



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

May 2026

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

Boozhoo, Aanii, Bonjour, Hello,

I am pleased to share my May report, which provides an overview of recent developments, key priorities, and activities across the University.

This report includes an update on the 2026 Ontario Budget, as well as the recently approved two per cent tuition increase for domestic students for the 2026-27 academic year. I am also pleased to highlight our recognition of National Indigenous Languages Day, reflecting our commitment to truth and reconciliation. Additionally, this report captures a range of institutional updates from recent events and initiatives, underscoring the strength and vibrancy of our university community.

I would also like to congratulate Lorretta Neebar, University Registrar and Executive Director, Student Services, for being elected as Treasurer of the Ontario University Registrar's Association (OURA) for a two-year term. This is a well-deserved recognition of her leadership and expertise.

I look forward to the start of the Spring 2026 semester and the continued momentum across our campuses in the months ahead.

### Provincial Funding Announcement

Since the provincial government's announcement of an additional \$6.4 billion in funding over four years for post-secondary education, we have been working to determine the impact on Algonma University. Based on information from the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security (MCURES), official government funding to Algonma University, and the University's Strategic Mandate Agreement implementation requirements, we know that the new funding will, regrettably, not result in a significant funding boost for Algonma University that will stabilize our institution's finances – nor does it for any other university.

While Algonma University will receive some additional funding as part of the province's \$6.4 billion announcement, reflecting factors such as our location, size, and program mix, we do not anticipate a significant overall increase in provincial support. This is due in part to changes within the new funding framework that eliminate or consolidate certain previous funding streams.

We are continuing to work closely with government officials to ensure we have fully explored and assessed all available funding opportunities under this announcement. At the same time, it



is important to be transparent that, given the size of our domestic student population, the financial impact remains limited. We need to explore increasing our domestic student population in areas of high government priority, mostly STEM-related, in order to increase our per capita funding for domestic students.

Within this context, Algoma University's Board of Governors has approved a two per cent tuition increase for domestic students for the 2026-27 academic year. This marks the first tuition adjustment in eight years, following a prolonged period during which Ontario's university sector operated under a 10 per cent tuition cut and then freeze, in place since 2018.

The adjustment, while modest, provides some support for Algoma University's ongoing investments in academic excellence and the student support services that are central to the university experience. At two per cent, the increase does not keep pace with inflationary pressures, but it does offer limited additional capacity to help sustain program delivery, enhance learning opportunities, and maintain access to the supports students rely on to succeed.

Algoma University remains committed to affordability and continues to have some of the lowest tuition rates in Ontario. The University is also recognized as a leading institution in Canada for scholarship and bursary opportunities, helping to offset costs for many students.

### Awarding Honorary Doctorates

The University sought confirmation from MCURES regarding its authority to confer Honorary Degrees, as previously we appeared to be restricted to no more than one Honorary Degree per year and that could only be awarded at a convocation in Sault Ste. Marie. The Ministry has confirmed that, under the current provisions of the *Algoma University Act*, Algoma University holds full statutory authority to grant Honorary Degrees without legislative limits on number or frequency or campus. This clarification provides certainty moving forward that we are able to recognize additional recipients for their distinguished contributions.

### National Indigenous Languages Day

In recognition of National Indigenous Languages Day on March 31, 2026, Algoma University shared a powerful new episode of its faculty-led, award-winning podcast, *The Human Challenge*, featuring Dr. Shirley Horn, Elder, Survivor, Co-Founder of the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association (CSAA), and Algoma University's first-ever Chancellor.

Titled "Shirley: A Residential School Story," the episode is named in honour of Dr. Horn's newly released children's book. It offers a deeply moving account of her lived experience in two residential schools, her lifelong journey of healing, and her enduring commitment to community, education, and language revitalization.



Hosted by Professor Vanessa Ferlaino, and grounded in truth and reconciliation, the episode was recorded in the Shingwauk Anishinaabe Students' Association (SASA) lounge, Elders' room, located on the former grounds of the Shingwauk Indian Residential School. The thoughtful setting reflects the significance of Dr. Horn's return as both a former student and the University's first Chancellor, completing a deeply meaningful full-circle journey.

### 2025-26 Varsity Student-Athlete Awards

On March 20, Algoma University hosted the 2025–26 Thunderbird Varsity Student-Athlete Awards at Grand Gardens North, celebrating a standout year of athletic and academic excellence. This celebration is about more than awards. It is about recognizing the impact our student-athletes have as leaders, role models, and ambassadors for Algoma University. Leading this year's award winners, Becca Gutteridge (Wrestling) was named Female Athlete of the Year, while Brandon Carrillo (Wrestling) earned Male Athlete of the Year honours. Both athletes capped exceptional seasons with top performances at the USPORTS Championship and were also recognized as the Most Valuable Wrestlers for their respective programs.

The distinguished Dr. Lukenda Thunderbird Service Award was presented to Lilah Fraser (Wrestling), recognizing her leadership and commitment to community engagement. Ten graduating athletes were also recognized with the Thunderbird Award, celebrating their lasting contributions to Algoma University and the Thunderbird legacy.

The evening also honoured Danielle D'Ettorre (Women's Basketball) with the Thunderbird Wall of Fame Award, recognizing her exceptional playing career at Algoma University after earning national and provincial accolades as a Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) All-Canadian and Ontario Colleges Athletic Association (OCAA) Player of the Year during the 2006-07 season.

### Health & Safety Training

As part of the University's ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace, all Algoma University employees are required to complete legislated Health & Safety training. This training is crucial in ensuring that we all have the necessary knowledge and resources to work safely every day. The People and Culture department has communicated with employees across the University requesting them to complete this training through ADP, our Human Resources Information System.

### Recent University Achievements





**Not Dead Yet Concert:** Algonoma University's Music Program is celebrating the success of its *Not Dead Yet* Celtic-inspired concert, which drew a full house for an evening of live music, community spirit, and philanthropy on March 17. The sold-out event brought together students, faculty, and members of the wider community for a high-energy celebration of music and culture at the Sault campus' Speakeasy. Beyond the vibrant performances and full house, the concert made a meaningful impact, raising \$3,000 in support of the Algonoma University Music Program, with funds directed toward repairing and maintaining instruments used by students.

**Pancake & Pitches Competition:** In March, Algonoma University's Community Economic and Social Development (CESD) program hosted Pancakes & Pitches, a breakfast and Social Enterprise Pitch Competition, at the University's Speakeasy. A social enterprise is any form of organization whose central purpose is to create a positive social, environmental, or cultural impact in its community. The event brought together students, aspiring entrepreneurs, and community members to support local social innovation. Winners were selected by a panel of judges representing local entrepreneurial services across the city.

**ThunderHacks Hackathon:** Algonoma University's Faculty of Computer Science and Technology (FCST), in collaboration with the Algonoma University Computer Science Society (ALCOMS), successfully hosted ThunderHacks, the University's first-ever 24-hour hackathon. The event brought together more than 50 students, who were challenged to build technological solutions for three different scenarios: Frictionless Campus, Private Chatbot, and Customer Retention Platform. Participants were invited to collaborate, innovate, and build functional prototypes in teams with the opportunity to network with industry professionals, attend technical workshops, and compete for prize money.

**From Silence to Spotlight:** Algonoma University invited the community to join award-winning artist, author, podcast host, and sessional professor, Vanessa Ferlino, as part of the International Women's Month speaker series, "From Silence to Spotlight." Vanessa shared her journey as an underrepresented artist and explored how she uses music, work, and philanthropy to uplift other systematically excluded voices while increasing media representation.

**International Sustainability Challenge:** Algonoma University's BRIDGE Lab hosted an International Sustainability Challenge in March, which showcased the sustainability initiatives and activities happening at the Sault Ste. Marie campus as part of Sustainable Development Solution (SDG) Month Canada. The Sustainability Challenge is an interdisciplinary, practice-oriented course jointly developed by Algonoma University and Wirtschafts Universität Wien (WU, Vienna University of Economics and Business), one of Europe's leading business universities.

This innovative course challenged students to tackle real-world sustainability problems through collaborative, solutions-oriented learning, bridging academic theory with community impact. Canada's inaugural pilot marks the beginning of a growing partnership with WU Vienna, with





plans to expand the program to additional post-secondary institutions internationally in 2027. The event also featured the Anji Inaashkawun team's upcoming initiatives, water-related sustainability resources, Baawaating history, and arts integration focused on caring for water in the Upper Great Lakes region.

**World Men's Curling:** Congratulations to alumni E.J. Harnden (BBA Marketing '06) and Ryan Harnden (BA Geography '15) for winning silver medals at the World Men's Curling Championship in Utah over the Easter break. E.J., a 2006 graduate of Algoma University's Bachelor of Business Administration program, and Ryan, a 2015 graduate in Geography, have built remarkable careers in curling. Both are Olympic Gold Medallists from the Sochi 2014 Winter Games and continue to represent Sault Ste. Marie with excellence on the world stage.

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

