



CULTURAL AWARENESS

The 'Wake The Giant' project aims to contribute to co-creating an inclusive community, by helping to identify, and increase welcoming and inclusive spaces in the city of Thunder Bay for Indigenous people.

We invite local businesses and organizations to put a Wake the Giant window decal at their location, proudly displaying the logo. By doing so, local businesses and organizations are signifying that they are identifying their location as a welcoming and inclusive space and are committed to teaching their employees and the community at large, to be more inclusive and welcoming.

We have a goal to see this logo come to represent a positive shift, and a symbol of ever-improving cross-cultural relations in Thunder Bay, and perhaps, beyond. In the face of negative national spotlight on Thunder Bay, Wake the Giant is an opportunity and an invitation to Thunder Bay to be a leader in Canada, for healthy Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations.

Most Indigenous students needing to come to Thunder Bay for school (as there are no other options), are required to leave their family, friends, and all that is familiar to them. Imagine at the age of 13, having to make the choice to leave friends, family, and home community, just to receive an education. Many Indigenous youth who leave home to attend school in Thunder Bay, move in, and live with a complete stranger. Every routine, every path they walk, every way of life completely changes. For most students, this is the first time they have ever interacted with a traffic light.

Additionally, these students may be coming from backgrounds with drug, alcohol and/or even sexual abuse, and families that have been destroyed through years of abuse at the hands of colonialism, and especially, the residential school system (the last one closed in 1996). When you throw a big rock in the water there is a big splash. That big splash quickly disappears, but the ripples can continue to have effects for generations.



Please be welcoming to these youth. They need all of the support they can get. Walk a mile in their shoes, and show compassion and support to help them thrive as they approach adulthood while attending school in Thunder Bay.

We invite you to consider the above, as we work together in partnership to co-create an inclusive community here in Thunder Bay.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- 1. BE AN INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING SPACE.** Local businesses, organizations, and their employees can pledge to be more welcoming to Indigenous youth and people, and work to increase awareness and understanding of Indigenous people, culture and history. If Indigenous youth tell you something is happening to them, please listen and address their concerns. Be compassionate to the challenges they are facing. Help them in any way that you can, and/or provide them resources where they can seek the professional help if required.
- 2. USE RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE.** Language can connect people, and can show openness and willingness to understand. For example, instead of referring to indigenous people as “Indians” or other disrespectful terms, rather, ask how an Indigenous person/people would like to be referred to. This may include, but is not limited to: ‘First Nations,’ ‘Metis,’ or ‘Inuit’ and perhaps their traditional individual name from their home community.
- 3. INCREASE AWARENESS.** Make an individual effort to increase your understanding and awareness of Indigenous cultures, and the challenges indigenous youth face on a daily basis. There are plenty of Indigenous events happening around the city throughout the year. Consider attending one or more of these events.
- 4. Acknowledge in a positive way.** Do not profile the youth. The students at Dennis Franklin Cromarty School report every year in an annual school survey that they experience being followed by staff members in local shops because the workers think they might steal. Acknowledge Indigenous youth in a positive and meaningful way, regardless of the color of their skin, looks, or clothing. Interact with



them in a positive and meaningful way.

5. SPEAK UP. “In the words of Martin Luther King, “In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends” The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty endured in the hands of the few, but the silence of the many. We encourage you to speak up and address racism or oppression if you witness it, and talk to your friends, coworkers, and family members. Let’s contribute to positive change in Thunder Bay by speaking up. Be a leader to the rest of Thunder Bay by contributing to co-creating an inclusive community.

6. BE WELCOMING. Let’s make an inclusive community together. Often the shyness by Indigenous youth has been mistaken for rudeness. Indigenous youth can be very shy and often need time to warm up, feel safe, and some prompting to talk. It is surprising how far a “Hi! How is your day going?” can go to make these students feel more welcome. These students can react very well to humor, food, and a quiet and calm voice. Social settings that are common in the city, can sometimes be overwhelming for them. It may take a few attempts, but they are open to connecting with people that put in the effort. Be friendly, open-minded, open-hearted and treat everyone with respect.

Uneducated Opinions Addressed by Wab Kinew

Please watch this clip with employees:

STROMBO: SOAP BOX: Wab Kinew: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1kuRCXdu5A>

Help us spread the word and raise awareness by sharing how your business or organization is participating in Wake the Giant on social media. Be sure to include #WaketheGiant.



wakethegiant.ca
Facebook: facebook.com/wakethegiant807
Instagram: @wakethegiant807

