Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday March 4, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN, KASHECHEWAN WELCOME JURY VISIT AS CORONER'S INQUEST SET TO BEGIN

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler together with Kashechewan First Nation Chief Jonathon Solomon welcome a jury visit to Kashechewan First Nation on March 9 as part of a coroner's inquest into a fatal fire that claimed the lives of two inmates at a police detachment in 2006.

"I welcome the opportunity for this jury to see the under-serviced and deplorable conditions Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service (NAPS) officers are often forced to work under," said Kashechewan First Nation Chief Jonathon Solomon. "There have been too many delays in having this inquest begin its critical work, and it feels as though we are finally coming to the end of a chapter in this sad story."

James Goodwin and Ricardo Wesley died in a tragic jail fire at a NAPS detachment in Kashechewan on January 8, 2006 while the community was powerless to help them. The tragedy garnered national attention on the inadequacies of firefighting resources in First Nation communities. The inquest into their deaths is set to resume March 23, 2009 at the Toronto Coroners Courts with Dr. David Eden presiding as inquest coroner.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation urges the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that jury members get a complete picture of the community by visiting the water treatment plant, the levee, band office, school, health centre, as well as homes of some community members.

"We are hoping the jury physically see the challenges that community members face and that they will be able to visualize what is being discussed during the inquest," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. "By seeing the physical conditions of the communities we hope that the jury members will see the bigger issues that need to be looked at."

Kashechewan First Nation, a remote fly-in community along the west coast of James Bay with a population of 1,600 people, has trained a volunteer fire department and is in the process of building a fire station but does not have any fire-fighting equipment and is currently unable to respond to fires. They are unable to acquire fire trucks and equipment until the station is completed.

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

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