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NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday August 27, 2008 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN GRAND CHIEF CELEBRATES SUCCESS OF SUMMER READING CAMPS

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy celebrated the success of the 2008 Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Summer Reading Camps program for improving literacy and education in NAN communities at an appreciation dinner at Lakehead University earlier this week.

"These reading camps foster understanding, initiate dialogue and instill hope in our young people, and we are very excited to be involved in this annual program," said NAN Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "Tragically, we lose about 30 young people to suicide every year because our children are growing up with a sense of hopelessness. If our young people don't receive a proper education they will never know that they can have a better life."

More than 100 student counsellors from Ontario universities and NAN communities held 39 reading camps in 31 NAN communities this summer, delivering literacy programming to more than 2,500 First Nations youth between 4-16 years of age.

A new element in this year's program saw four students from the Ontario College of Art and Design develop visual art projects in the NAN communities of Sandy Lake First Nation, Keewaywin First Nation, Aroland First Nation, Kashechewan First Nation, Fort Albany First Nation as well as White Dog First Nation in Treaty 3 territory.

"Thanks to this program and the dedication of these counsellors, we are able to instill a sense of hope in our young people and make them aware that there is a world out there full of promise," said Beardy, who has worked closely with Ontario's Lieutenant Governor on several literacy initiatives in NAN communities. "I believe that with the proper education and support, anyone in Ontario and Canada can grow to become anything they want to be."

The reading camp program was launched in 2005 as a pilot project in five NAN communities to improve literacy. The program is delivered by Frontier College, Canada's oldest literacy organization, on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and is supported by the Government of Ontario, Ontario universities and the private sector.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

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