



## **Mattagami First Nation**

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### **News Release**

#### **MATTAGAMI FIRST NATION LAUNCHES LAWSUIT AGAINST CN RAILWAY FOR DAMAGES CAUSED BY TRAIN DERAILMENTS, OIL SPILLS IN TERRITORY**

Mattagami: Mattagami First Nation has launched a court case against Canadian National Railway (CN Railway) for the damage caused by two separate train derailments near Gogoma, Ontario in February and March 2015.

The two derailments spilled millions of litres of crude oil into nearby lands and the local watershed.

The area affected by the oil spills is in the heart of Mattagami First Nation's territory. For thousands of years, Mattagami members have harvested, hunted, fished, undertaken spiritual practices, and shared their traditional knowledge in this area. Today, the water is covered in a slick of oil, and animals and plants in the area are contaminated.

The impact on Mattagami First Nation has been catastrophic. Chief Chad Boissoneau says, "This is our homeland. Harvesting, hunting and fishing here have always been central to our livelihood and central to who we are. Because of the oil spills, many of our people don't go out on the land anymore. We can't gather the food we need. We can't share our knowledge with our young people. It's devastating."

Investigations by the Transport Safety Board have confirmed that the derailments were caused by CN Railway's failure to properly inspect, maintain and repair their tracks, and by gaps and failures in their training and safety systems.

"Last year environmentalist David Suzuki and I had the honor of visiting Mattagami First Nation," said Dr. Faisal Moola, Ontario and Northern Canada Director General for the David Suzuki Foundation. We saw firsthand the significant damage that has been caused to the local watershed as a result of the CN derailments. We believe that CN must be held accountable for the damage that they have caused to the health of the environment and ability of Mattagami First Nation members to safely harvest fish and other local foods, without threats to their health and well-being from oil contamination," he added.

In the lawsuit, Mattagami First Nation seeks monetary damages for the harms caused to their aboriginal and treaty rights to harvest, hunt, fish and share knowledge out on the land. They

argue that these rights are property rights in Canadian law, and that Mattagami First Nation members are entitled to use and enjoy their property rights free from unreasonable or unlawful interference by CN Railway. The oil spills have compromised their rights. Mattagami First Nation also claims CN was negligent in inspecting and maintaining its tracks, and in failing to implement adequate safety and training measures.

“We want justice for our land and for our people,” said Chief Boissoneau, “It’s not right that CN Railway should be allowed to ignore safety measures and dump oil into our homeland. We’re the ones who have to live with the damage.”

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