NEWS RELEASE

Thursday November 7, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN FIRST NATIONS DECLARE INHERENT AND TREATY RIGHT TO CONTROL THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

THUNDER BAY: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Harvey Yesno and Deputy Grand Chief Goyce Kakegamic stood in unity with Chiefs, Councillors, First Nation educators, Elders and youth today to confirm and declare First Nations Inherent and Treaty Right to control the future of education in NAN territory.

“Today we stand in unity to declare that the future of education in NAN will not be based on federal legislation but on our inherent right to self-government, including education jurisdiction,” said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Harvey Yesno. “The Government of Canada has failed to meet its obligation to deliver education to First Nation students on par with the rest of Canada. No longer will we allow our children to be denied their inherent right to education.”

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation Declaration on Our Inherent and Treaty Right to Education was endorsed by Chiefs-in-Assembly following three days of meetings by more than 200 delegates at Chiefs Summit on Education in Thunder Bay. The Declaration rightfully claims that the Government of Canada shall:

- Acknowledge and respect our Inherent Right to Education.
- Respect the educational obligations made by the Crown to our people through Treaty No. 9 and Treaty No. 5.
- Recognize our rejection of the imposition of the First Nations Education Act.
- Support NAN First Nations by recognizing our right to self-govern our education systems.

“This is a historic day as NAN leadership stands together to assert our inherent right to lay the path forward for education for the sake of our children and our children’s children,” said Deputy Grand Chief Goyce Kakegamic, who holds the education portfolio. “We have a sacred trust to our children and future generations to provide a quality education that respects our culture, values, and traditions while enabling them to live safe, healthy and productive lives, and today we are taking action to make that a reality.”

Over the past few weeks NAN has met with many municipal leaders to express NAN’s interest in developing collaborative working relationships to advocate for Northern communities, both native and non-native, with a strong regional voice.
“We look forward to working closely with neighbouring municipalities to build and strengthen relationships and to look for ways to work together on regional education and economic development initiatives,” said Kakegamic.

NAN will continue negotiations with the federal government through the self-governance jurisdiction process to secure control of education jurisdiction in Nishnawbe Aski.

*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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