

Eabametoong First Nation

Fort Hope Indian Reserve #64
P.O. Box 298
Eabamet Lake, Ontario
P0T 1L0

Telephone: (807) 242-7221
Fax: (807) 242-1441

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EABAMETOONG FIRST NATION ANNOUNCE LOSS OF COMMUNITY'S ONLY SCHOOL DUE TO ARSON

EABAMET LAKE, ON: Chief Solomon Atlookan and Council announced a fire that took place at the *John C. Yesno Education Centre* (JCY) in Eabametoong First Nation (EFN) early this morning resulting in a total loss of the community's only school. No individuals were reported hurt. As a result of continued investigation, police have determined the fire is consistent with arson. Two suspects, aged 17-years old and 14-years old, were located and taken into custody. Their identities are being withheld in accordance with the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

Chief Solomon and his Council provided the following statement:

"Along with our children, students, school staff and community members—we are extremely devastated by the fire that took place this morning in our community as a result of arson. This will result in a major disruption to our school year as the fire rendered the school inoperable for the remaining 5 month. This will deprive approximately 299 students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 9 of an education.

We will be working hard with our partners in a Task Force including: the Ontario government, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Eabametoong Education Authority, Matawa Education Authority and Technical Services, and others, to address immediate, short-term and long-term needs, including plans for continuing education in the interim. We will do our best to ensure that students' studies are not impacted to any large extent including setting up a virtual education system in the interim with the help of the Matawa Education Authority.

Moving forward, will be continuing with our plans (on a more urgent basis) for a new school that we have had in the ISC capital project process over the past number of years already to replace JCY. To our community, we say—justice will prevail and together we will overcome."

On October 24, 2023, Matawa First Nations Management announced that it received Indigenous Services Canada support to secure two wildfire rapid attack trucks. Unfortunately, due to the winter road not being completed as of today's date, EFN's truck has not been delivered and the community had no alternative but to try to fight the fire with the few fire suppression resources available.

The *Achieving the Dream Through Education* charity has set up a donation page here to assist the community: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/98564>.

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For more information, please contact Carol Audet, Communications Manager, Matawa First Nations Management at caudet@matawa.on.ca or 1-807-632-9663.