

# Information Release



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## **MANITOULIN'S NEW OJIBWE IMMERSION SCHOOL SET TO OPEN ITS DOORS FOR KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN**

[M'Chigeeng, – August 26, 2013] – September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 will mark another important historical moment for Anishinabek education at the grassroots level as the first day of Ojibwe immersion school for 13 kindergarten children attending Mnidoo Mnising Anishinabek Kinoomaage Gamig (MMAK) officially begins.

With ongoing years of committed support of the KTEI Board of Directors and the United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising (UCCMM), the decision and support for Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI) to forge ahead and implement an immersion based learning model beginning with Kindergarten children for the Fall of 2013 was made – knowing that time is of the essence as every day and every year more and more valuable Anishinabek language speakers are leaving to the spirit world.

Since the Spring 2013 announcement was made to proceed, parents and extended families of the 13 children enrolled in Mnidoo Mnising Anishinabek Kinoomaage Gamig have been actively involved in the planning of their child's educational future. Regular monthly meetings have been held over this past summer to explain the school's educational philosophy and approach to early childhood learning with the Ojibwe language immersion environment. Queens University, a long-time and valued partner in KTEI post-secondary education, is a key part of the new immersion learning initiative going forward. Under the leadership and expertise of Dr. Lindsey Morcom, KTEI and its University partner will collaboratively complete the research and evaluation component of the MMAK school outcomes each year. Dr. Morcom has also been valuable in providing community and parental knowledge by explaining and communicating the various models and strategies of language learning and the well-researched and documented benefits of multiple language acquisition from an academic perspective.

One very important critical success factor for the MMAK immersion school - parental engagement and commitment, has been fully communicated right from the very start. Many tasks, such as designing and installing an ecofriendly playground and finalizing the monthly parent volunteer schedule, are only a few of the current priorities which moms, dads and family members have been busily working on in anticipation of the first day of school on September 4<sup>th</sup>.

With the first intake of Kindergarten students already getting a flavor of their new school during their August 22<sup>nd</sup> orientation day with their parents/guardians, and 100% immersed in Anishinabemowin, it is clear that these children already have a sense that they are unique because they will be going to a different kind of school this year. Becoming engaged in outdoor community experiential learning and regularly visiting and conversing with community elders and groups such as the Anishinabemowin Gamig Elders' Centre in M'Chigeeng, as part of their early learning, will undoubtedly become a renewed focus

and catalyst for overall community engagement and involvement in adult language learning strategies as well.

Chief Joseph Hare of the M'Chigeeng First Nation and who is also the Tribal Chairperson for the UCCMM, said "it's time for our children to learn, grow and play in Ojibwe. With many children from the M'Chigeeng First Nation enrolled in the new school, our community is proud to support the interests and several language learning strategies in our community; this new MMAK school is yet another strategy and achievement our community can certainly be proud of!"

Stephanie Roy, the Executive Director of KTEI, who has spearheaded the initiative since its early beginnings a number of years ago, feels the growing anticipation and excitement building as that first day of school in September approaches. "I am pleased that the early learning Anishinabek educational model espoused in our locally developed MMAK immersion school, which thoughtfully blends Early Learning Kindergarten (ELK) curriculum together with layers of Anishinaabemowin immersion language acquisition, and using principles of environmental stewardship through an official Eco School designation, will represent and bring new ideas for the development and improvement of new models in Anishinabek education. It is important that parents have the ability to explore and be provided a variety of options to choose from when selecting their child's education". The ELK curriculum covers six broad learning expectations in the areas of social/emotional development, language, mathematics, science & technology, health and physical, and the arts. KTEI plans on formalizing their provincial eco school status with a formal application to be made later this Fall.

To welcome and celebrate the first day of Manitoulin's new Ojibwe immersion school on September 4<sup>th</sup>, interested media are invited to attend the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, located at 15 Highway 551, M'Chigeeng First Nation, ON. The school bus will arrive at 8:45 AM with words of welcome to the Kindergarten children, with KTEI and other stakeholder representatives on hand to answer more in-depth questions from media and community stakeholders about Mnidoo Mnising Kinoomaage Gamig.

#### Background:

Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of eight First Nation community representatives in the Manitoulin-North shore area and is centrally located on Manitoulin Island – Mnidoo Mnising (M'Chigeeng First Nation) in Northern Ontario. KTEI provides community based-approaches to education, training and business support services and opportunities. In the Ojibwe language, "Kenjgewin Teg" means 'a place of knowledge'.

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