



**ATOSKE
ACTION GROUP**



**NORTHERN LAKES
COLLEGE**

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 2018

Wabasca - Desmarais, Alberta

Federal Funding leads to creation of Atoske Community Educational Health Lab

In April of 2018, the Atoske Action Group (AAG) received a contribution of \$450,000 from the Government of Canada through Western Economic Diversification Canada to train community members who want to pursue health careers. These funds made possible the creation of the Atoske Community Educational Health Lab located at the Northern Lakes College campus in Wabasca.

The Atoske Action Group dedicates its work to increasing the skills, abilities, and size of the local work forces within the MD of Opportunity #17, Bigstone Cree Nation (BCN), Sandy Lake, Peerless Trout First Nation, Chipewyan Lake, and Wabasca-Desmarais. "Atoske" is the Cree word meaning, "to work".

In 2015, The Bigstone Health Commission reached out to the Atoske Action Group to assist in promoting health careers to community members. Roundtable meetings with the Atoske Action Group, Bigstone Education Authority, Alberta Works, and Northern Lakes College resulted in the development of a plan that supports community members to pursue Health Care Aide training.

The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and Minister responsible for Western Economic Diversification Canada comments, "Access to local community training programs creates new opportunities for life. Through effective partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, the Government of Canada is helping to remove barriers to success by ensuring local citizens are able to obtain the skills they require to fully participate in the economy and strengthen their communities."

Art Bigstone, Chair of Atoske Action Group comments, "A crucial aspect of the Atoske Action Group vision is to provide meaningful and accessible training through key partnerships. The Atoske Community Educational Health Lab and its associated programming are only possible because of the partnership between the Atoske Action Group, Bigstone Cree Nation, the M.D. of Opportunity, the Western Diversification Program, and Northern Lakes College."

"The Western Economic Diversification grant provides an opportunity for BCN members and citizens from communities within the MD of Opportunity to obtain education leading to a career in the health field," says Bigstone Cree Nation Chief Gordon T. Auger. "The funding has also made possible the

Community Educational Health Lab, which will reduce the need for students to travel over 134km to Slave Lake to further their education. Our community takes pride in this opportunity to give back to our membership, youth, and young families, as this will help bridge the need for qualified health professionals in our community.”

“Educating local residents in the health professions will be a real asset to the MD of Opportunity when we open our seniors’ health facility in the fall of 2019,” enthuses Reeve Marcel Auger, MD of Opportunity No. 17.

NLC President and CEO Ann Everatt says, “The College’s ongoing commitment to access and quality results in the reduction of educational barriers faced by northcentral Albertan’s. The Atoske Community Educational Health Lab ensures that community members will have access to the lab experiences required for the Health Care Aide program right here in the community. As a part of the larger initiative to increase capacity for Health Care Aides in the community, the creation of the customized Health Preparation Program ensures that local students receive the educational preparation required to enter into the Health Care Aide program.”



Elder Albert Yellowknee, Clayton Auger, Darlene Jackson, Marcel Auger, Ernie Grach, Rena Auger, Ann Everatt

Northern Lakes College (NLC), located in northern Alberta, provides quality programs through distributed learning to over 6,000 students annually. NLC offers certificate and diploma programs in Business, Health Sciences and Allied Health, Human Services, Technology, Trades, University Studies, and Academic Upgrading. The College collaborates with partners to offer degree completion opportunities, including a Bachelor of Education and a Bachelor of Social Work. NLC provides professional accreditation and certificate programs through its Continuing Education and Corporate Training Department.

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