

ON NEWS

YOUR ONTARIO NORTHLAND EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER



Walking the Path: The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund and Ontario Northland's Commitment to Legacy

On a cold October night in 1966, a 12 year-old Anishinaabe boy named Chanie Wenjack died beside a set of railway tracks in northwestern Ontario. He had been trying to walk more than 600 kilometers home after fleeing the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora.

His death, caused by starvation and exposure, became one of the most haunting symbols of Canada's residential school system and the harm inflicted on Indigenous children and families for generations.



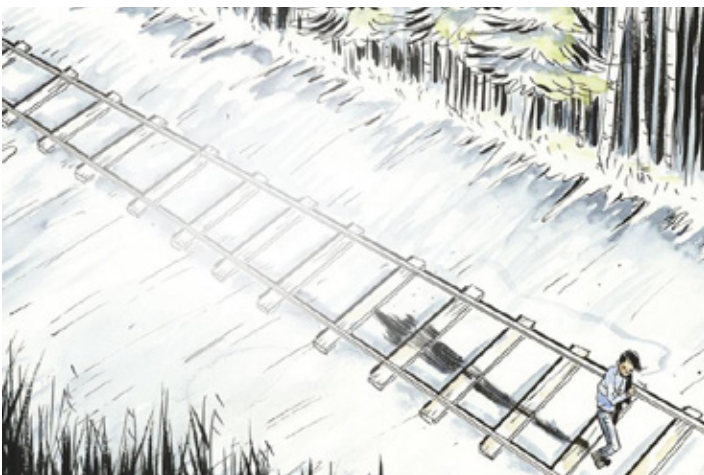


More than half a century later, Chanie Wenjack's story continues to move Canadians, not only as a tragedy, but as a call to action.

Inspired by Chanie's life and death, the late musician Gord Downie, of the Tragically Hip, brought national attention to residential schools through his 2016 multimedia project *Secret Path*. That same year, the Downie and Wenjack families came together to create what is now known as the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF), an organization dedicated to advancing reconciliation through education, awareness, and action.

The Fund's mission brings together a simple but powerful idea: reconciliation is not a moment in time, but an ongoing responsibility shared by all people in Canada. Through public campaigns, learning initiatives, and partnerships with organizations across the country, DWF encourages Canadians to move beyond awareness and toward what it calls "reconciliACTION", taking meaningful steps that create lasting change.

One of the most visible expressions of this approach is the Legacy Spaces Program.



What is a Legacy Space?

Legacy Spaces are physical, welcoming environments created in workplaces and public institutions. Each space is designed to encourage reflection, conversation, and ongoing education, while focusing on Indigenous voices, artwork, and perspectives.

Ontario Northland: Bringing Reconciliation Home

In Northern Ontario, where Chanie Wenjack was born, where railways have long connected communities, and where Indigenous Nations continue to shape the region's identity, the need for reconciliation feels especially close to home.

Ontario Northland's Indigenous Engagement Coordinator, Janie McLeod, notes that rail has played a powerful role in shaping Canada's past and will continue to do so in the future with the upcoming launch of the *Northlander*.

"This partnership shows a shared commitment to move forward with intention, strengthen relationships with the communities served, and deliver a more respectful and inclusive passenger experience," says McLeod.

Continuing the Journey

In May, the On Board Services Team received the first training program in preparation for the return of the *Northlander* with training now available for all employees.

Chanie Wenjack's story is both painful and powerful. Employees are encouraged to visit downiewenjack.ca for more information and regularly seek out courses available on ONLearn.



Message From the CEO

The second edition of the 2026 ON News celebrates the tremendous excitement alive in our organization, as our team continues to achieve significant milestones on major programs.

With the new era of the Northlander service just around the corner, our staff are now preparing for in-service. Onboard training, system testing, emergency preparedness, and track infrastructure are just a few examples of work currently underway.

Warmer weather also brings important infrastructure and maintenance work for our railway and facilities alike. Investments in tie replacement work, bridges, culverts, and grade crossings will be areas of focus in the coming months.

Our Remanufacturing and Repair Centre continues to fulfill timely and best in class work, recently completing for the first time, an entirely refurbished bilevel 2 coach in under 10,000 hours and returning our first refurbished locomotive to Metrolinx.

With so much to be proud of and so much excitement ahead, I encourage all staff to continue to work together, celebrate successes and take some time to enjoy the warm summer weather.

- Chad





ONE System Will Connect Ontario Northland Through A Single Platform

Ontario Northland is advancing toward a more connected and modern workplace with the rollout of the Ontario Northland Enterprise (ONE) System. This new platform will consolidate the organization's key business functions – procurement, supply chain, inventory management, finance, human resources, payroll, manufacturing, and customer relationship management – into a single, integrated system.

Replacing several aging legacy systems, the ONE System is designed to create a single access point for employees across the organization, improving reporting, data accuracy and transparency.

Joel Stopper, ONE Project Lead for Human Resources, explains the goal is to keep the important work employees already do while making processes more efficient. "Everything we need to accomplish our work in Human Resources will still be possible with the ONE Project, though the methods may be new. Ultimately, we're aiming for greater efficiency so employees can focus on being proactive rather than reactive."

Standardizing information across departments is another key benefit. "The new system will let us standardize department data," Stopper adds, which will help Ontario Northland meet compliance and financial reporting requirements.

Project team members are collaborating with departments to make sure the system accurately reflects how employees do their work. Mackenzy Hebert, ONE Project Procurement Lead, highlights simplifying processes for busy staff as a top priority. "Employees already have a lot on their plates, so making things easier is crucial," she says. Spending time with teams to understand their daily tasks is key to the system's design.

Technical teams are gathering information about current systems to support the new design of the platform.

John Walsh, ONE Project Technical Lead, says, "Early work has focused on mapping existing systems and data flows, so the team can understand how everything fits together and begin designing the new environment."

The project will progress through several phases, starting with the Align Phase, where the ONE team agrees on how to configure the system. While departments like Finance, Human Resources, Procurement, and Payroll will experience the biggest changes, the ONE System will eventually impact every employee.

"Even if your only interaction is downloading a pay stub or entering a timecard, those processes will be updated," Walsh says. By consolidating multiple systems into one platform, the ONE Project will enhance efficiency, strengthen reporting, reduce manual tasks and support a more connected organization for the future.



Leveraging Ontario Northland's Engineering Expertise

The Engineering Team at Ontario Northland continues to combine project scope with practical work on the Remanufacturing and Repair Centre (RRC) shop floor on many of Ontario Northland's major projects.

Brad Hyndman is an Engineering Specialist in his fifth year working as a part of the engineering group. Working under the leadership of Senior Manager of Engineering and Quality Assurance, Ian Westerberg, the team includes four Engineering Specialists, along with a Designer and a Materials Procurement Specialist.

"Our main goal is to provide technical support to the production group," Hyndman says. "We write detailed instructions on how to disassemble and reassemble the cars based on the criteria listed in the scope."

That process requires an understanding of both the equipment and the refurbishment process. "We're pretty hands-on and often provide technical troubleshooting," Hyndman says. "Even though we'd like everything standardized, there are often differences due to wear and damage."

When issues arise, such as damaged floor panels, the engineering team works with production crews to determine whether components should be repaired or replaced and how the work should be completed. By using tools such as AutoCAD and SolidWorks, the team can develop CAD and 3D models to recreate components or design new ones.

"We often find damaged parts that need to be replaced, so we'll reverse engineer them and create our own solution," Hyndman says.

Those designs are then turned into prototypes with support from Ontario Northland's fabrication shop before being tested and approved for use.

"The engineering field allows for a lot of flexibility," Hyndman says. "My background in materials science overlaps quite a bit with mechanical engineering."

That variety of experience is reflected across the engineering team. "Our group has diverse experiences," he says. "For example, Chris Church worked at a private engineering firm in a technical role before joining us, and brings a lot of mechanical aptitude and troubleshooting knowledge to the group."

In addition to providing day-to-day technical support, the Engineering Team also works on developing solutions for parts that may no longer be available or require redesign. Ontario Northland recently added a designer, Travis Desormeau, to strengthen in-house drawing and design capabilities. The team also recently procured a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine, which allows them to produce custom high-pressure laminate panels used in the rail cars.

The new equipment has already generated excitement among the production staff.

"It's been great to see the interest from the shop floor," Hyndman says. "Some employees already have experience with this type of equipment, so it's created new opportunities within the shop."

Looking ahead, the Engineering Team will continue to support the organization's commitment to excellence for new and ongoing projects at Ontario Northland.



From left to right: Vincent Leggett, Matthieu St-Onge, Chris Church, Brad Hyndman, Travis Desormeau, Tom Chalykoff



Northlander Onboard Menu Takes Shape

A major milestone for the Northlander project is beginning to take shape: deciding what will be on the menu.

Director of Passenger Operations and Customer Experience, Bob Sloss, says early discussions were shaped by the design of the train equipment that supports in-seat food and beverage service, rather than a full dining car.

“We are focusing on how to deliver a high-quality experience,” Sloss says, pointing to considerations such as onboard service levels, pricing and bundling, and the need for hearty hot meals on trips that can extend up to 12 hours, particularly during the winter months.

Those goals had to align with the technical realities of the train itself. “We knew we’d have microwaves, ovens and refrigeration, so the goal became finding a partner that could support fresh food and prioritize oven-heated options while aiming for cleaner, healthier, fresher products.”

From the outset, ensuring accessibility across all service levels was a key priority. “One of the main points was that both Northlander+ and standard fare passengers should have access to a hot meal,” says Tina Irwin, Manager of Onboard and Food Services. Following a competitive procurement process, Aramark was selected as Ontario

Northland’s partner because of their ability to provide fresh food with an emphasis on Canadian sourcing.

Meals will be prepared and loaded based on passenger counts on the day of service, which will ensure freshness while minimizing waste. “We want to make sure there’s that sweet spot for having enough food, but not too much,” Sloss says.

No unused meals will go to waste. Irwin says, “Food travelling north will be offloaded in Cochrane and made available at the station and hotel which will benefit passengers who are arriving late or during times when local restaurants may be closed.”

Once the strategy and logistics were developed, the Passenger Services team worked with Aramark to finalize the menu itself. During a three-day event at the Aramark Culinary Innovation Centre, the team sampled more than 80 different meal options.

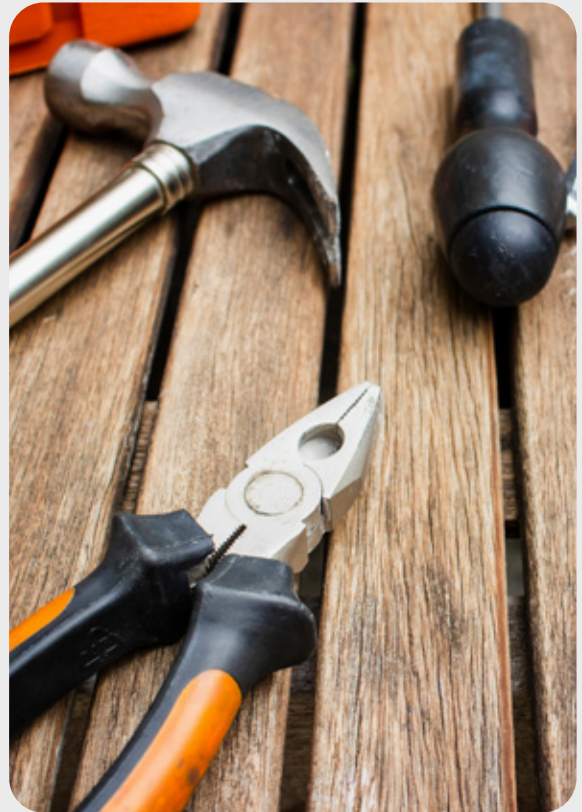
“We really put a lot of thought into what our customers are going to experience on our service,” Vice President of Passenger Rail and Motor Coach Services Tracy MacPhee says. “We know passengers will be travelling for different reasons, medical appointments, school or tourism, and it was important for us to reflect that in the options we’re choosing.”



Irwin says the result is a balanced menu that will offer variety, quality, including excellent breakfast and dinner selections. “We’re genuinely excited for our passengers to discover the thoughtful options we’ve chosen,” adding that meal items will be rotating regularly, on a three-month basis, to keep the offering current.

This is an approach that draws on the insights and experience learned from existing services like the Polar Bear Express. Senior Manager of Polar Bear Services and Hospitality Eric Rochon says, “We have a good understanding of what our current passengers like. Our team has been reviewing all of that as part of this process.”

MacPhee emphasized that the menu selection process will continue to evolve once service begins. “We’ll continue to listen to feedback,” she says. “We can adjust and work with the team at Aramark to make changes as needed.”



What's in Your Workday Toolkit?

Stay in the loop with Ontario Northland updates through the ON News, our weekly email, and the Dispatch app to keep up with everything happening across the organization.

In the months ahead, we'll be featuring more photos that showcase the tools, gear, and everyday essentials employees rely on to get the job done. We invite you to share your own photos and stories for a chance to be featured. Each week until September, submissions will be entered into a draw to win a Northlander long-sleeve t-shirt!

Looking for inspiration? Capture your go to tools or that one item you can't do without and show us what powers your workday or post a photo of you and your team suiting up in the proper safety gear to tackle your day!



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Employee Roadshow Brings Wellness Conversations Across Ontario Northland

During Mental Health Week, Ontario Northland's Human Resources Team took its annual Employee Roadshow on the road, connecting directly with employees across divisions and locations to promote wellness, support, and meaningful conversations around mental health.

This year's theme, Come Together, focused on reinforcing the importance of connection, psychological wellbeing, and ensuring employees know how to access the supports available to them and their families.

Throughout the roadshow, employees were encouraged to learn more about several key wellness initiatives, including:

- The Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
- The relaunch of Ontario Northland's Peer Support Program
- The renewed Wellness Committee
- Mental health resources and support services available across the organization

The roadshow also created opportunities for employees to engage directly with representatives from the Human Resources Team, helping foster awareness, and strengthen conversations around workplace wellbeing.

As Ontario Northland continues to grow and modernize, supporting the health, safety, and wellbeing of employees remains a key organizational priority. Initiatives like the Employee Roadshow help reinforce a culture where employees feel supported, connected, and empowered to reach out when they need assistance.

Employees interested in learning more about the Peer Support Program or available Wellness resources are encouraged to review the program materials located on the Human Resources page of the Junction under Total Rewards → Benefits Section.

Special thanks to operational leaders for promoting attendance to the event, and all employees who participated in making this year's Employee Roadshow a success.



Work Safe Recognition and Awards Program



Chad Parker and Glen Brownlee

Parker and Brownlee demonstrated exceptional awareness and initiative while working in the North Bay Rail Yard.

They detected an unusual sound coming from their locomotive. Instead of ignoring the subtle change, they took proactive steps to investigate the issue and promptly reported their findings to the rail mechanical team. This careful attention prevented a potential problem on-route, highlighting the importance of staying vigilant in maintaining workplace safety.



Cody Borgford

While riding at the leading end of a movement, Borgford noticed an irregularity on the track. Recognizing the potential risk, he promptly informed the engineer, who was then able to safely stop the movement before reaching the defect. Thanks to Borgford's keen observation and quick action, any damage to the track was avoided, and a possible incident was prevented.



Online Nomination

If you know someone who has gone above and beyond for safety, nominate them for a Work Safe Award on the Junction.



Pictured right, Ontario Northland was proud to return motor coach service to the newly renovated Englehart Train Station at 1 Railroad St., restoring passenger service to the site for the first time in 11 years.

STATION UPGRADES

North Bay



Englehart



Cochrane



Enhancing Railway Track Safety Through Instrumented Railcar Technology

Earlier this year, Ontario Northland and the National Research Council Canada (NRC) completed a collaborative research project to monitor track and vehicle performance across the network. Ontario Northland acquired an instrumented railcar for trial use, equipped with track geometry systems, ground penetrating radar and other sensors. The project recorded track data throughout the trial period on Ontario Northland's rail network and other short line railways across Canada.

"During its time on site, the instrumented car collected a range of data that we simply don't have access to through traditional inspection methods," says Paul-André Lajeunesse, Director of Rail Infrastructure at Ontario Northland. "While Transport Canada establishes thresholds for geometry-related defects, this project allowed us to look beyond regulated parameters and identify emerging safety risks earlier."

The instrumented rail car allows railways to transform raw sensor data into actionable safety intelligence, enabling the crews to prevent derailments, as well as target and prioritize areas that are more in need of maintenance. This creates a data driven approach to proactive rail safety management rather than reactive problem response.

Track related issues are a leading cause of main track derailments in Canada, and current inspection practices can be significantly enhanced by adding the data collected by the instrumented cars. Traditional approaches rely heavily on periodic track geometry inspections and visual inspections by human inspectors. However, these methods are limited in effectiveness and frequency, leaving gaps in detecting emerging or seasonal track defects. Advances in technology now make continuous monitoring feasible.

Autonomous Track Geometry Measurement Systems (ATGMS) enable more frequent track geometry measurements using in-service vehicles. Transport Canada's updated Track Safety Rules permit ATGMS for regulatory compliance. While railways expect ATGMS to enhance safety and reduce reliance on visual inspections, full validation and further research are still needed.

The Ontario Northland-NRC partnership highlights the value of measuring wheel-rail forces, which reveals how trains interact with track conditions. Instrumented Wheelsets (IWS), widely used in Europe but new to Canada, are currently the only technology for directly measuring these forces.

IWS offers a performance-based safety approach by identifying unsafe force combinations undetectable by geometry data alone. Research shows that IWS can pinpoint high derailment risk locations even when geometry measurements meet standards, and using IWS data for maintenance planning can significantly reduce safety risks and costs. Unlike wayside detectors, which monitor rolling stock defects (such as hot bearings or broken wheels), instrumented railcars with IWS focus on infrastructure-related risks, including track geometry issues, broken rails, failed joints, and deteriorating ties.

The project has enabled risk-based, data-driven maintenance planning by identifying current and emerging safety risks, tracking their growth over time, assessing seasonal effects, and evaluating the effectiveness of repairs. It also helps explore a shared technology model in which the instrumented car is used and shared across multiple Canadian railways, maximizing benefits at minimal additional cost.





A Former Co-Op Students' Full Circle Journey Back to Ontario Northland

When Mohammed Moidu first walked through the doors at Ontario Northland in 2019, he was a logistics and supply chain management student at Canadore College looking to complete his mandatory co-op placement.

"Working here really helped me understand how the public sector works," Moidu says. "It gave me experience and real-life learning."

As part of the curriculum, Moidu was required to complete an internship, and his professor encouraged him to consider Ontario Northland.

"I had previous experience working at an airport, so I was already in the transportation sector," Moidu explains. "She told me that working at Ontario Northland would help me with my career."

Moidu and a classmate connected with Jason Baker, Director of Strategic Procurement.

Rather than limiting the students to one function, Baker broadened their exposure across the organization.

"I wanted them to learn as much as possible about Ontario Northland," Baker says. "They saw purchasing, public procurement, stores and inventory operations, the entire supply chain asset. But we also went beyond that. I brought them into the rail yard, we went into the shops, and we climbed into a locomotive. We even built a train set one day. I wanted them to understand who we support and how everything connects."

For Moidu, that hands-on experience was eye-opening.

"Jason put me in different fields and helped me see what was available," he says. "I worked closely with project managers for a supply chain optimizing project. All of that helped me understand what kind of career might suit me best. That experience helped me get my first job in Canada," says Moidu. "I went to Voyager Aviation as a maintenance planning coordinator. The shop environment there was very similar to Ontario Northland. So, I already understood how things worked."

He would go on to become a Senior Maintenance Planner in aviation before returning to Ontario Northland this past December, this time as a full-time Maintenance Planner. "It feels like coming back home in a way," he says.

CORPORATE EVENTS TEAM

Our Corporate Events team had the opportunity to talk about the Northlander services at several high-profile events in communities throughout the Northlander corridor. Events include (from left to right) The Cottage Life Show, the Earlton Farm Show, the Outdoor Adventure Show, PDAC and FONOM.



PULL FOR UNITED WAY

"Pull for United Way" airplane pull was a huge success this year. Ontario Northland was represented by three different teams; The RailRoaders, Code and Muscles, and Freight Train, with Freight Train winning the event with the best time of 17.76. Congratulations to Jeff Wallace, Dave Whitehead, Dan Edmunds, Chris Fraser, Chis Hebert, Cam Dobson, Josh Beaton, Owen Belecque, Brad Mahar and Zach Bamford. The fundraiser supports the organization's Community Fund to assist local programs and agencies.





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Stop. Look. Listen.

Rail safety is
a shared responsibility.

