



CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

January 15, 2010

ONTARIO REGIONAL CHIEF ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF THE FIRST NATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT DURING FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC FORUM

Fort William First Nation, Ontario – Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse today announced the launch of the First Nations Environmental Assessment Toolkit during the First Nations Economic Forum currently taking place at the Fort William First Nation.

The purpose of the Toolkit is to assist First Nations in Ontario that are engaged, or likely to engage in environmental assessments which are being conducted for proposed projects or development on their traditional territories. The Regional Chief emphasized that the toolkit is one example of a practical tool that can support First Nations in achieving progress on economic and resource development issues. “This toolkit was developed with the intent of building and supporting capacity within First Nations communities. First Nations are determined to build self-sustaining communities and addressing the capacity requirements within communities is necessary in meeting these goals. Targeted investments and supporting capacity development is critical to the future prosperity of First Nations”, stated Regional Chief Toulouse.

The toolkit was designed primarily for First Nations communities, employees, and leadership but it is also important that governments, industry and other entities become familiar with the toolkit and its’ contents. The toolkit is a result of collaboration between First Nation peoples in Ontario and British Columbia. It was developed by the Ontario First Nations Environmental Assessment Technical Working Group (FNEAWG), with representatives from several First Nations in Ontario, the Chiefs in Ontario Environmental Unit, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Union of Ontario Indians, Treaty # 3, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians and Independent First Nations representatives, along with provincial and federal agencies.

The First Nations Environmental Assessment Technical Working Group developed the toolkit to help all parties better understand the following:

- Consultation
- Capacity requirements and capacity development
- Traditional knowledge (TK) and community based approaches
- Cumulative impact assessment
- Socio-economic benefits; and,
- Development agreements/ impact benefit agreements

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This toolkit is available for First Nations to use as a practical tool to assist them in preparing for, and participating in environmental assessments. The Chiefs of Ontario office will seek resources to introduce the toolkit in First Nation communities, including organizing training sessions for First Nation communities, governments, and industry to learn more about the toolkit and how it can be most effective for them.

“It is important that any development-related activities on First Nations lands be undertaken in a way that recognizes and respects Aboriginal title and First Nations treaty rights. We have always depended on the land to sustain our way of life and we believe that Indigenous peoples have a responsibility and obligation for the stewardship of Mother Earth. First Nations must have a voice in any discussions and plans relating to our lands and environment,” said the Regional Chief.

The release of the First Nations in Ontario Environmental Assessment Toolkit is a major step for First Nations in fulfilling their rightful place as the original stewards of Mother Earth, the waters and all our relations.

For more information please contact:

Pam Hunter
Chiefs of Ontario
416-522-0706
phunter@coo.org