



DATE: October 16, 2025
TO: Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
FROM: Keith Rolof, Chairman, Board of Regents
RE: Announcement of KBOCC's Next President

The Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (KBOCC) Board of Regents is pleased to announce that it has hired Ms. Melissa Kiesewetter as the next President of Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College. She is expected to assume the position on December 8, 2025. We welcome Ms. Kiesewetter's leadership as we begin the next chapter of Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College's history.

Melissa Kiesewetter currently serves as the Tribal Liaison for the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) at the State of Michigan. As the Tribal Liaison, Melissa works to ensure strong positive Tribal relationships, administers the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver program, frequently facilitates professional development training and gives presentations related to Tribal relations. Melissa assists the department with various education related projects. Much of her work focuses on equitable access to higher education as well as increased Native representation and strengthened Indigenous-centered resources for Native students. Melissa played an integral role in projects such as the development of Maawndoongan, an Anishinaabe educational resource manual that aligns with Michigan's social studies standards, and the Tribal/State training module, which provides foundational knowledge about government-to-government relationships for State of Michigan employees. Melissa also serves as a Vice Chairperson and board member with the Native American Heritage Fund and is a board member for the Michigan Center for Civic Education.

In the early years of her professional career, Melissa worked at several higher education institutions as a student affairs professional. Melissa worked at both of her alma mater institutions, Illinois State University and Michigan State University, and also served at Albion College. Her roles at these institutions focused primarily on residential life, student development, student government, and programs intended to elevate the representation and voice of marginalized student populations.



Following her time in higher education, Melissa spent a few years working as a freelance writer/editor. She had the opportunity to write for a local newspaper, the Traverse City Record Eagle, and for publications such as a Northern Michigan parenting magazine and U.S. Business Review magazine. She has also served as a proofreader and editor for publications such as the Michigan History magazine.

Melissa then began her career in Tribal government and Indigenous education. She became the Education Director for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, the Waganakising Odawa, on their ancestral and traditional homelands in Harbor Springs, Michigan. In this role, she provided departmental oversight of educational support services, local school outreach, the GED program and summer camp; the administration of the Tribal higher education scholarship and educational incentive programs and of grant programs such as the Tribal library and the Waganakising Odawa Career & Technical Education Program; and was also responsible for the supervision of staff, tutors and instructors and budgetary oversight. After nine years serving in this role, Melissa made a transition to the State of Michigan, where she served initially as the Tribal Liaison for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights before being transferred, per Executive Order of the Governor, to the MiLEAP agency where she currently serves.

Melissa received her bachelor's degree in English from Illinois State University (ISU) and received her Master's Degree in Higher Education - Student Affairs Administration from Michigan State University (MSU).

"We're thrilled to welcome Ms. Kiesewetter to our community" said Board of Regents Chairman Rolof. "Her leadership and expertise will be instrumental as we continue to grow and advance our mission. Melissa brings a wealth of strengths and knowledge to the college, including strong communication skills, extensive experience in higher education, meaningful connections with tribal nations whose ancestral lands encompass what is now known as Michigan, and a deep understanding of the state's legislative landscape."

The Board is grateful to everyone in the College community who took part in the presidential finalist forums. Your feedback was carefully considered and deeply appreciated. This shared effort played a meaningful role in strengthening the Presidential search process.

We hope the community will help us in providing a warm welcome to Ms. Kiesewetter. If you have any questions regarding the search process, please reach out to our ACCT Search Consultant: Cindy Lopez, ACCT Director of Search Services and Tribal College Initiatives, at clopez@acct.org, (405) 255-2566.