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# NEWS RELEASE

**Tuesday August 19, 2008** **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## NAN CONCERNED ABOUT GOVERNMENT'S LACK OF CONSULTATION WITH FIRST NATIONS PRIOR TO CONCEPTION OF NEW PROGRAMS

**THUNDER BAY:** Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler expressed concern about the lack of consultation with First Nations prior to the inception of new programs following an announcement for Aboriginal community justice initiatives made by Attorney General Chris Bentley at the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre today.

"It's not so much about the content of today's announcement but rather the process. Here we have another example of the government rolling out a new program without first consulting the people who will be affected the most," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. "First Nations, including the NAN communities should have been consulted. Holding a meeting one hour before the announcement, as they did in this case, is just not going to cut it."

The Government of Ontario announced today the inception of the Aboriginal Victims Support Grant Program which will provide $2 million in funding from the Victims' Justice Fund to Aboriginal communities and organizations in Ontario, including First Nations, Metis and Inuit, for one-time projects to enhance supports to victims of crime.

"First Nation people continue to be over represented as victims of crime as well as in the correctional system, in relation to the rest of the population. Something definitely needs to be done, but it needs to be done properly and with consultation with First Nations. We need to look at the system itself and address what changes need to be made," said Fiddler.

Also announced today was $96,000 for the Aboriginal Community Council Program, operated by the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre as well as $41,000 to provide Thunder Bay's courts with specialized reports on Aboriginal offenders when making sentencing decisions.

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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