

MEDIA RELEASE / MEDIA ADVISORY

January 20, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**KKETS to Honour the Memory and Legacy of the Late Chief Celia Echum**

**Thunder Bay, ON** — Tomorrow, Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (KKETS) will host a commemorative event dedicating KKETS Innovation Room in memory of the late Celia Echum, former Chief of Ginoogaming First Nation and former member of the KKETS Board of Directors.

The event will bring together Matawa Chiefs, leadership, staff, and invited guests to recognize Chief Echum's lasting contributions to First Nations communities and her key role in the development of KKETS. Her guidance helped establish the organization's direction and priorities, and the opportunity provided by KKETS programs and services are a reflection of the future Chief Echum envisioned.

"We honour the memory and lifelong dedication of the late Celia Echum, whose leadership, strength, and vision were instrumental in the creation of KKETS. Chief Echum believed deeply in community-driven, culturally grounded solutions that place wellness, dignity, and opportunity at the centre of employment and training," said Dave Neegan, Executive Director of KKETS.

Chief Echum dedicated more than 25 years to serving Ginoogaming First Nation in roles including Community Health Representative, councillor, and Band Manager, before she was elected Chief in 2007. She was re-elected seven times, earning strong community support for her steady and compassionate leadership, and served until her passing on May 9, 2020.

"The KKETS Innovation Room is a space for reflection, creativity, and forward-thinking solutions that embody Chief Echum's belief in empowering First Nations people, which is why we're dedicating the room in recognition of her enduring legacy. Through Chief Echum's guidance and commitment, KKETS developed the first known integrated model of its kind, an evidence-informed wellness strategy supporting First Nations not only within Matawa, but across Canada. Her legacy continues to guide our work and inspire future generations," added Neegan.

**Date:** Wednesday, January 21, 2026

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Location:** Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services  
3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Matawa Training and Wellness Centre  
523 Algoma St. N., Thunder Bay, Ontario

Media are welcome to attend.