

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AETS Takes a Novel Approach to Address Indigenous Workplace Inclusion

Workshop aims to Inspire Laughs to Inspire Change

March 5, 2021, Thunder Bay, ON- Anishinabek Employment and Training Services (AETS), in partnership with Indigenous Works and Magnus Theatre Company Northwest, has announced a free professional workshop, with a twist of comedy, to inspire organizations to improve their Indigenous Workplace Inclusion practices.

The improv comedy event is being hosted virtually on Thursday March 25th and tackles sensitive topics related to Indigenous workplace inclusion. It features Tonto's Nephews, an all-Indigenous troupe of professional actors, writers, and comedians.

"Given the current health pandemic and the excessive number of virtual meetings people are facing, AETS wanted to continue delivering workplace education programs while using innovative and upbeat approaches. This employer focused workshop offers an engaging and artistic approach to addressing important Indigenous Workplace Inclusion issues through the voices and hearts of Indigenous comedians," say John DeGiacomo, Executive Director of AETS.

The event will explore where organizations fall on the Indigenous Inclusion Continuum. This enterprise-wide Workplace Inclusion System, designed by Indigenous Works, helps organizations to climb the seven-stage continuum, by diagnosing what organizational competencies are needed to achieve increased engagement and relationships with Indigenous Peoples, businesses and organizations. Indigenous sketch comedy troupe, Tonto's Nephews, will bring each stage to life live through performances, as they interpret the program and its principals.

"In some Indigenous teachings, humour is considered a medicine; a medicine that can help us be more open, vulnerable and transparent to deal with difficult issues and subjects. Significant barriers continue to exist when it comes to the hiring, retention and advancement of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Indigenous inclusion in the workplace is a crucial part of creating more welcoming and diverse workplaces. This event will inspire business leaders and professionals to review their own workplace practices and strategies to inspire change and new era of workplace inclusion." says Kelly Lendsay, President & CEO Indigenous Works.

"Ensuring that workplaces are diverse, inclusive and promote career growth for Indigenous

Peoples must be a priority. The Indigenous population is young and growing, and is largely an untapped resource for staffing with up to a 31% unemployment rate. AETS believes that hiring and enabling Indigenous Peoples in the workplace is essential to our region and country's future economic success," continues DeGiacomo. "It also provides an opportunity for employers to contribute meaningfully to reconciliation."

The Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) has pre-approved this event for one Continuing Professional Development hour.

The event is taking place via REMO and ZOOM platforms, and includes a Pre-Show networking event sponsored by Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce and a Main Show event hosted by Magnus Theatre Company Northwest.

"Magnus Theatre is thrilled to be a part of this event and to work with AETS to bring the incomparable Tonto's Nephews to Thunder Bay to explore this important topic. Using comedy to highlight important parts of a crucial conversation is what theatre is all about, and we are thrilled to have been invited," says Thom Currie, Magnus Theatre Artistic Director.

Registration is open until March 15th at: aets.org.

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About AETS

Based in Thunder Bay, AETS is leading the development of a skilled Indigenous workforce by empowering the Anishinabek through holistic programming, cultural sharing and skills training and employment. AETS provides unique solutions to support Anishinabek to overcome barriers that are customized to individuals in their search for meaningful employment.

About Indigenous Works

Indigenous Works works with companies and organizations to strengthen their performance and results in Indigenous employment, workplace engagement and inclusion. Indigenous Works is addressing relationship building and responding to the growing need for stronger partnership development between Indigenous-owned enterprises and corporate Canada. This is timely given calls by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Government of Canada to renew relationships with Indigenous Peoples for the betterment of Canadian society and our economy.

About Tonto's Nephews

Tonto's Nephews is an all-Indigenous troupe of professional actors, writers, and comedians who perform Improv and Sketch Comedy. A first-rate ensemble of professional comedians, the Nephews have been seen on stages across North America. They have also been featured in television and film productions such as The Royal Canadian Air Farce, The Rez, Dance Me Outside, GC Kids, Real Rez Blues, Due South, Northwood, and many more.

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