



Nishnawbe Aski Nation  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### NAN MOURNS PASSING OF GABRIEL ECHUM

**THUNDER BAY:** Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Harvey Yesno and the NAN Executive Council offer condolences to Chief Celia Echum and the community of Ginoogaming First Nation on the passing of her husband and Council member Gabriel Echum suddenly this morning.

“It is with sad hearts that we mourn the loss of this dear friend and respected leader who spent much of his very active life working to improve the quality of life not only in Ginoogaming First Nation but across Nishnawbe Aski,” said NAN Grand Chief Harvey Yesno. “Our thoughts and prayers are with the Ginoogaming community and we pray for Chief Echum and her family during this difficult time.”

Gabriel Echum was re-elected to the Ginoogaming Council last week after serving many years as Chief and Councillor. He also served in a variety of roles with several First Nation organizations including Matawa First Nations, NAN, and Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation where he served as Elder for the Central Region and a board member from 2008 to 2010. In 2000 he became a member of the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund and was elected to Board of Directors in 2001. He served as Chairman for several terms and was a current board member.

As a young Chief in the 1970s he challenged Ontario Hydro over the loss of land along the Ginoogaming shoreline. A specific claim was launched against the Government of Canada in 1993 for flooding and erosion during to logging activity around the community, which led to a settlement in 1998 with compensation for land damage and economic and cultural losses. He was also instrumental in a specific claim against the Government of Canada over the sale of timber from the reserve, alleging that the Department of Indian Affairs had underestimated the amount of merchantable timber and sold it at undervalue, which eventually led to the settlement of the Ginoogaming Timber Claim Trust in 2001.

Gabriel Echum was very active in employment and economic development initiatives for his community and, during three consecutive terms as Chief from 1993-1999, led the development of the Aboriginal Workforce Development and Maintenance Program, a

unique employment and training agreement at the Longlac mill that included a counselling and retention component to deal with social issues that became an employment model for many other communities. He was one of the founders of the National Aboriginal Minerals Association, which is now the Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association

“We are saddened with Gabriel’s passing but give thanks for his life of leadership and friendship and take comfort that his memory and spirit lives on through his family, friends and the many lives he improved throughout his life and work,” said Yesno.

Ginoogaming First Nation (formerly Long Lake 77 First Nation) is located on the northern shore of Long Lake approximately 40 kilometres east of Geraldton in Northern Ontario.

*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 in Canada.*

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