



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOUR RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES GROUP HOSTS THANKSGIVING HARVEST DISTRIBUTION EVENT

THUNDER BAY, ON: Four Rivers Environmental Services Group (Four Rivers) hosted a Matawa garden harvest distribution event today from 4:00pm-6:00pm in the Matawa First Nations Management parking lot. The distribution was an opportunity for Matawa First Nation members to stock up on some Thanksgiving meal favourites including carrots, potatoes, apples and pumpkins. This event operated in a *tailgate market* format, offering the fresh produce, grown in the Matawa garden, from the back of the Four Rivers truck.

The Matawa Garden project was an exciting initiative led by Four Rivers throughout Summer 2020 as part of first steps of increasing knowledge and capacity to actively support future gardening projects in Matawa First Nation communities. The project goals also included alleviating food scarcity and supporting overall wellbeing among Matawa membership, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The success of the project allowed Four Rivers to harvest approximately 10,000 pounds of fresh produce from the Matawa Garden throughout the months of July to September. Harvests were scheduled frequently to ensure the vegetables were delivered to Matawa members during their peak of freshness. Distribution methods included tailgate giveaways (like today's event) as well as the Matawa food hamper project, scheduled air delivery, and as a special gift to delegates at this year's Matawa Annual General Meeting. Four Rivers is extremely thankful for all the help received from the countless volunteers along the way. The Matawa Garden has not only provided the opportunity to get outdoors and connect with the land, but also a place to share knowledge and build lasting memories.

Overall, the projects most successful crops included snap peas, zucchinis, cucumbers, green beans, tomatoes and potatoes. In some cases, different varieties of given crop were tested and records of these trials will ensure future projects continue to benefit from this knowledge collected.

This project is even more important today as changes in weather due to climate change are adding stress to the delicate food situation felt in communities across the Matawa member First Nation homelands. With successful garden projects like this in communities, local food production can help alleviate the dependency on the unpredictable state of winter roads and ultimately reduce the cost and time associated with transporting food. Climate change experts are also projecting warmer temperatures, which could result in the ability to grow an increased variety of crops further north. The project was partially funded by the Emergency Community Support Fund, a partnership between the Thunder Bay Community Foundation and the United Way Thunder Bay. Four Rivers anticipates additional funding through the Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund, hosted by Community Foundations of Canada.

— 30 —

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

QUOTES

“The Matawa garden is something good that came out of COVID-19 – it was something positive that came out of a negative situation. We had environmental field staff unable to travel to the field over the summer, we had employees and community members who were indoors, and needed a safe outdoor place to go, we had large concerns about food security and overall welfare of Matawa First Nation members, we had an overall long-term desire to help develop sustainable capacity surrounding food systems and but a need to build capacity internally in that area. The initiative started out with employees growing plants in their homes across the city and moved to a generously donated patch of fertile land in Slate River Valley. Despite many weather challenges, through the extreme hard work and perseverance of employees and dedicated volunteers it resulted in a huge bounty of healthy food for Matawa First Nation members. We are very proud and very thankful for the individuals and organizations who helped us along this journey.”

—Sarah Cockerton, Manager, Four Rivers Environmental Services Group

Four Rivers was established in 2011 as an environmental services group within Matawa First Nations Management to provide environmental support and technical services to the Matawa First Nation communities facing unprecedented development within their shared traditional territories. In 2017, Four Rivers Inc. was created as a stream of Four Rivers to expand service offerings beyond Matawa member First Nations in a cost-effective and competitive manner. Follow them on their website at: fourrivers.group on Facebook at: FourRivers Matawa or Twitter at: @4RiversMatawa

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 (not a Treaty signatory). Follow them on Facebook or Twitter @MatawaFN

