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

NEWS RELEASE

Monday May 25, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN CALLS FOR JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN HAIRCUTTING INCIDENT

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Executive Council is calling on the Attorney General to review the police investigation and the action of the Crown Attorney for the Thunder Bay region following the decision not to lay charges in the case of the teacher's assistant who cut a 7-year-old First Nation student's hair without his consent.

"Nishnawbe Aski Nation wants an explanation of the circumstances that led to their decision not to lay charges against the teacher's assistant who violated the child and traumatized him when she cut off his hair off," said Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

NAN is concerned about both the processes and decisions made by the Thunder Bay Police Service in its investigations and the regional Crown in their assessment of the situation.

A May 23 Globe and Mail article reported that police in Thunder Bay say it was the Crown's decision not to file charges of assault; a spokesman for the Attorney General said it's police who decide whether to lay a charge, not the Crown.

"What we have now is confusion as the Thunder Bay Police say the responsibility for charges rests with the Crown and the Ministry of the Attorney General saying the responsibility rests with the Thunder Bay Police," said Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose. "First they claimed it wasn't in the public interest, and now for the first time, without ever having consulted with the child's parents, they say it's 'to avoid re-victimizing the child.' How can they claim this as a defense when they've already obtained a video statement from him?"

Only a full examination by the Ministry of the Attorney General of the police investigation and Crown Attorney's charge assessment will solve the issue, Fiddler says.

Julian Falconer, a lawyer for the child's family, has stated unequivocally that cutting the child's hair without his consent constitutes an assault.

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

***

For more information please contact *Joyce Hunter, A/Director of Communication – Nishnawbe Aski Nation (807) 625 4952 or (807) 472-5638 mobile.*