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*MEDIA RELEASE*

**Tuesday, May 29, 2018**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THUNDER BAY AND AREA VICTIM SERVICES AND MATAWA FIRST NATIONS MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCE COMMENCEMENT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING/ANTI-VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES DURING VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF CRIME WEEK 2018**

**THUNDER BAY, ON:** Susan L. Tilson, Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services (TBAVS) Executive Director and David Paul Achneepineskum, Matawa First Nations Management (MFNM) CEO today announced the commencement of human trafficking/anti-violence support services during *Victims and Survivors of Crime Week*.

*Victims and Survivors of Crime Week*, commemorated nationally from May 27 – June 2, 2018, is an annual outreach initiative of Justice Canada. Its goal is to raise awareness about the issues facing victims and survivors of crime and the services and laws in place to help them and their families. It is also about acknowledging the dedicated work of service providers who assist victims and survivors of crime and their families. This year, the theme is ‘Transforming the Culture Together.’

The way that TBAVS and MFNM will work together is through a Service Agreement to establish a *Human Trafficking/Anti-Violence Support Worker (HTAVSW)* who will be responsible for outreach, engagement and supporting the health, social and emotional needs of Matawa First Nation members, families and all victims and residents of Thunder Bay and area who are victims, or at risk of being a victim, of crime and tragedy - including human trafficking cases, sexual violence and harassment.

The position, housed at MFNM, will be in place until March 2020. It will be overseen by both TBAVS and the MFNM Health Cooperative. This initiative represents the first service agreement between TBAVS and MFNM and fills a gap that has been long identified by both parties.

— 30 —

**For more information, please contact** Carol Audet, Matawa Communications Manager at (807) 632-9663 or by email at [caudet@matawa.on.ca](mailto:caudet@matawa.on.ca) or Susan L. Tilson at (807) 684-1051 or by email at [vcars@tbaytel.net](mailto:vcars@tbaytel.net)

**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 (Matawa First Nations Management) or on Twitter: @MatawaFN - **Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services** is committed to supporting all victims of crime and tragic circumstances. We provide crisis response, supports, programs and services to help alleviate the trauma associated with victimization. Follow them on Facebook: Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services.

## QUOTES

*“Matawa First Nations Management and Health Directors in our 9 First Nations have done some work over this past year around the areas of anti-violence and human trafficking and we felt that establishing a partnership with the Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services was a good fit in terms of being able to continue to address these specific areas of concern. We feel that the skills, knowledge and capacities within our organizations will complement each other and will best meet the needs of this segment of society within our area. I applaud Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services for their commitment work with the Matawa First Nations Management Health Cooperative. We are truly working together within the spirit of this year’s Victims and Survivors Crime Week which is—transforming the culture together.”*

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

*“Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services is a community-focused and volunteer-driven organization that provides confidential community support services to victims of crime and tragedy to help lessen the trauma and its impacts. Over the past year, our organization has been carrying out work involving support, outreach and engagement services relating to human trafficking. Along with the Thunder Bay Police, OPP, other referral agencies and self referrals, we have been assisting human trafficking victims in several ways. This week is a very exciting time for TBAVS as we partner with Matawa First Nations Health Cooperative. We are certainly celebrating the creation of this joint opportunity to help victims and their families. This victims and survivors of crime week our agencies are transforming the culture together. Matawa First Nations Health Cooperative and TBAVS are coming together within the community to acknowledge the issues facing victims and survivors of crime and letting them know that they’re not alone.”*

*—Susan L. Tilson, Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services Executive Director*