



NEWS RELEASE

Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence \$8.6-million Post-secondary Training Centre Officially Opens in Nelson House

NELSON HOUSE, Manitoba – May 25, 2006 – Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation officially opened the \$8.6-million, 27,000-square-foot Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre of Excellence (ATEC) at Nelson House, the first purpose-built facility of its kind on a Manitoba First Nation reserve.

The fully accredited, non-profit, community-based, post-secondary training facility will initially provide jobs and training initiatives for the proposed Wuskwatim Hydroelectric generation project. Since ATEC was first announced in April 2003, more than 300 NCN members have participated in ATEC training. Its long-term focus is to offer a wide range of post-secondary education opportunities to fill other skill-needs for the First Nation and others in Northern Manitoba.

ATEC construction created about \$500,000 in activity for the local economy and employment including training opportunities in concrete, framing, welding, electrical, drywall and plumbing.

“ATEC is an important legacy resulting directly from our negotiations for the proposed Wuskwatim project. The centre will provide benefits for our people for years to come regardless of whether the generation project proceeds or not,” NCN Chief Jerry Primrose said.

“We realized that to have meaningful participation in Wuskwatim and other northern development projects taking place over the next 20 years, our members needed an easily accessible way to acquire the necessary employment training, skills and experience. This facility will help us create a sustainable and independent future.”

The facility houses three classrooms, a science lab, a library, a 30-station computer lab and an industrial shops area for carpentry, plumbing, electrical machine/metalworking and welding. ATEC includes a 23-bed dormitory for students from outside Nelson House, an accredited 25-space day care centre that also serves the early-childhood training program, and a cafeteria that is open to the public. The computer lab doubles as an Internet café for use by Nelson House residents in the evening and on weekends.

“ATEC serves NCN members and the community beyond its strict role as an educational institution,” said W. Elvis Thomas, NCN councillor and chair of ATEC’s board of directors and responsible for NCN’s Future Development portfolio. “By locating the facility in Nelson House and providing dormitories and a day care, education becomes much more accessible to our members living in and outside of Nelson House including those with children. The day care centre, Internet café and cafeteria provide valuable, additional community amenities.”

Financial contributions for construction came from the Government of Canada, through Indian and Northern Affairs and Western Economic Diversification, with Manitoba Hydro also providing financial support. The federal and provincial governments and Manitoba Hydro are providing support for training. The province also fast-tracked an upgrade of the 10-kilometre access road to Nelson House to provide on-the-job-training and work experience for NCN and South Indian Lake heavy equipment operator trainees.

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ATEC is working in collaboration with a number of other institutions to help deliver and certify its programs and meet placement objectives. These include the University College of the North, Red River College, Assinboine Community College, Winnipeg Technical College, the Academy of Learning and the University of Manitoba. ATEC is also working with unions, members of the building industry, the Apprenticeship Board, Manitoba Hydro, and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. The Nisichawayasihk Housing Authority (NHA) is the main provider of work experience for NCN apprentices.

ATEC will accommodate about 100 students at a time, supported by up to 20 academic, administrative and support staff headed by executive director Ezra Bogle. It can provide about 300 training spaces per year in various programs. Wuskwatim-based training includes: designated apprenticeship trades, such as carpentry, electrical, plumbing, welding and machine/metalworking; non-designated trades such as heavy equipment operator, construction labourer, truck driver; and construction support, including security, catering and clerical. ATEC also offers business administration, early childhood education, healthcare aide and bachelor of education and arts programs.

ATEC's striking architectural design features a low profile, masonry building with an expansive metal-clad, low-pitch gable roof with a skylight structure over the main lobby. The extensive use of energy-efficient windows throughout makes maximum use of natural light. ATEC has incorporated quality materials and energy efficient features throughout. Public areas feature vaulted, gabled ceilings, many with attractive exposed wood beams.

Gaboury, Prefontaine, Perry Architects of Winnipeg designed the building with construction by Winnipeg-based, Parkwest Projects Ltd.

Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation is based in Nelson House, Manitoba, about 800 kilometres north of Winnipeg and 80 kilometres west of Thompson. NCN has about 4,000 members living in Nelson House, South Indian Lake, Leaf Rapids, Thompson, Brandon and Winnipeg. More than 60 percent of its members are between 13 and 30 years of age.

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For more information please contact Chief Jerry Primrose at (204) 679-0232 or Councillor and Future Development Portfolio Holder W. Elvis Thomas at (204) 679-0803 or through the NCN Future Development Office at (204) 484-2414