



MATAWA FIRST NATIONS

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NEWS RELEASE:

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KI First Nation court ruling has serious implications for the human rights of First Nations

Thunder Bay, On – The sentencing of six members of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation (KI) to six months in jail has caused widespread indignation among the people of Matawa First Nations. The Chiefs of Matawa First Nations called an urgent meeting today to discuss the very serious implications of the Thunder Bay Superior Court decision and to determine the future relationship between their communities and the Province of Ontario.

“As leaders, individuals and families, the people of Matawa First Nations have been deeply offended and shocked by this week’s ruling against KI,” says Matawa First Nations spokesperson, Chief Arthur Moore. “This decision has been received as a clear message from the Government of Ontario that they have no respect for the First Nations people of Ontario and that they give no consideration to our lives or rights as citizens. It is a shameful time for this country on the world stage and one that will have very serious implications for future relations between government, industry and First Nations.”

Matawa First Nations are pro-development communities located in Northern Ontario. They have been exploring partnerships with mining companies for economic development opportunities in their traditional territories. Earlier this month, Matawa First Nations were the only Aboriginal communities represented at the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) conference.





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“Matawa First Nations have been proactive in building relationships with mining companies wishing to undertake exploration in our traditional territories thus far,” continued Chief Moore. “However, we depend on working relationships that are based on cooperation, respectful use of traditional territories and meaningful consultation with our community members related to lands and natural resources. Now that Ontario has undermined the requirement for industry to engage in a process of consultation with our First Nations, our relationships with the mining industry have been seriously jeopardized and future relationships are doubtful to occur,” he says.

The First Nations foremost focus is, and has been, to secure a prosperous future for their youth and the generations to come. They want pro-active negotiations with the government to take place so that their youth are not left scarred by current events and can see a future in the mineral employment sector. Matawa First Nations’ goal in this ordeal is to leave the First Nations youth with zero negative social and economic impacts.

Matawa First Nations are enormously fearful of the implications of this week’s court decision. Chief Moore says; “Our community members are rightfully afraid for their lands and for the future of our families and communities. We depend on the resources of our lands everyday for food, for water, to live. We now have no protection against companies who wish to enter our territories to exploit and ruin our lands for their own economic gain. We are just like any other Ontario residents who would want to be protected or at the very least consulted about the intentions of developers entering their own backyards.”

From the political perspective, the Matawa Chiefs have never supported, participated in or received funding from the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Northern Table (NAN - Ontario Bilateral Process). Matawa First Nations is however seeking a Consultation and Accommodation Protocol with Ontario so that future situations do not spiral out of control like that at K.I.





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Matawa First Nations are a Tribal Council of ten communities located in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation; Aroland, Constance Lake, Eabametoong, Ginoogaming, Hornepayne, Long Lake #58, Marten Falls, Neskantaga, Nibinamik, and Webequie First Nations.

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