

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA FIRST NATIONS KICK OFF FIRST ANNUAL ‘POWER TO THE PEOPLE’ ENERGY CONFERENCE

THUNDER BAY, ON: Matawa First Nations today kicked off the first annual ‘Power to the People’ Energy Conference held in Thunder Bay, Ontario on May 2 and 3.

The first-of-its kind for the Matawa First Nations, it represented the beginning of the steps they are taking forward to look at new sources of energy generation and transmission. For some, to move from diesel generation.

There are 5 remote Matawa First Nation communities that rely on outdated, unreliable and greenhouse gas producing diesel plant operations. The use of diesel for energy has halted community and economic growth. “Our goal is to have a community driven energy plan with the support of the government to be off diesel said Chief Elizabeth Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation. “The forecasted cost of diesel fuel is expected to increase in the next 25 years which will see our annual operating costs rise along with it. We are already having difficulty keeping up the cost to ship diesel and run aging plants.”

As part of the [Regional Framework Agreement](#), Matawa First Nations are looking to conduct regional infrastructure planning, including all-weather roads, broadband fibre optic cabling, energy generation and transmission within their traditional territories. “Our Regional Framework Agreement provides a community driven structure and process to help facilitate progress on our First Nation energy issues and opportunities. We must be resourced to maximize these potential developments before they are to go ahead,” said Chief Cornelius Wabasse of Webequie First Nation.

Delegates joined business sector executives, government officials and experts in the field to discuss important topics such wind, solar, waterpower, micro-grid, and biomass energy generation/transmission, amongst others. The main focus was to gain knowledge and understanding as the first step in enabling meaningful participation in the energy sector and ultimately, empowerment to build more much needed infrastructure.

Some discussion topics included: why energy matters, the role of government in energy decisions and policy making, the electricity system in Ontario and key actors involved, generation of energy in Ontario and considerations for First Nations, off-grid electrification issues affecting First Nations and funding programs available for First Nations.

The 'Power to the People' Energy Conference concluded with the establishment of a Matawa Energy Planning Committee and an invitation only wrap-up dinner with keynote speaker MPP Bob Delaney, Parliamentary Assistant to the Hon Bob Chiarelli, the Ontario Minister of Energy.

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Matawa is a Tribal Council with 8 First Nations in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and 1 First Nation in Robinson-Superior Treaty providing a variety of advisory services and programs. Follow them on Facebook or Twitter @MatawaFNM.

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