



For Immediate Release

Anishinabek looking for action, not photo-ops

UOI Offices (Nipissing First Nation) January 19, 2012 – What has to be changed in the relationship between Canada and First Nations has already been established, says Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee. What needs to happen at a Jan. 24 Crown-First Nations Gathering in Ottawa is for Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government to take action.

"There has been much, much work done," said Madahbee. "Things like the Kelowna Accord, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Nielsen Task Force Report, the Penner Report and many, many other studies that point to the fact that we do need change. Now, we have the answers. The solutions are there, already built into a lot of these processes. What we need is the political will to move on some of these initiatives."

The Grand Council Chief was hopeful that the Jan. 24 meeting between First Nations leaders from across Canada and the federal government will be the start of that process.

"The rebuilding of a Crown-First Nations relationship is a necessary first step. I think we have a real opportunity here to show the world how Canada will engage with the First Nations in this country, by doing something very pro-actively to advance these issues that we've been talking about for years and years and years. Not since the Treaty days, and even more recently in the Constitutional talks of the early eighties, have we had an opportunity to meet with the Crown to discuss matters dealing with First Nations issues.

The Grand Council Chief said First Nations want the Ottawa gathering to be more than just a photo-op.

"We want this meeting to say that things are being done -- we want to see some really significant processes emerge, where we have ongoing working meetings, perhaps culminating in a First Minister's conference agreeing on some substantial ideas to affect our communities.

"So with that I say to the Canadian public, I say to the Anishinabek people, and I say to the government of Canada and the Governor General who represents the Crown: 'Let's

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get our sleeves rolled up, let's do some really good work, let's get to the heart of our issues, and let's make some real tangible change."

The Anishinabek Nation established the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949. The UOI is a political advocate for 39 member communities across Ontario, representing approximately 55,000 people. The Union of Ontario Indians is the oldest political organization in Ontario and can trace its roots back to the Confederacy of Three Fires, which existed long before European contact.

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