



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**KIIKENOMAGA KIKENJIGEWEN EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING SERVICES (KKETS)
CELEBRATE GRADUATION OF 3rd COHORT OF STUDENTS**

THUNDER BAY, ON: Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS) announced today that they hosted a graduation ceremony for students successfully completing the 2015-2016 *Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program (ASAP)*. Graduates obtained their *Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)* with many also completing their post-secondary entrance requirements.

ASAP is part of Phase 2 of the KKETS Employment Training Model wherein Matawa First Nation members are being prepared to move forward with further employment and training opportunities to meet potential future labour demands in the area known as the Ring of Fire. It also lends support to the improvements in socio-economic outcomes amongst the Matawa First Nations.

Including the OSSD, ASAP provides Matawa members aged 22 and above with transitioning to urban living, life/cultural/social supports, employment readiness and basic certifications. In many cases, it is the stepping stone from education to training to employment. Many graduates will move on to seek higher learning opportunities to secure their place in the labour market.

According to the labour market analysis in [Service Canada's June 2014 Client Segment Profile of Aboriginal Peoples in Ontario](#), there are fewer Aboriginal peoples engaged in the labour market and that lower levels of academic achievement are corresponding to higher unemployment rates. The study also found that, although the Aboriginal population had lower levels of educational attainment compared to the general population, their academic achievement is rising.

The graduation ceremony took place at 1:00 p.m at the Davinci Centre. Officials from the KKETS Board of Directors, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Lakehead Adult Education Centre attended in addition to Honourable Patty Hajdu, MP Thunder Bay-Superior North.

QUOTES

“KKETS, through the ASAP program, is addressing the obstacles and challenges that contribute to First Nations’ negative position in the labour market and are putting us in a better position to take advantage of future opportunities.”

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

“KKETS began serving Matawa members in October 2010 after gaining their Agreement Holder status with only a core staff. Since then, they have grown substantially however our goal still remains the same. We aim to help Matawa members become independent leaders. We know that education and training are key to reaching our goal. This opens the door to many more opportunities. I am proud to be working for and with these hard working and determined individuals, I wish them success in their future endeavors.”

— *Joe Baxter, KKETS Board of Directors President*

“KKETS is pleased to announce we have 69 Matawa First Nation members graduating this year with their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) from the Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program (ASAP). KKETS is in its first year of a 3 year agreement with Ministry of Training of Colleges and Universities to manifest this vision into a reality for our people. We have many opportunities ahead of us and we need to use these tools to strengthen our Nation. We encourage our students, the future leaders, to continue learning. KKETS has striven to give them a strong foundation so they can be confident to achieve their goals and dreams. It is time for our Anishnabe people to move forward.”

— *Morris Wapoose, KKETS Executive Director*

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS) is an Agreement Holder with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) under the Aboriginal employment and training program “Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS).” It also oversees the ASAP program.

The **Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program (ASAP)** is a one-of-a-kind adult education program that goes beyond the education essentials by incorporating the social, emotional, cultural and transition supports to Matawa First Nation members while pursuing their high school credits in the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario. This program started as a pilot in 2012-13 (resulting in 62 graduates). It was renewed in 2014-2015 by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) (resulting in 64 graduates). With the current demand and past successes of the program, MTCU issued a 3 year multi-funding year agreement (from 2015-18) to educate 300 Matawa First Nation members in obtaining their high school diploma.

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 them on Facebook or Twitter @MatawaFNM. It is affiliated with KKETS as one of its partners.

