



Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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## NEWS RELEASE

Thursday August 18, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **WINDIGO AND NAN APPLAUD LANDMARK DECISION TO ADD STIRLAND LAKE AND CRISTAL LAKE HIGH SCHOOLS TO THE LIST OF RECOGNIZED INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS**

**THUNDER BAY, ON:** Windigo First Nations Council (Windigo), supported by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN), is pleased following the decision by Chief Justice Winkler, Superior Court of Justice of Ontario, to add Stirland Lake and Cristal Lake Residential High Schools to the *Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA)*. This is also a precedent setting case as this motion to determine the parameters for adding further schools to the IRSSA is the first motion to be decided across Canada.

“This is a good solid victory for not only those who have been directly impacted by these particular schools but also First Nations across the country,” said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Mike Metatawabin. “This landmark decision paves the way for other First Nations people who have been institutionalized to be included in this national settlement and we hope they too will continue to fight for justice.”

“The former students of Stirland Lake and Cristal Lake Residential High Schools will now be able to begin their healing journey through the Common Experience and Independent Assessment processes offered by the IRSSA,” said Frank McKay, Council Chair of Windigo First Nations Council, who spearheaded this court challenge.

The significance of this decision is that all former students, estimated at approximately 600 students, will now be eligible to apply for the Common Experience Payment (CEP). The CEP is awarded to all former students who attended any recognized Indian Residential School throughout Canada. The students are each entitled to receive \$10,000 for their first year of attendance, and another \$3,000 for each additional year of attendance. The students will also receive an apology from the operating institution. In addition, those who may have been sexually or physically abused, or mistreated as defined by the IRSSA, can apply for further compensation under the Independent Assessment Process (IAP).

“The deadline for filing CEP applications has also been extended to September 2012, which will give the new applicants a chance to learn of this opportunity and file an application,” said Susan Vella, legal counsel for Windigo and NAN. “We are ready to

assist these former students with pursuing their legal rights under the IRSSA. We are grateful to the Court for rectifying the oversight in the IRSSA's failure to include these schools in the original schedule of Indian Residential Schools.”

### About

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.

Windigo First Nations Council is comprised of seven (7) remote northern Ontario First Nation communities and works to deliver a number of programs and services to Bearskin Lake, Sachigo Lake, North Caribou Lake, Cat Lake, Koocheching, Whitewater Lake and Slate Falls First Nations.

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