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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PLANNING COUNCIL and KIIKENOMAGA KIKENJIGEWEN EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING SERVICES ROLL-OUT NEW DRIVER'S LICENSING PROJECT FOR REMOTE MATAWA FIRST NATIONS

THUNDER BAY, ON: The Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC) for the District of Thunder Bay and Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS) announced today that they are rolling out a new *Driver's Licensing Project* within the communities of Eabametoong, Nibinamik, Neskantaga, Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations.

For members of these communities, obtaining a driver's license involves the additional costs of flying at least two times to an urban centre due to the lack of this Ontario government service in their communities. The nearest DriveTest Centres from these communities are in Pickle Lake or Sioux Lookout, Ontario. Due to the lack of broadband internet in these communities, members also face difficulty in accessing resources that DriveTest Centres provide. As the employment and training service provider for these communities since 2010, KKETS has seen firsthand how the lack of a driver's license negatively impacts on a trainee's ability to connect to employment opportunities.

The project, aimed at addressing this disparity and improving Indigenous employment rates, includes an education/awareness campaign and a sponsorship program which will assist 30 people from these communities in obtaining their G1 license. Another important part includes examining how the lack of Ontario government driver's license services in the remote north has an impact on employability and developing potential solutions to address barriers so that people from the Matawa communities can better capture employment opportunities now and into the future.

The project is expected to run until May 31, 2017.

"We are very excited to be working with KKETS in bringing this initiative and opportunity to residents of Matawa communities. Having up to 30 members receiving their G1 license and adding that skill to their resume will contribute positively to their employment prospects and better position them for the competitive labour market."

— *Madge Richardson, Executive Director of your Local Employment Planning Council*

“Lack of access to Ontario government driver’s licensing services in the remote north in Matawa has been an ongoing issue that has never been addressed. We are pleased that this project aims to tackle this, both in the short and long-term so that employment rates can be improved and our people have access to this basic service like the rest of Ontario. We are also delighted that 30 of our members will receive direct benefit through reduced insurance rates.”

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

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This *project* is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.



Media Interviews: Madge Richardson Executive Director of the North Superior Workforce Planning Board, your Local Employment Planning Council, is available for comment. Please contact: (807) 346-2940 or mrichardson@nswpb.ca

About the Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC):

LEPC for the District of Thunder Bay is a pilot project led by the North Superior Workforce Planning Board (NSWPB) with the support of Northern Policy Institute (NPI) as data and research partner. The LEPC uses community consultation, research, and evidence-based practices to spur innovation in workforce development in our region. <http://www.nswpb.ca/lepc/projects>

Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services (KKETS):

KKETS is an Agreement Holder with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) under the Aboriginal employment and training program called the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. KKETS delivers a number of programs including: Ring of Fire Training Alliance, Aboriginal Skills Advancement Program, Employment Integration and Career Focus. The Driver’s Licencing project was developed by the KKETS Employment Integration and Career Focus programs.

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