



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**KIIKENOMAGA KIKENJIGEWEN EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING SERVICES
(KKETS) CELEBRATE GRADUATION OF 4TH COHORT OF STUDENTS**

THUNDER BAY, ON: Kikēnomaga Kikēnjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS) announced today that they hosted a graduation ceremony for 63 students successfully completing the 2016-2017 *Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program* (ASAP). Students obtained their *Ontario Secondary School Diploma* (OSSD) with many also completing their post-secondary entrance requirements.

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 the learner. Since its inception in 2012, ASAP has assisted 258 Matawa First Nations members in obtaining their OSSD.

KKETS is entering into its final 3-year funding agreement with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development where approximately 88 students will continue to work on their high school credits in 2017-2018.

The graduation ceremony took place at 1:00 p.m at the Valhalla Inn. Officials from the KKETS Board of Directors, Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Lakehead School Board and the Lakehead Adult Education Centre attended in addition to a representative Honourable Patty Hajdu, MP Thunder Bay-Superior North's Constituency Office. Chiefs from Aroland, Long Lake #58, Ginoogaming and Nibinamik First Nations, along with proxies from Eabametoong and Neskantaga First Nations were also in attendance.

QUOTES:

“On behalf of the KKETS Board of Directors and Executive Director—we are pleased to fulfill the second year of our agreement in partnership with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development in helping another 63 Matawa First Nations members attain their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas through our Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program. I say *Kichii Miigwech* to the KKETS organization, the ASAP management, and staff for doing an excellent job in fulfilling our *Mission* and *Vision* to provide culturally appropriate opportunities for education, and training, to improve academic excellence and employability in our communities as well as empower First Nations Anishinabeg to take that next step to get a University or College Education.”

—*Joe Baxter, KKETS Board of Directors President*

“We are proud of the achievements of our Peoples who, for whatever reason, were not able to complete their high school when they were younger. With the help of ASAP, they can now advance their education and move forward with their careers of choice.”

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

"Congratulations to all 63 graduates of the Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program. I want to thank these life-long learners for choosing to empower themselves through education. The more knowledge and skills you develop, the better we are as a society as you get ready to participate in the workforce. The skills you are graduating with today all contribute to strengthening the future of our country."

—*The Honourable Patty Hajdu, M.P. Thunder Bay-Superior North*

"Our government is proud to support the Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program which delivers adult education tailored for Indigenous learners. Congratulations to the graduating class. Today you've completed a chapter and begun your journey towards becoming members of Ontario's highly skilled workforce."

—*The Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development*

"2016/17 marks the fourth cohort of graduating students from the Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program (ASAP). Congratulations to our students to persevering and reaching this special day. Each of you should be proud of this accomplishment and we encourage you to continue the path of education, training and employment for the rest of your life. We know this first step wasn't easy but you did it! On behalf of the ASAP team, we will miss you and remember you can accomplish whatever your heart desires! With such great academic success achieved, it is KKETS' anticipation to have the program renewed after March 2018 as the demand to enrol in the ASAP program continues to grow from the Matawa region."

—*Carolyn Zadnik, ASAP Project Coordinator*

"Lakehead Adult Education Centre is honoured to support the learning of all the students from the Matawa Communities who have completed the *Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program (ASAP)*. The high level of learning that the students demonstrated in achieving their *Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)* is a testament to their dedication in pursuit of their goals. Congratulations to the graduating class of 2016/2017. We wish them success in all their future endeavours."

—*Denise Baxter, Principal*

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For more information, please contact Kathleen Maletta, KKETS Post Secondary/Communications Officer – Matawa First Nations at (807)630-0373 or by email at kmaletta@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).

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



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