possible.

## Expenses Visualised





# You've Seen the Impact. Now Be Part of It.

2024 was an amazing success. With your help, 2025 can be even better.

Your support helps ensure children have what they need be healthy and happy in their own community.



**SCAN TO DONATE**

Thank you to all our donors and volunteers! For a full list of Supporters, visit our website.



## Questions? Contact Us

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