



Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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100 Back Street, Unit 200, Thunder Bay, ON P7J 1L2
Tel: (807) 623-8228 Fax: (807) 623-7730 www.nan.on.ca

NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday August 3, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN CALLS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES OF EVACUATED FIRST NATIONS AS THEY RETURN HOME

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy says immediate financial support is required for those NAN First Nations returning home following their evacuation due to forest fires burning across Northwestern Ontario. The call for support comes after a Sandy Lake First Nation family, who was forced to evacuate, returned home this past weekend to find their house completely destroyed by fire.

“Immediate financial support is required from both the provincial and federal governments to replace the loss by the family in Sandy Lake First Nation. It was challenging enough for that family, along with others, to evacuate their home communities, leaving their personal belongings behind for safety. Now, that family is coming home to nothing and the community does not have the resources to replace what they have lost,” said NAN Grand Chief Stan Beardy.

While thousands of evacuees are returning to their communities this week, many who experienced power outages have been forced to restock their food supply from their freezers and refrigerators. Beardy says there must be support to restore and restock traditional and non-traditional foods. Fish and wild game which are a staple part of the diet of the communities, may now be displaced or have perished in the traditional trapping, hunting and fishing grounds.

In addition, forest fires typically cause drastic changes to water quality, wild life habitats and can contribute to toxic conditions in the air and water. This will lead to serious reductions in fish populations, and will add further complications to the already deficient drinking water systems in the North.

Beardy is calling on both the Province of Ontario and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada to assist the communities in returning to their homes safely and with stocked food and personal supplies. “This was not a choice. The families did not choose to leave their homes. It was something they needed to do to ensure their safety and well-being. The Governments of both Canada and Ontario must have a short-term plan in place to assist these families who have suffered a loss in food supplies and a long-term plan in place to determine how best to address the aftermath.”

More than 4,000 NAN residents were forced to evacuate their communities due to recent forest fires in Northwestern Ontario and over 600,000 hectares of land has been affected. Many residents are still waiting to return home.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty No. 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

For more information please contact *Amy Harris, Director of Communications – Nishnawbe Aski Nation (807) 625-4906 or (807) 252-2806 mobile or by email aharris@nan.on.ca.*