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Northern Ontario First Nations to Gather in Thunder Bay for Environmental Conference

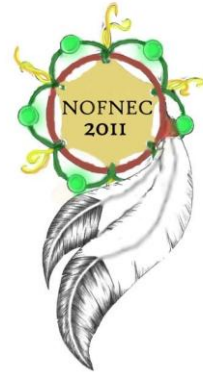
Thunder Bay, ON, October 3, 2011- Leveraging the success of the 2010 Matawa Environment Conference, Matawa has opened up this year's Conference to three additional Organizations. For 2011, Matawa will collaborate with the Mushkegowuk Environmental Research Centre, OFNTSC, Windigo and Shibogama Tribal Councils to host the very first **Northern Ontario First Nations Environment Conference (NOFNEC)**.

NOFNEC will take place in Thunder Bay on October 4-7, 2011 at Fort William Historical Park and will bring together delegates from Northern Ontario First Nations, as well as from Governments agencies, NGOs and environmental organizations. NOFNEC will offer delegates a unique opportunity to learn, share and network. Most importantly, it will generate new dialogue on important environmental issues that face regional First Nations.

Says Sarah Cockerton, Program Coordinator for Matawa Four Rivers Environmental Services Group; "Matawa First Nations are delighted to be working with several neighbouring Tribal Councils to host this important conference. This is a new way of reaching broader audiences to facilitate education, collaboration and action on a number of important environmental topics. The conference will link First Nations throughout the region so that they can support each other to make pivotal decisions about their inherent lands and resources."

The four day conference includes capacity and partnership development programming, in addition to the latest environmental information, data and field tools. Workshop and presentation topics include:

- Local Operation & Maintenance Practices
- Environmental Assessment Tool Kit- Chiefs of Ontario
- Drinking Source Water Protection Planning
- Land Use Planning and Mining Activities
- Environmental Health and Local Food Forums
- Renewable Energy and Conservation



Says Windigo First Nations Council Technical Unit Representative and Planning Committee member, Natalie Popovic; “The Planning Committee really focused on bringing together environmental planners, technologists, researchers, and specialists who can really focus on what is important to First Nation communities today. Right now, most of this work revolves around protecting and healing our Mother Earth. Environmental damage has a tremendous impact on First Nations people whose lives are traditionally, culturally, spiritually and physically connected to the land.”

A tradeshow will also be held on October 6th that will feature over 25 booths.

Cockerton continues; “With all of the recent proposed resource and energy developments in Northwestern Ontario, the face of the region could change entirely. First Nations need to be prepared and knowledgeable about the potential impacts these activities can cause. At NOFNEC participants will learn what they can do to protect their lands, communities and ensure a sustainable future.”

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Media are invited to attend the four day event. To receive a conference handbook that provides an agenda and a detailed look at the workshops and presentations please contact:

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