



## WHITESAND FIRST NATION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 23, 2026

### WHITESAND FIRST NATION CLARIFIES MNR EXEMPTION PERMIT ISSUE

**THUNDER BAY, ON** - Whitesand First Nation is issuing this statement to clarify public reporting and commentary concerning recent events at the Highway 527 and Highway 811 junction, known as Camp 230, where the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources ("MNR") has established a checkpoint pursuant to [Evacuation Order](#) IO-2026-009-TBI10 and [Implementation Order](#) IO-2026-009-TBI09.

Under these orders, all persons must evacuate the affected area and are prohibited from entering unless authorized through an exemption permit issued by the MNR. These restrictions are intended to protect public safety and support wildfire suppression operations. The presence of unauthorized civilians can place individuals and emergency personnel at risk and may interfere with operations, including the deployment of waterbombers.

Unauthorized entry may also disrupt or compromise asset-protection measures established by the MNR to reduce the risk of losing homes and critical infrastructure. Individuals entering without authorization may unintentionally interfere with this work and make conditions more dangerous if the fire reaches the area. Whitesand First Nation therefore reiterates its request that people not travel into the evacuated area unless they have received the required authorization from the MNR.

Statements have since circulated online suggesting that Whitesand First Nation Chief Lawrence Wanakamik issued Councillor Wigwas a permit authorizing him to return to Gull Bay First Nation that evening. This is incorrect. Whitesand First Nation does not have the authority to issue exemption permits on behalf of the MNR, and as such, no permit was issued by Whitesand First Nation to Councillor Wigwas.

*"We agree with Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek that no permit was issued by Whitesand First Nation authorizing Councillor Wigwas to pass through the checkpoint," said acting Chief Yvette Kwandibens of Whitesand First Nation. "We respect the authority of KZA's Chief and Council to determine who they believe should be present in their community to assist with wildfire suppression, subject to the applicable evacuation orders and provincial requirements."*

*"Whitesand and Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek are on the same page: nobody should be crossing that line period."*

**Whitesand First Nation**

Statement re KZA Exemption Permit Issue with respect to Councillor Wigwas

Whitesand First Nation is aware of the broader circumstances surrounding this matter, including that Councillor Wigwas was served with court documents by the Ontario Provincial Police at his residence in Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek on July 22, 2026. Whitesand also understands that Councillor Wigwas has indicated that he intends to seek legal counsel and file a complaint with the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency.

Those matters are properly addressed by Councillor Wigwas, Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek and the relevant authorities. Whitesand First Nation's statement is limited to correcting the public record regarding the alleged permit and affirming its respect for the authority of Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek's Chief and Council.

Whitesand First Nation values its relationship with Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabek and its neighbouring communities and will continue working collaboratively on matters affecting the safety and well-being of all community members.

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