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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **KTEI and Canadore College Launch Ontario's First Immersion-Based Early Childhood Educator's Program**

[M'Chigeeng, ON] - "Bringing back and acknowledging our ways of learning and knowing within our education systems, and most importantly, teaching our children in our own language, Anishinabemowin, is putting into action what our Elders have told us to do for so many years", says Stephanie Roy who is the Executive Director of Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute. Language and cultural learning is an integral and important part of KTEI's organizational mission in lifelong learning and it came as no surprise that this program work was unanimously and strongly supported by the organization's Board of Directors.

Today, Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute and Canadore College made a formalized announcement at the annual Three Fires Confederacy gathering at the Sheguiandah Heritage Park (in the traditional Roundhouse) for this one-of-a-kind, Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development certified post-secondary program, the "Early Childhood Education Anishinabemowin (ECE-A)" program. It was determined that it would be most fitting and appropriate to have this program news announcement shared at the Three Fires Confederacy, where the introduction of 'teaching lodges' within educational systems was also talked about at the gathering. These two topics were quite timely, as the use and possible construction of a teaching lodge for KTEI, is also on the horizon for intended for not only use by the students and faculty of this new ECE-A program, but for other community organizations and groups as well.

One key distinguishing feature of this new post-secondary program is the holistic development of the Anishinaabe child, which will be significantly achieved through KTEI's long term teacher education and support strategy; early childhood educator students in this new program, which is set to start January 2017 at KTEI, will implement with greater confidence the Seven Grandfather teachings and other appropriate practices of the Anishinabek, all within an immersion-based environment of learning. "The goal of the ECE-A program is also to support and increase the language speaking skills of students who are admitted into program as well – so this is a win-win situation for both students of the program and the children they will be teaching", said Rhonda Hopkins, who has been leading the KTEI team in the development of this the new ECE-A program over the past year. Rhonda, a fluent speaker, and who is an immersion specialist with experience in various immersion programs in Canada and in the states of Michigan and Kansas in the USA, will also be a key part of the instructional team in this new and exciting program.

As part of the program's admission requirements, students must be able to meet a certain level of language speaking proficiency: KTEI with its Traditional Knowledge Holders and Elders in Residence, have adapted a new language assessment/proficiency tool based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and the European Common Framework that will be used as part of the

admissions process. Jessica Benson, who is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers, led the KTEI team in researching and then creating an adaptation of these commonly used assessment tools and best practices to suit the needs for communities interested in creating standardized processes for their schools and organizations.

"I am extremely proud of our continued partnership and relationship that we have with Canadore College on this initiative", says Beverley Roy-Carter who is the Director of Business and Training at KTEI, as the announcement was made at the Three Fires Gathering. "Together, the great team members of Canadore College and our staff have yet again demonstrated their commitment to higher education and Indigenous learning with this new program – and we are thrilled to support First Nation community schools and early learning centres everywhere by providing this opportunity". Integral to the ECE-A program development was the KTEI team working with Mary Wabano, who is the Associate Dean of the School of Indigenous Studies at Canadore College. Mary has been a strong and committed advocate and supporter within the College system for Aboriginal Institutes to create new post-secondary programs where language and worldview is a cornerstone to Indigenous student identity, infused with our cultural traditions as a central foundation to overall well-being for students. "We truly teach our children our value system and lessons through our language – we are beyond merely translating from English to Anishinabemowin" – and it is this kind of work that further support our communities in their language and immersion goals", said Mary Wabano during the day's gathering of community and elders.

This two-year Early Childhood Education – Anishinaabemowin diploma program has been approved for delivery at Canadore's partner institutions, Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (KTEI) in M'Chigeeng First Nation, ON and Seven Generations Educational Institute in Fort Frances, ON. This Ontario College two year Diploma in Anishinaabe Early Childhood Education is delivered solely in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) over four semesters. This Anishinaabe knowledge based program meets all the standards of the Ontario Early Childhood Competency guidelines and was officially approved by the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (formerly known as the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities) earlier this month. The first cohort(s) are expected to be delivered at partner sites starting in the 2016-2017 academic year.

*Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute is located on Mnidoo Mnising (Manitoulin Island, ON) is one of eight members within the Aboriginal Institutes Consortium in Ontario providing community-based access and culturally relevant learning in post-secondary education. For more information on this program, or any other KTEI service, program or event, go to [www.ktei.net](http://www.ktei.net) or [facebook.com/KenjgewinTeg-Educational-Institute](https://facebook.com/KenjgewinTeg-Educational-Institute).*

*Canadore trains people through applied learning, leadership and innovation and is a partner with several Aboriginal Institutes in Ontario. It provides access to over 65 full-time quality programs and has outstanding faculty and student services. The College and its students add nearly \$290 million to the regions of Nipissing and Parry Sound. Approximately 1,000 students graduate from Canadore each year, and they join 43,000 alumni working across the globe.*

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