



Interim President and Vice-Chancellor's Report to the Board

March 2026

Message from Interim President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Sheila Embleton

Boozhoo, Aanii, Bonjour, Hello,

We welcome the Ontario government's recent post-secondary funding announcement. The province's \$6.4 billion investment over four years in the higher education sector, including \$284 million in new funding for small, rural, Northern and French-language institutions, signals a meaningful commitment to the long-term sustainability of Ontario's university sector. These investments will help create more than 70,000 fully funded post-secondary spaces for Ontario high school students across the province and support institutions like Algonoma University as we continue expanding access to high-quality education in our communities. As of the time of this report, we are currently reviewing the full details to better understand what this means for our campuses and students.

Since my last report in February, I have also had the opportunity to travel to India as part of a Universities Canada delegation of 21 Canadian university presidents. The mission was part of the renewed momentum in Canada-India relations and the relaunch of negotiations toward a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, in advance of Prime Minister Carney's visit to India in March. It was a timely and important moment to be on the ground, strengthening relationships and exploring where our academic institutions can work more closely together.

Over five days, we met with leaders from India's higher education sector, government and industry in Goa, New Delhi and Gujarat International Finance Tech (GIFT) City (near Ahmedabad), as well as officials from Canada's High Commission in Delhi. The conversations focused on advancing research collaboration, expanding knowledge exchange, and exploring sustainable models of transnational education. There is clear interest in deeper partnership with Canadian universities, particularly in areas tied to talent development, innovation and industry engagement.

Before the mission, I was pleased to sign a new Memorandum of Understanding with Parul University (Vadodara, Gujarat), and a broader Memorandum of Understanding and formal pathway agreement with our existing partner, Chandigarh University. After the mission, I signed a similar pathway agreement with North South University (Dhaka, Bangladesh), and with Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (Colombo, Sri Lanka). All these agreements reflect a shared commitment to expanding global learning and collaboration, with strong potential in student mobility, pathways, academic exchange and joint research initiatives. I also had an explanatory meeting with the University of the Liberal Arts Bangladesh.





Many exciting events and initiatives have taken place across our campuses since my February report, which I am pleased to highlight below.

63rd Annual Bon Soo Winter Carnival

Algonma University was proud to support the 63rd annual Bon Son Winter Carnival and the many community-centred events held throughout this winter celebration in Sault Ste. Marie. As part of this year's festivities, the University hosted the 20th annual Gathering at the Rapids Pow Wow on February 14 and 15 at the GFL Memorial Gardens. The milestone event, the largest in the region, welcomed over 6,000 visitors and participants who came together to celebrate the vibrant culture and enduring traditions of the Anishinaabe people. Congratulations to Algonma University's Makwa Waakaa'igan team, the Anishinaabe Initiatives Division, and the Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students' Association (SASA), for organizing this wonderful and successful milestone event.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to our many sponsors, especially our lead sponsor, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG), as well as the City of Sault Ste. Marie Tourism Development Fund, for their generous support. I am also grateful to Mayor Shoemaker, the Chiefs of Garden River First Nation and Batchewana First Nation for their presence and sponsorship. My thanks as well to OLG CEO Duncan Hannay for joining us at the Grand Entry, to MP Terry Sheehan for attending, and to the Bon Soo Winter Carnival organizing committee for providing a platform to promote the Pow Wow during their Opening Ceremonies.

Algonma U also supported and participated in the Hunger Freeze Food Drive at the Bushplane Heritage Centre, helping to address food insecurity in the region during the winter months. The fundraising initiative brought together university leadership, staff, and community members, many of whom took the plunge in support of local food pantries, including the AUSU Food Pantry. The 2026 event set a goal of raising \$5,000 or the equivalent in canned food items. Through its participation in Bon Soo, Algonma U continues to demonstrate its commitment to community engagement.

FNMI Open House

Recruitment efforts for the Spring 2026 semester are underway. We continue to prioritize college visits, education fairs, and in-class presentations to connect directly with prospective students. A new strategic initiative this year is the FNMI Open House that took place during the Pow Wow weekend. This marks the first time we are aligning an open house with this important community gathering, recognizing that many prospective FNMI students and their families would be present in the city. The weekend provided a meaningful opportunity to introduce future learners to campus in a setting that reflects the University's commitment to Indigenous learners and cross-cultural engagement.





Additionally, staff are participating in guidance-led events in both Brampton and Sault Ste. Marie, while organizing broader Spring Open House activities at both campuses to showcase our programs, student supports, and campus communities. Together, these efforts are intended to sustain enrolment momentum and strengthen our presence in key recruitment markets.

Alum Named to the Order of Canada

On behalf of the entire university community, I am proud to celebrate the appointment of alum John Willinsky to the Order of Canada in December 2025. His lifelong devotion to expanding public access to research has earned him one of Canada's highest civilian honours.

Willinsky earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Algoma University in 1974 and maintains deep ties to the Sault Ste. Marie community, where he also taught early in his career. These experiences helped shape his enduring commitment to education and the broad sharing of knowledge.

The Office of the Governor General of Canada recognized Willinsky's scholarship in learned publishing, highlighting his Public Knowledge Project, the world's most widely deployed scholarly publishing platform, with the mission of increasing public access to carefully reviewed and vetted research, supporting a greater democratization of knowledge.

Reflecting on his early years as an educator, Willinsky recalled, "One of the great inspirations for the Public Knowledge Project was when, as a school teacher in the 1970s, I could come by Algoma University's Arthur A. Wishart Library on Sunday afternoons with my wife at the time, Pam, and sit by the windows, absorbed and fascinated by what we could find in the library's latest journals and magazines."

Shirley Horn Recognized with Order of Ontario

I am pleased to share that Shirley Horn has been appointed to the Order of Ontario, a top provincial honour. This recognition celebrates individuals whose distinguished service and lasting contributions have helped strengthen Ontario and Canada.

A member of Algoma University's alumni family, Shirley completed her Fine Arts degree at Algoma U, holds an honorary doctorate, is a founding member of the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA), and served as the University's first Chancellor. A member of Missanabie Cree First Nation, she has devoted her life's work to advancing Indigenous rights, cultural preservation, education, and reconciliation across the province and beyond.

As an Elder and Residential School Survivor, Shirley's leadership and lived experience continue to shape dialogue, understanding, and healing in meaningful ways. On behalf of the Algoma University community, I extend my sincere congratulations to Shirley on this well-deserved honour.





2025 Strive Algoma Visionary Awards Gala

In January, members of the Algoma University community were celebrated at the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce (SSMCOC) 2025 Strive Algoma Visionary Awards (AVA). The annual gala brought together leaders and changemakers from across the region to recognize excellence and meaningful contributions by young professionals. Algoma University community members were nominated and honoured across multiple categories, reflecting the breadth of talent and commitment associated with the institution. Two outstanding Algoma University alumni were among this year's distinguished award recipients.

A 2025 Psychology graduate, Minion Paul received the Newcomer Achievement Award of Distinction in recognition of her exceptional commitment to equity, student leadership, and community service. Nina Toulouse, Anishinaabe kwe from Whitefish River First Nation, received the Indigenous Visionary Award of Distinction for her outstanding leadership and care on behalf of Indigenous students and community members.

Inaugural Brampton Connect

On January 20, Algoma University hosted the inaugural Brampton Connect at its Brampton campus. The new initiative, led by the Brampton Board of Trade, is designed to bring together local business leaders, entrepreneurs, and community partners to strengthen connections within the region's business community.

We were pleased to serve as the host venue for the launch event, in collaboration with Algoma U's National Centre of Excellence for Immersive Technology. The session highlighted how immersive technologies are being used by organizations to recruit talent, train teams, engage customers, and accelerate innovation. Participants also had the opportunity to experience interactive virtual reality (VR) demonstrations, showcasing practical applications of emerging technologies for industry.

Hosting the inaugural Brampton Connect on our campus reinforces our role as an active partner in the economic and professional development of the Brampton community.

Recent University Achievements

Algoma U Choir Raises Funds for AUSU Pantry: The Algoma University Choir concluded its end-of-term performance in December 2025 with a meaningful act of community support, raising \$500 and collecting donations for the Algoma University Students' Union (AUSU) Food Pantry through its concert. Members of the Choir formally presented the collected donation to the pantry, underscoring music's power to inspire community engagement and social good. The





initiative reflects the generosity of concert audiences and the shared commitment of students, faculty, and community members to supporting vital local services.

Alum at the 2026 Winter Olympics: I am pleased to share that the Algoma U community came together last month to celebrate and support distinguished alumnus Brad Jacobs as he prepared to represent Canada at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy. A gold medalist and graduate of our Bachelor of Arts in Geography program, Brad's journey from Algoma U classrooms and curling rinks to the world stage is a source of tremendous pride for our institution. This moment reflects the growing culture of academic and athletic excellence across our Thunderbirds varsity programs. We are proud to see Algoma alumni representing our university and our country at the highest levels of international competition, while inspiring the next generation of scholar-athletes currently studying on our campuses.

Since arriving in Italy, Team Jacobs has delivered a strong performance and has now officially secured a spot in the final. The gold-medal game against Great Britain on Saturday, February 21 is a remarkable achievement, and we extend our sincere congratulations to Brad and his teammates. The entire Algoma U community will be cheering them on as they compete for the gold medal at the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympics.

CUCOH National Conference: 21 Algoma University students from the Sault Ste. Marie and Brampton campuses recently participated at the 21st annual Canadian Undergraduate Conference on Healthcare (CUCOH), held at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. CUCOH is the largest student-run undergraduate healthcare conference in Canada, bringing together students from across the country to explore the evolving landscape of healthcare through keynote addresses, workshops, case challenges, and research presentations.

This marked Algoma University's first time attending the national conference, and I am pleased that Algoma University's fourth-year Environmental Science student, Jacob Kajnar, earned first place in the "Urban Capacity vs Rural Constraints: A Comparative Systems Analysis of ED Wait Times in Canada" case challenge. Shrishti Gupta secured second place, and Navdeep Kaur and Tanvi Malik earned third place, in the "Cultural Safety vs Service Delivery: A Co-Developed Reintegration and Wellness Program for Indigenous Youth" case.

OUA Wrestling Championships: Congratulations to the Algoma University Varsity Wrestling teams for delivering one of the strongest performances in program history, finishing fifth overall at the 2026 Ontario University Athletics (OUA) Wrestling Championships. The Thunderbirds earned three OUA Second Team All-Star selections, captured four medals, and demonstrated competitive depth across both the men's and women's divisions in a highly contested provincial field.

First-year finance and economics student Brandon Carrillo claimed a silver medal in the 57 kg weight class. Second-year English student Becca Gutteridge captured silver at 59 kg, while fourth-year history student Lilah Fraser also earned silver in the 83 kg category. Additionally,





third-year community, economic, and social development (CESD) student Rebecca Vann secured a bronze medal in the 50 kg division.

Chi-Miigwech, merci, and thank you for all you do for Algoma University.

