

*MEDIA RELEASE*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MATAWA FIRST NATIONS WELCOME REQUIRED FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL INVESTMENTS TO PROCEED WITH A STATE OF THE ART FIBRE-TO-THE-HOME HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND INTERNET**

**THUNDER BAY, ON:** Matawa First Nations today welcomed funding commitments to assist in bringing state of the art *fibre-to-the-home* high-speed broadband to internet dead spots in 5 fly-in/remote First Nations as follows:

- \$37.1 million announced by The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) through the Connect to Innovate Initiative launched by ISED on December 15, 2016
- \$30 million in partner funds from the Government of Ontario announced by The Honourable Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines and Member of Provincial Parliament for Thunder Bay – Superior North
- \$2.14 million from Indigenous and Northern Affairs to conduct an archeological investigation in support of the project announced by The Honourable Don Rusnak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services and Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay-Rainy River

The funding will be allocated to *Rapid Lynx*, a regional telecommunications company established by the Matawa First Nations in January 2017 to build and administer an 881 km fibre-optic cable network connecting the remote communities of Nibinamik, Neskantaga, Webequie, Eabametoong and Marten Falls together and to existing carrier locations near Wunnummin Lake and Aroland First Nations.

*Rapid Lynx's* network design and electronics specifications will provide capacity, reliability and speed for today and for the long-term and will be based on the [First Mile](#) approach to network infrastructure development which includes local broadband ownership and control over local telecom networks and infrastructure. The First Mile work will ensure every home, business and organization in these 5 First Nations are connected to the community-owned fibre network first.

The construction project will migrate the community-owned networks off the existing satellite-network to the regional-network that will be built as another part of the project. It will be subject to an environmental assessment. Both the construction and operational phases of the project will mean employment for First Nation members across the Matawa region and local businesses that support this work. The announcement comes after 5 years of lobbying and a recent application submitted this past April.

Matawa First Nation Management is a leader in many different development initiatives. Our project management teams construct buildings, roads, water and sewer systems, education and training programs, health services, incubate community-owned development corporations and regional business ventures among others and now, with the support of the federal and provincial governments—is able to build, own and maintain a state-of-the art fibre-optic broadband network through our telecommunications company *Rapid Lynx*.

## QUOTES

“The Matawa First Nations are thrilled with the funding investments for this legacy project that addresses our long-standing community concerns. Our First Nation community members will benefit in so many ways. Connectivity is crucial to their well-being. Better services through broadband fibre optic construction will eliminate the digital divide between our First Nations and the rest of the world. It will facilitate greater efficiencies in the delivery of First Nation services, including access to health and education technologies and practices, grants and programs, family and court services, banking and credit services and the gamut of other opportunities that high-speed internet provides.”

— *David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO, Matawa First Nations Management*

“In 2012 the United Nations declared access to Internet a basic human right. The Internet is a powerful tool for accelerating knowledge and wealth. Rapid Lynx Telecommunications will design and build the entire network from end-to-end to be a "Next Generation" Fibre-to-the-Home network that will support increased demand, large applications, real-time interactive imaging for telemedicine, modeling and simulation, pre-and post production for high quality video that will meet our First Nations needs. This is truly a transformational, ground-breaking, life-saving and life-changing project for the Matawa communities.”

— *Jason Rasevych, Economic Development Advisor, Matawa/Rapid Lynx Representative*

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***Matawa First Nations Management*** is a Tribal Council providing a variety of advisory services and programs to 8 Ojibway and Cree First Nations in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and 1 First Nation in the Robinson-Superior Treaty area. Follow us on Facebook or Twitter @MatawaFNM.

***For more information, please contact Carol Audet, Communications Manager – Matawa First Nations at (807) 632-9663 or by email at [caudet@matawa.on.ca](mailto:caudet@matawa.on.ca).***

