Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Thursday September 1, 2011 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN CONTINUES TO CALL FOR ACTION TO COMBAT PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Mike Metatawabin is calling on the governments of Canada and Ontario and the general public to recognize the rapidly increasing rates of prescription drug abuse, the alarming health and social impacts and for Canada and Ontario to take action in addressing the growing issue. He made his comments today, coinciding with a walk led by Lyle Fox – a youth from Bearskin Lake First Nation – who is working to raise funds for the fight against prescription drug abuse.

"OxyContin addiction did not begin in NAN communities; this drug is not made in our territory. NAN First Nations face a very dangerous epidemic of an ultra-addictive drug amongst children, youth and all members. In 2009, NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly unanimously passed a resolution declaring a state of emergency as a result of the prescription drug epidemic but Government response has been minimal," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Mike Metatawabin. "In the north we lack addiction treatment programs and facilities. Our communities do not have resident health professionals for community treatment services. There is an overall shortage of community-based recovery programs. Our efforts to enhance the training of our workers are challenged by the absence of training institutions and trainers for community workers to learn addictions interventions."

Nishnawbe Aski Police Services (NAPS) reported a steady rise in policing services from 13,437 calls in 2005 to 20,325 calls in 2010, most likely linked with increased OxyContin use. There were 180 drug investigations and a seizure of 8500 OxyContin tablets worth an estimated value of $3.4-million in Northern communities in 2010.

"We have been forced to stretch our already limited policing and security personnel in order to attempt to keep this drug from entering our communities. More resourcing must be in place to protect our members against crime, violence and gang-related activity," said Metatawabin. "As leadership, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our membership to the Governments of Canada and Ontario, as well as the general public in order to come up with a solution. Action must be taken now, in order to save our communities and future generations from harm."

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.

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