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NEWS RELEASE

Thursday August 7, 2008 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL PROUD OF ATTAWAPISKAT YOUTH SHANNEN KOOSTACHIN'S NOMINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AWARD

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy together with Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose and the NAN Executive Council are proud to learn of thirteen-year-old Shannen Koostachin's nomination for the International Children's Peace Prize for her fight to get a much-needed school built in her community of Attawapiskat.

"Education is a basic right for every child in Canada, but for far too long the children of Attawapiskat have been denied the opportunity to learn in safe, clean and comfortable surroundings," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "Children are our future, and it is shameful that in this day and age our children are crowded into drafty, leaky portables that challenge the delivery of their academic programs instead of learning in a proper facility."

Koostachin has garnered national attention for challenging Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Chuck Strahl over his refusal to honour a federal commitment to build a new school in the remote Cree community. She was nominated on behalf of the children of Attawapiskat by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada for being an inspiring young leader.

The International Children's Peace Prize is awarded annually to a child that has devoted a lot of his or her energy to improving the rights of children. It is an initiative of the KidsRights Foundation with the support of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. The 2008 recipient will be announced at the end of the year.

Attawapiskat First Nation has fought for a new school for eight years and launched an awareness campaign after plans for a new school were cancelled in December 2008 by the Government of Canada. A YouTube campaign entitled Attawapiskat School Fight (www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzLMuW1N50I) has received more than 68,000 hits.

"I am very proud and inspired by the work of Shannen Koostachin and the children of Attawapiskat, but I am very discouraged and disheartened by the Government of Canada's failure to address these basic educational needs," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose, who supported Koostachin's nomination on behalf of NAN. "It is shameful and unethical that these young leaders and this community has been forced into a position to lobby for what every other Canadian child has the right to – a quality education."

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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