

*MEDIA RELEASE*

**Thursday, June 14, 2018**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*(Embargoed until 12:00 noon)*

**MATAWA LEARNING CENTRE GRADUATES 8<sup>th</sup> COHORT OF STUDENTS**

**THUNDER BAY, ON:** The Matawa Learning Centre (MLC) today hosted a graduation ceremony including convocation and awards for four students successfully obtaining their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. The graduation took place at the Victoria Inn Hotel and Conference Centre in the traditional territory of Fort William First Nation. Families of graduates, MLC partners, representatives and dignitaries from the Matawa First Nations, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, City of Thunder Bay, Nishnawbe Aski Police Services, Thunder Bay-Superior North Hon. Patty Hajdu's office, amongst others, attended.

Dylan Neshinapaise, graduating student from Niibinamik was the MLC's 2018 graduating class valedictorian and previous MLC student Whitney Edwards from Niibinamik was Master of Ceremony. Neskantaga First Nation Chief Wayne Moonias provided opening comments and congratulatory remarks. He was joined by Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Matawa First Nations Management CEO David Paul Achneepineskum, Nishnawbe Aski Police Services Acting Chief of Police Roland Morrison, City of Thunder Bay Mayor Keith Hobbs, a representative for Honourable Patty Hajdu - MP for Thunder Bay-Superior North, MLC Principal Brad Battiston and Matawa Education Department Manager Sharon Nate.

MLC had an enrollment of 66 students during the first semester and 84 students during the second semester for the 2017-2018 school year. Staff comprised of a Principal, Senior Vice-Principal, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Principal, five classroom teachers, and a number of support staff to meet the various mental health, cultural, special education and recreational needs of the students.

In 2016, MLC got involved in the *First Nations Youth Inquest* and have been actively involved in the implementation of Jury Recommendations forming a number of community partnerships such as with the City of Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Police Services, Lakehead University, amongst others. In 2017, MLC acquired the City of Thunder Bay's former Grandview Lodge to open in the near future as a Matawa Education and Care Centre.

This past school year, MLC integrated a variety of new and exciting programming into classes including land-based and outdoor education, art, and hockey. Students had the opportunity to go camping, canoeing, learn traditional skills, play hockey, and learn traditional cooking skills among many other fun learning adventures. Several students received certifications in canoeing, safe food handling, and fire arms safety as well as spent several nights away from the city in Quetico, Lac Des Mille Lacs, Sleeping Giant Provincial Park and at the first Indigenous Student Leadership Gathering

at Old Fort William. MLC is looking forward to expanding these programs and providing students with more fun experiential learning opportunities.

## QUOTES

“The purpose of education is to turn locked doors into open pathways. Now you have achieved your goals and are set on the path to new goals and achievements. Myself, and everyone at the MLC couldn’t be prouder of the students’ achievements today. Congratulations to our graduates and may your journey take you higher and farther than your wildest dreams.”

– *Sharon Nate, Matawa First Nation Management Education Manager*

“Education is the key which unlocks all your potential. It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are; humility to know that you can always learn new things; and truth to honour your gifts and be a role model to others. Congratulations on your achievements, all our best wishes in your continuing journey.”

– *Brad Battiston, MLC Principal*

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**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).

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**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. Follow them on Facebook or Twitter at: @MatawaFN

**Matawa Learning Centre (MLC)** is a private First Nations High School in the city of Thunder Bay serving the students of the five (5) remote Matawa communities of Neskantaga, Webequie, Marten Falls, Nibinamik and Eabametoong. MLC involves teachers, students, parents and community partners in developing programs and courses that reflect the needs of both students and the Matawa First Nation communities while encouraging each student to develop self-reliance, initiative, resourcefulness, creativity, and responsibility. The learning environment supports self-motivated students who are encouraged to plan and follow their individual learning pathways while supporting reflective, self-directed, lifelong learners. Services provided include: academic counselling and support; career guidance; post-secondary services; specialized course/program selections; and, after-hours on-call support.

