

2025 NOTO AWARD WINNERS



President's Award Winner – Mal Tygesson (Evergreen Lodge)

I am honoured to recognize Mal Tygesson who has dedicated over 40 years of service in the resource-based tourism sector in Northern Ontario. He began his career with a major lodge operator in Northwestern Ontario and later fulfilled his ambition of owning his own business, Evergreen Lodge, with his late wife, Pat.

Beyond successfully operating an American plan lodge, Mal has devoted significant time to volunteering on tourism organization boards, including NOTO and the Kenora District Camp Owners Association, since the late 1980s. He has contributed extensively to committees and working groups, advocating for sector solutions and protections through initiatives such as Ontario Lands for Life and local fisheries advisory groups.

Mal's expertise in policy and regulation has strengthened advocacy efforts for NOTO and KDCA. He has consistently represented the interests of Northern Ontario's tourism industry, articulating its unique challenges and collaborating on effective solutions.

Mal has received several awards over the years for his work on various initiatives.

- In 1991 he received the Conservation award for his involvement in the development of stringent fisheries regulations on Eagle Lake.
- In 1999 he was awarded the Executive Director's award for his assistance on a number of forestry and wildlife related issues.
- And in 2009 Mal was presented with the Bob Giles Award from the Deputy Minister of Tourism at that time for his tireless efforts toward the Ontario Living Legacy initiative.

Within the sector, he continues to serve as a reliable liaison and mentor for new business owners entering the tourism industry. He has been a regular NOTO convention and Northern Ontario Tourism Summit attendee who always has time to share tips of the trade or learn something new. In fact, last year was the first annual tourism conference he had missed since 1987.

Within the last few weeks, Mal successfully sold his business, and we wish him a very happy and well-deserved retirement.

It is my privilege to present the President's Award to Mal Tygesson of Evergreen Lodge.

Executive Director's Award Winner – Andrea McAvan (Lac Seul Floating Lodges)

This award recognizes a member whose dedication and hard work have significantly advanced the organization's mission. This year, we are proud to honour Andrea McAvan of Lac Seul Floating Lodges in Hudson, Ontario. Andrea consistently demonstrates her commitment to the industry by responding to surveys, providing valuable feedback, and volunteering for working groups. Her most

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notable contribution this year was giving her time to review and provide feedback on 92 pages of the Liquid Fuels Handling Code to help NOTO advocate for practical changes.

Her thoughtful and professional approach always considers the broader tourism sector, benefiting her peers and the industry as a whole. With over 40 years of family history in outdoor tourism, Andrea's reputation for collaboration and service to the greater good is truly exemplary. We thank her for her outstanding contributions and leadership.

Conservation Award Winner – Fern Duquette (Kashabowie Outposts)

This award is presented to a NOTO member who has incorporated unique conservation initiatives or education into their business model and/or has contributed substantially to conservation. According to NOTO archives, this award has a long history and was first awarded in 1973.

As a lifelong avid hunter, trapper, and founder of Kashabowie Outposts, Fern Duquette built a successful fly-in operation where he has shared his love for nature while promoting responsible resource use. Fern understands the importance of conservation and his business policies and personal actions have reflected this. His commitment to conservation and sustainable practices earned him a seat on the Big Game Management Advisory Committee, where he continues to champion wildlife and the outdoor tourism sector. In recognition of his lifelong dedication to wildlife conservation and the outdoor tourism sector, NOTO is pleased to present the Conservation Award to Fern Duquette.

Outfitter of the Year Award Winner – Nicole Archer (Moosehorn Lodge)

This award is presented to a tourism operator who has made an outstanding contribution to, and a significant impact in, the resource-based tourism industry.

Over her 23 years in the tourism industry, this recipient has shown unwavering dedication to promoting tourism, community development, and economic growth in Sioux Lookout and the surrounding region. She has shown exceptional leadership through her service with the local Chamber of Commerce and as President of the Sioux Lookout Hudson Tourism Association. Nicole Archer works to inspire a shared sense of purpose, bringing together businesses, residents, and visitors in a way that strengthens community ties and builds civic pride. Under Nicole's guidance, Moosehorn Lodge has doubled in size since her family assumed ownership in 2003, expanding its business model to serve both tourists and local residents. This inclusive approach has reinforced the lodge's role as a cornerstone of community life and a gathering place for shared experiences. Her contributions continue to make a lasting mark on both industry and the quality of life in the region. We are pleased to recognize Nicole as the 2025 Outfitter of the Year.

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Tourism Champion Award Winner – Bob Garson (Garson’s Fly-in Outposts)

The Tourism Champion Award is given to a person or persons who support a strong and united tourism industry. A person(s) who sees tourism in a much larger picture than their own specific business or role they play. They are dedicated to spreading the word about the value tourism to people locally, provincially, nationally, and/or globally.

Bob Garson exemplifies the term Tourism Champion. His dedication to the industry through his time on the NOTO Board of Directors is undeniable. Bob has been on the NOTO Board for most of the last 22 years. He first served as a director for 7 years then as Vice President for one, President for several terms for a total of 9 years and served as Past President in between. In his current term as President, he led NOTO through the pandemic. He spent countless hours calling members and checking in on the staff throughout this time and still does this today. His positivity is infectious, and his objectivity has helped provide strong leadership for the organization. Bob has received two Ministerial appointments; the Minister’s Mining Act Advisory Committee and the Big Game Management Advisory Committee. Bob is a strong advocate for resource-based tourism, particularly on matters of wildlife management, forestry or economic value. His unwavering support of the staff and NOTO’s members has not gone unnoticed. In recognition for years of exceptional leadership and dedication to Northern Ontario’s tourism industry, we are pleased to recognize Bob today as Tourism Champion.

Corporate & Community Champion of the Year Award Winner – The New Business

This award is presented to a Corporate & Community Champion in recognition of their dedication, support and participation in furthering the goals and objectives of NOTO and the outdoor tourism industry.

Through collaboration and leadership, Mike Jacobs and his team at The New Business continue to provide guidance, inspiration and innovative solutions to enhance Northern Ontario’s incredible tourism products and services. They are always more than happy to contribute at the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, engage with operators and DMOs, and offer valuable advice and support on initiatives and marketing. We are pleased to recognize The New Business as the 2025 Corporate & Community Champion of the Year.