

Tbaytel Invests in Leadership Thunder Bay to Build Strong Leaders

Meet Leadership Graduate
Matthew Villella



By Janine Chiasson

Matthew Villella doesn't mince words when he says, "Leadership Thunder Bay changed my life." After graduating from Lakehead University with an education degree, he and others faced a bleak Thunder Bay teaching market. Wanting to stay in the city where he was born and raised, Matthew spent years working at a job that he knew wasn't quite the right fit. "I had no real direction," Matthew recalls. "When I heard about Leadership Thunder Bay I thought it would be a good opportunity to learn more about Thunder Bay and help build my community."

The timing was right. Matthew identified himself as a future leader and, through a combination of employer funding and access to bursary funds



provided by dedicated supporters like Tbaytel, the program fee was paid. After graduating from Leadership Thunder Bay, he joined the City's Sister Cities Advisory Committee and Crime Prevention Council, started working as a part-time instructor in the Tourism – Travel & Eco-Adventure program at Confederation College, joined the Leadership Thunder Bay Board where he is now President, became a Toastmaster, and began volunteering for Easter Seals.

Matthew says simply, "I've become a better person." He gives full credit to Leadership Thunder Bay's programming that starts at the first meet and greet where "nervous participants arrive and don't know if they belong, and by graduation they're confident, they're networking, they've joined a new board, and they want to make Thunder Bay the best place to live. It's wonderful to see that change in ten months."

Part of the fabric of Thunder Bay for over 100 years, Tbaytel knows that a healthy base of volunteers and individuals ready to take on new positions are indicators of a healthy community. That's why Tbaytel supports Leadership Thunder Bay. "Tbaytel contributes to our bursary fund to enable aspiring leaders to complete our program, Tbaytel frequently steps up as a sponsor for our

local events," Matthew says gratefully, "and Tbaytel always enables their own employees to join the program."

With persistence and hard work, Matthew has received a string of awards: Shift's Top 20 under 40 Northwestern Ontario Visionary Award for Community Champion; the Confederation College Part-time Faculty Award of Excellence; the City of Thunder Bay Good Citizen Award; and Toastmaster of the Year.

Yet Matthew is the first to admit, "leadership is not easy and Thunder Bay is fortunate to have a local company like Tbaytel that believes in nurturing leaders."

Leadership Thunder Bay – Apply Now

This innovative 10-month leadership program helps participants gain a broader understanding of critical community issues and acquire the leadership skills necessary to resolve them. Diverse people and viewpoints welcome. Applications accepted year-round. The deadline to apply to the Class of 2019 is May 25, 2018. www.leadershiptb.com

Discover the Leader in You
Leadership Thunder Bay