



Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **NAN CALLS FOR FIRE INQUEST ON ANNIVERSARY OF PIKANGIKUM TRAGEDY**

**PIKANGIKUM FIRST NATION:** Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and Pikangikum First Nation Chief Dean Owen have called for a coroner's inquest into Fire Safety in NAN First Nations, on the anniversary of the tragic house fire that claimed nine lives in Pikangikum First Nation last year.

"We remember the tragedy in Pikangikum a year ago and we pray for strength and healing for the families, Chief and Council and the entire community. It is unacceptable that house fires continue to claim lives in our communities. We are calling for an inquest into fire safety in memory of all those we have lost in fires across NAN territory over the years, and to prevent such tragedies from ever happening again," said Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

In a letter to the Chief Coroner for Ontario, NAN outlined how multiple deaths appeared to have occurred from a common cause, and these systemic issues, when brought to light and examined, would advance public safety. An inquest would examine the causes of house fires and make recommendations to prevent similar deaths and promote fire safety and prevention.

"Last year's tragedy shook our community to the core and we are still struggling to come to grips with it. Overcrowding, unsafe building standards, and a lack of firefighting equipment continues to put lives at risk in Pikangikum and communities across NAN territory. We experienced our worst nightmare with the terrible loss of 9 of our members and today we honour their memory. We fully support an inquest to help prevent similar tragedies," said Pikangikum First Nation Chief Dean Owen.

An inquest would be synchronized with Amber's Fire Safety Campaign which was launched by NAN in May 2016. The campaign is named in memory of Amber Strang, an infant just five months old and the youngest victim of the March 29, 2016 house fire in Pikangikum that claimed three generations of her family. It calls for a long-term plan to address fire protection and safety in the NAN territory.

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