



MATAWA FIRST NATIONS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Fuel Spill under School Threatens Northern First Nation**  
*Local youth want to know why the Government won't help them...*

**Eabametoong First Nation, ON** – Following an assessment by Health Canada on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Eabametoong First Nation has shut down their only school facility due to a hazardous fuel spill underneath the John C. Yesno Education Centre. With no recommendations for clean up from the Government, the First Nation has been forced to suspend all classes until the spill can be excavated, leaving First Nation students behind schedule for 2008 graduation and causing serious environmental concerns.

Chief Soloman Atlookan of Eabametoong First Nation says... “Yes, Health Canada has come into our community and made an assessment, but no recommendations have been made about how we can fix the problem. They can't tell us we have an environmental problem and then simply walk away without a solution. We don't understand why there is such disregard for the health of our youth. Our young people know that an urban school would receive immediate assistance in a similar situation and they want to know why they are being treated as less important than other young people by the Government. I think its time the Government answered our youth for themselves.”

The fuel tank spill occurred in the crawl space of the school due to improper installation combined with years of wear and tear. It is not yet known how much fuel was spilled on the





MATAWA FIRST NATIONS

ground although much of it has been salvaged by volunteer community members and transferred to an underground fuel container.

Due to immediate health concerns, the community school will remain closed until clean up work is done, which could take 3-4 weeks. Continues Chief Soloman, “Not only are the students suffering; but we are also facing some very real environmental impacts. This fuel is potentially seeping into our water source and contaminating the water we drink, bathe and cook with. This is a crisis for my community and it cannot be ignored. We are afraid for the young and the old in particular.”

A request made to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to fix the contamination has been denied.

Eabametoong First Nation is a remote First Nation, located north of Thunder Bay, ON.

-30-

**Media Contact:**

Tana-Leigh Sacino  
Communications Officer

Phone: 807-767-4443

Mobile: 807-474-8567

Email: [tanaleigh@firedogpr.com](mailto:tanaleigh@firedogpr.com)

