

# #1 KBIC-NRD volunteer is MTU's "Serving Others" award recipient

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The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) Natural Resources Department (NRD) is excited to share that our Number One Volunteer, Val Gagnon, recently accepted the "Serving Others" award at Michigan Tech. On Jan 8, the annual ["Making a Difference" award program](#) recognized exceptional staff members who received nominations and announced award recipients in seven categories. The "Serving Others" award recognizes a staff member who 1) Maintains a high quality of service to University customers, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members; 2) Fosters positive and productive client and colleague relationships; 3) Has a genuine desire to serve others without the need for fanfare; and 4) Volunteers time and effort to help others.



KBIC NRD provided a letter of support for Val's nomination at the request of Andrew Barnard, Director of the [Great Lakes Research Center](#). "It is said that the best leaders are those who help people think more highly of themselves, and it is with this truth that Val's volunteer service manifests itself. She is respectfully known as KBIC's Number One Volunteer," shared Evelyn Ravindran, NRD Director, "Val has done so much for us over the years and I believe she has made a huge difference in our relationship with researchers and bringing trust back into the relationship."

Other NRD staff also contributed their thoughts to the letter in support of Val's nomination. "She has an amazing work ethic, she's smart, she's there for us at our school programs, she gets stuff done, teaches us things, and she's fun," stated two KBIC NRD youth staff, Billy and Bobby Genschow. Karena Schmidt, NRD ecologist shared: "Val is that rare individual who can be seen wielding an axe to prepare firewood for parching pans used at Wild Rice camps to perspicacious intellect in writing grants that will strengthen our partnerships and truly serve the needs of the community."

Michigan Tech faculty also observed Val's efforts to serve others. "Val gives of herself selflessly, to anyone who asks, including faculty, staff, students and communities. Her passion for promoting indigenous cultures serves Michigan Tech and our tribal partners from the region," says Barnard, "Specifically, Val serves others through advising graduate students and serving on graduate committees, mentoring undergraduates, teaching courses, moderating conference events, giving invited talks and participating in advisory groups and communities. All of these activities serve many stakeholders and are well beyond her job description." Letters of support were also provided by Nancy Barr (College of Engineering) and Angie Carter (Department of Social Sciences) who both shared personal experiences of Gagnon's service in supporting university and community partnerships.

[Val Gagnon](#) serves as the Director for University-Indigenous Community Partnerships at the Great Lakes Research Center, and as a Research Assistant Professor for the College of Forest Resources and Environmental Science. She is also an adjunct instructor for the Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College. And of course, Val Gagnon is the KBIC Number One Volunteer.