

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***Wataynikaneyap Transmission Project Training Program Celebrates Inaugural Graduating Class***

***Thunder Bay, ON, July 19, 2018-*** Today, Wataynikaneyap's skills training initiative is thrilled to celebrate the graduation of its first round of successful participants in its *Line Crew Ground Support Training Course*.

The 15-week certificate program, held at Gridlink in Thunder Bay, Ontario, started in April and is designed for those looking to gain direct or in-direct employment in the construction of the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project and the powerline industry. Wataynikaneyap Power PM, Opiikapawiiin Services, Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA), PowerTel and Oshki-Pimache-O-Win: The Wenjack Education Institute have joined together to deliver training programs including the *Line Crew Ground Support Training*, funded in part by the Government of Canada's Skills and Partnership Fund.

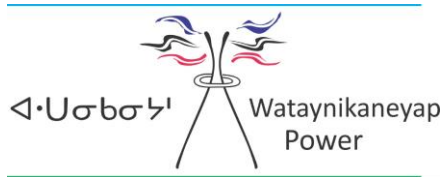
Wataynikaneyap Power is a First Nations led project that will connect 17 remote communities to the provincial power grid. 51% of the project is owned by 22 First Nations who have partnered with industry leader, Fortis Inc. "It is vital to witness the graduates achieve their goals and complete this intensive certificate-based training program. This is another milestone for our communities to have meaningful participation in the project. Our community members are majority owners of the transmission company and will be the ones to help build the line," says Margaret Kenequanash, CEO of Wataynikaneyap Power. "Now it's time to put the graduates to work in the construction of the powerline to gain valuable work experience. Congratulations to all the graduates."

The First Nations have been working together since 2013 on community engagement, participation and capacity building to capture maximum employment, training and business opportunities. They recognized that it will be required to develop capabilities and initiate specific training for community members.

Graduates of the Line Crew Ground Support Course have spent the last three months participating in the program, combining classroom and practical training, that includes several safety courses, ladder and safe pole handling, the fundamentals of working at heights, mobile crane operator training, specifics on pole line construction and several other courses that are required for the position. "The Infrastructure Health &

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Safety Association is pleased to have worked alongside the first group of participants to teach valuable work-ready skills, help build confidence and instill a high level of safety,” says Dennis Smith, IHSA’s Manager of Powerline Apprenticeship and Training. “The Infrastructure Health & Safety Association and its instructors celebrate the growth of the participants and success of the graduates.”

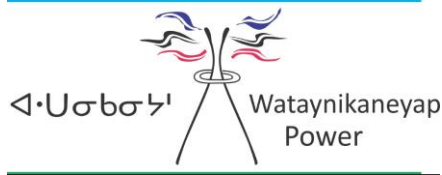
Opiikapawiin Services LP (OSLP) is coordinating the delivery of the training program and Lucie Edwards, OSLP CEO is pleased with the results. “This is our first round of technical training and we have an excellent work-ready program. The dedication of the staff and our training partners in working closely with the participants have made it a success”.

Line Crew Ground Support graduates will be seeking meaningful employment in the powerline sector. Joel Meekis, a participant from Sandy Lake First Nation is looking forward to gaining work experience. “The Line Crew Ground Support Course was a great experience for me. There was a lot of hands-on training that I believe has given me the confidence I need to further my career in the industry. The instructors really taught us to trust our equipment and that safety was always a number one priority;” says Meekis. “Although at times it was tough to be away from home, I knew this would benefit my life and the family and create a brighter future. I’m looking forward to putting my skills to use and start my career in powerline construction.”

“I really liked being out in the field and operating equipment. Today’s graduation makes all of those early morning classes worth it;” says Sandra Morriveau, a participant from North Caribou Lake First Nation.

The Wataynikaneyap Power transmission project is currently scheduled to be constructed by the end of 2023, and is projected to create 769 jobs during the construction phase and \$900 million in socio-economic benefits.

Three additional intakes for the **Line Crew Ground Support Training Course** will be offered on August 13, 2018, April 29, 2019, and August 19, 2019. The group has a goal to see 48 students receive training certificates. For additional information please visit: [www.wataypower.ca](http://www.wataypower.ca).



**About Wataynikaneyap Power:** Wataynikaneyap Power is a licensed transmission company, regulated by the Ontario Energy Board, equally owned by 22 First Nation communities (51%), in partnership with Fortis (49%). FortisOntario Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Fortis, and an electricity transmission and distribution utility holding company based in Ontario, owns 49% of the general partner of Wataynikaneyap Power and acts as the project manager. To connect remote First Nations communities to the electrical grid, Wataynikaneyap Power will develop, manage construction, and operate approximately 1,800 kilometers of 230 kV, 115 kV, and 44 kV lines in northwestern Ontario. For further information visit [www.wataypower.ca](http://www.wataypower.ca).

**About Opiikapawiin Services:** Opiikapawiin Services was established by a partnership of 22 First Nations in Northwestern Ontario, the 22 First Nations Partnership is also majority owner in Wataynikaneyap Power. Opiikapawiin Services is responsible for administering projects and programs for Wataynikaneyap Power relating to community engagement, community readiness, education & training, business readiness, stakeholder engagement, communications, and capacity building. Opiikapawiin Services will also support the First Nations Partnership in the management of its investment in Wataynikaneyap Power, which includes raising equity for the First Nations interest in the transmission project. For further information visit [www.oslp.ca](http://www.oslp.ca).

**About IHSA:** IHSA is a leader in health and safety education. Through skills-based training and evaluation, IHSA provides safety solutions to those who perform high-risk activities such as working at heights, working with energized high-voltage power systems, and utility line clearing. For further information visit [www.ihsa.ca](http://www.ihsa.ca).

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