



Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday September 9, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN WELCOMES KESHEN INVESTIGATION, SUPPORTS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS' FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

THUNDER BAY: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler is pleased the Court Monitor in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement will be able to conduct an investigation of Kenora lawyer Doug Keshen over financial arrangements for the settlement of Indian Residential School (IRS) claims.

The Court Monitor was to appear before the Superior Court of Justice today to request the authority to conduct an investigation into the practice files of Keshen and his law firm, Keshen & Major Barristers and Solicitors, over loans and administration fees paid by IRS claimants during the settlement process of compensation claims for their years of abuse. A hearing was scheduled for today but a consent order has since been obtained.

"We are pleased that this investigation will get underway without delay and we look forward to the establishment of an engagement process with First Nation communities and individual claimants that will provide the necessary outreach and support," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, who holds the justice portfolio. "It is unconscionable that legal firms would take advantage of the victims of the Residential School system, many of whom are marginalized and lack adequate legal representation. These survivors lost their childhood; they must not be robbed of their future."

NAN is also supporting former students of St. Anne's Residential School in Fort Albany First Nation who won access to thousands of pages of documents suppressed by the Government of Canada. In January 2014 the Superior Court ordered the government to produce documents relating to a 1990's criminal investigation into the physical and sexual abuse and torture of students, but documents released by the Department of Justice are heavily redacted and useless as the majority of information is blacked out.

"The federal government has a legal obligation under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement to release these documents, and it is shameful that even after two court orders the government still refuses to honour its obligations," said Fiddler. "Residential School survivors must have access to these documents in order to be fully compensated, but the government's failure to provide this material is denying them the justice they so rightfully deserve. These survivors acted in good faith when they agreed to take part in the Independent Assessment Process and it is shameful that they continue to be re-victimized."

To ensure the necessary support services are available for former Residential School students, Fiddler is seeking a commitment from the Health Canada to extend its current funding agreement so NAN can continue to support the thousands of Residential School survivors across NAN territory.

NAN encourages all Independent Assessment Process claimants who have questions about fees paid while settling their claims to call the Independent Assessment Process toll-free information line at 1-877-635-2648. Updates as more information becomes available will be posted on the Indian Residential Schools Adjudication Secretariat website at www.iap-pei.ca.

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