

Mestickoo Eeliloowuk

(People of the Trees)

(pronounced: miss tik ill ill e wuk)

News Release

December 11, 2006

Cochrane, Ontario. The First Nation Coalition of Northeastern Ontario and the Lake Abitibi Model Forest have submitted a joint proposal to the Canadian Forest Service for consideration as a candidate under the Forest Communities Program. The new joint venture will be known as Mestickoo Eeliloowuk which means “people of the trees”.

A memorandum of understanding between the Lake Abitibi Model Forest and the First Nation Coalition of Northeastern Ontario was signed on December 4th that sets out how this new organization will be formulated.

“It is a priority that we see this as a true opportunity to come together in a manner of caring and sharing that will allow for a productive coming together in an understanding way”, said Reg Fletcher, a Counselor with the Chapleau Cree First Nation at a gathering of the First Nation Coalition and Lake Abitibi Model Forest in Timmins on November 23rd.

The First Nation Coalition is initially made up of eight communities (Constance Lake First Nation, Missanabie First Nation, Moose Cree First Nation, Mattagami First Nation, Taykwa Tagamow Nation, Matachewan First Nation, Chapleau Cree First Nation, and Wahgoshig First Nation) in northeastern Ontario encompassing the watersheds of the Kenogami, Missinaibie, Mattagami and Abitibi Rivers. The Lake Abitibi Model Forest is based out of Cochrane and has an area of influence stretching from Hearst to Kirkland Lake and Moosonee/Moose Factory to the north.

“The Canadian Forest Service has presented us with a wonderful opportunity. Mestickoo Eeliloowuk is offering its hands on a journey of change to work cooperatively on renewed relationships creating a positive change for all those living in northeastern Ontario” said Wayne Young, General Manager of the Lake Abitibi Model Forest. “This will be an equitable partnership benefiting all northeastern Ontario communities. Municipalities and First Nation communities have similar issues in dealing with a changing economic climate and social issues such as youth out-migration”, he added.

The Canadian Forest Service has received submissions for the Forest Communities Program from across Canada. The selection of the final sites is expected some time in January with a start-up date of April 1st, 2007. There have been several applications from northern Ontario.

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Forest Communities Program: www.nrcan.gc.ca/cfs/national/what-quoi/forest_com_e.html
Nishnawbi-Aski Nation: www.nan.on.ca
Lake Abitibi Model Forest: www.lamf.net