



CHIEFS COUNCIL

MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday, January 15, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MATAWA CHIEFS COUNCIL ISSUE STATEMENT FOLLOWING FATAL HOUSE FIRE CLAIMING THE LIVES OF 3 CHILDREN IN SANDY LAKE FIRST NATION

THUNDER BAY, ON: Responding to a media statement by Chief Delores Kakegamic confirming the death of three (3) children dying in a housefire on January 13, 2022 in Sandy Lake First Nation—the Matawa Chiefs Council offered the following statement:

“The Matawa Chiefs Council, send our deepest condolences to parents Delaney and Cassandra Meekis, their families and community of Sandy Lake First Nation in the deaths caused by fire of birthday boy Grant Meekis (age 9), Remi Meekis (age 6), and Wilfred Fiddler (age 4)—their children. We also offer condolences to Chief and Council, Sandy Lake Fire Department and volunteers, Nishnawbe Aski Police Service and community members who acted during the fire. We acknowledge that is a devastating loss, not only for the community of Sandy Lake First Nation but, also Deer Lake First Nation and surrounding communities.”

We echo and unequivocally support Chief Kakegamic’s call for adequate resources for fire and emergency services. Indigenous Peoples having a 10x likelihood of dying in a house fire than the rest of Canada is a statistic that is completely unacceptable. It is time for the country to come to terms with the fact the public safety laws were not written with the housing and community conditions of First Nations in mind.

It is clear that recommendations provided to governments on fire and emergency services are resulting in actions that are not moving fast enough. We are hopeful that the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service will produce findings that will lead to fast-moving changes that will shake-up the system. Again, we offer our sorrow to all who have been affected by these three untimely deaths.”

Matawa Chiefs Council members participating in statement include:

- Chief Sheri Taylor, Ginoogaming First Nation
- Chief Judy Desmoulin, Long Lake #58 First Nation
- Chief Wayne Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation
- Chief Dorothy Towedo, Aroland First Nation
- Chief Ramona Sutherland, Constance Lake First Nation
- Chief Sol Atlookan, Eabametoong First Nation
- Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation
- Chief Cornelius Wabasse, Webequie First Nation
- Ogamakan Michael Sugarhead, Nibinamik First Nation

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