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### NAN ISSUES CALL TO ACTION ON SUICIDE CRISIS

THUNDER BAY, ON (January 20, 2016): Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler issued a call to action today to the governments of Ontario and Canada to establish a Special Emergency Task Force to address the growing suicide epidemic across NAN First Nations.

“Leaders from across NAN territory stand united today in their call for a focused task force to take immediate action to stop the growing epidemic of suicide that continues to devastate so many of our communities,” said NAN Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. “Hundreds of our young people, some as young as 10 years old, are taking their lives while living in poverty, hopelessness and despair and without immediate action there will be no end in sight. This crisis is a national tragedy and the time for action is now.”

Several NAN First Nations were thrown into crisis this Christmas season following the suicides of a 10-year-old girl in Bearskin Lake First Nation, a 20-year-old woman in Fort Albany First Nation, and a 14-year-old girl in Neskantaga First Nation.

“Nothing is as shocking as the death of a child, and the continued loss of our youth and community members has a devastating impact on the health of our communities and our members,” said Bearskin Lake First Nation Chief Rosemary McKay. “The loss of every child affects the entire community but we lack the resources to prevent this crisis and help our members heal from their grief.”

Neskantaga First Nation declared a State of Emergency in 2013 after seven youth took their own lives. Described as living in “fourth world living conditions” the community, which has not had access to clean drinking water since 1995, is overwhelmed by crippling health and social issues.

“Today my community is in a state of crisis because of the loss of another one of our young people. We need to see immediate action at the community level to properly address the needs of our families,” said Neskantaga First Nation Chief Wayne Moonias. “Our children deserve a future and we need the political will of the leaders of Ontario and Canada to make this a priority.”

NAN’s call to action follows today’s launch of The People’s Inquiry on Suicide by the Mushkegowuk Council Grand Chief Jonathan Solomon during the NAN Winter Chiefs in Assembly (January 19-21) in Thunder Bay. The comprehensive report documents the ongoing suicide pandemic in the Mushkegowuk communities along the James Bay coast (NAN’s eastern border) and identifies key solutions and recommendations.

NAN is looking for both the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada to commitment resources for the development of crisis response teams to immediately begin to assist communities as well as developing a long-term strategy for suicide prevention including physical and mental health services, counselling and addiction treatment.

For more information please contact: Michael Heintzman, Director of Communications – Nishnawbe Aski Nation (807) 625-4965 or cell (807) 621-2790 or by email [mheintzman@nan.on.ca](mailto:mheintzman@nan.on.ca)

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