

News Release

FOR RELEASE
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\$245,000 INVESTMENT IN EAST SIDE ABORIGINAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Winnipeg, Manitoba – Eastside Aboriginal Sustainable Tourism (EAST) Inc. will launch a comprehensive Aboriginal tourism development and marketing initiative, thanks to funding under Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement. This initiative will promote the wealth of natural resources and tourism opportunities in communities along the east side of Lake Winnipeg, in balance with respect for the land, its residents and culture.

The \$245,000 investment for this initiative was announced today by the Honourable Andrew Swan, Manitoba Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade; and James Bezan, Member of Parliament for Selkirk-Interlake, on behalf of the Honourable Rona Ambrose, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification; and the Honourable Eric Robinson, Manitoba Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

"Tourism and eco-tourism on the east side of Lake Winnipeg have unlimited economic potential," said Minister Swan. "The growing international awareness of Aboriginal culture coupled with the natural beauty of the east side represents a significant economic opportunity for the area. The funding announced today will go to training and developing strategies that will help develop potential markets."

"Today's tourists want to be engaged with the people and the places they visit," said MP Bezan. "Manitoba's Aboriginal communities are fortunate to have unique geographical features, rich cultural diversity and a welcoming hospitality, which are distinct magnets for Canadian and international tourists. The Government of Canada is pleased to partner with the provincial government in support of Aboriginal tourism in Manitoba."

EAST Inc. will work with the communities to identify Aboriginal tourism assets, develop tourism business opportunities, facilitate Aboriginal tourism training, establish a network of Aboriginal tourism operators, market and advertise tourism products and increase the number of tourism visits. This initiative is expected to increase the number of sustainable, locally owned Aboriginal business enterprises operating in the east side region and provide new tourism-related employment opportunities for residents including youth.

"The Government of Manitoba is also proud to announce support for a new Aboriginal Tourism Training program to help Aboriginal youth and underemployed individuals begin their journey toward careers in the tourism industry," said Minister Robinson. "My department is providing \$150,000 toward the Provincial Aboriginal Tourism Training Plan, which will provide

skills development, industry orientation and cultural training to individuals in communities on the East Side of Lake Winnipeg and throughout the province. The program, administered by the White Buffalo Spiritual Society, provides a bridge for participants into entry-level employment opportunities in the tourism sector and will also help participants to qualify for subsequent enrollment in formal industry certification programs.”

“Aboriginal tourism development in Manitoba will help to improve the economies of the First Nations while maintaining culture and tradition,” said William Young, Chair of EAST Inc. Board of Directors. “With the support of its partners, provincial, federal, and industry, Aboriginal tourism will take its rightful place in the province.”

EAST Inc. is a not-for profit, community-driven initiative, created and facilitated by people from the east side region to support the development and expansion of Aboriginal tourism businesses primarily in First Nation communities. The executive committee of EAST Inc. currently includes representatives from the communities of Berens River, Bloodvein, Brokenhead, Hollow Water, Little Black River and Poplar River.

Under the Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), the governments of Canada and Manitoba are working together and in partnership with community stakeholders to build the economy and strengthen communities. These priorities promote economic growth and diversification in the province.

For more information on this and other projects funded under the Agreement, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov.mb.ca>.

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