



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN CALLS ON THE PROVINCE TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT FASD

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose is calling on the Government of Ontario to get serious about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and develop an integrated provincial strategy for prevention and support services not only for First Nations, but for all of Ontario.

“Countless children are falling through the cracks because of Ontario’s continued failure to fully address FASD. This puts them at high risk for developmental disorders and severely impairs their chances to grow up to lead the full, happy and productive lives they so desperately deserve,” said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose. “FASD is a complex and debilitating condition with life-long implications for those affected and their caregivers, and an integrated provincial strategy is essential if progress is to be made on the prevention and treatment of this disorder.”

Ontario is falling behind other provinces, many of which have established provincial strategies and targeted mandates for FASD prevention, intervention and support. In 2006, the government cut the Northwestern Ontario FASD Diagnostic Clinic in Sioux Lookout that provided services to many First Nation and non-First Nation communities.

NAN struggles to support community-based workers in 47 northern and remote First Nations with minimal provincial funding, but they lack adequate clinical support and access to treatment and rehabilitation facilities, making it extremely difficult to provide proper assessments for high-risk children. This leads to poor school outcomes, mental health and addiction problems, conflicts with the law and increased risk of suicide and accidental death.

“Without assessments and proper services, many First Nations children are at very high risk for secondary disabilities that can severely impair their development,” said Waboose. “Lives are at risk, and it is crucial that the government officially recognizes the crippling health and social impacts of this disorder and begins to work with First Nations to design and implement a strategic response.”

FASD is preventable, but requires a comprehensive and community based approach, with solid, ongoing clinical and community supports. Assessment and diagnosis are key

elements in the prevention and treatment of FASD, and require a dedicated, multi-disciplinary team backed by an integrated, multi-year strategy with long-term funding.

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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