



***For Immediate Release***

## **First Nations force-fed lower living standards**

FORT WILLIAM FN (January 19, 2012) – Canada forces First Nations to accept lower standards of living," says Peter Collins, Northern Superior Regional Chief for the Anishinabek Nation.

Collins, also Chief of Fort William First Nation near Thunder Bay, hopes this is an issue that will be dealt with at the Jan. 24 Crown-First Nations Gathering in Ottawa.

"First Nations are forced to deal with lower standards for their citizens in housing and health care because of funding arrangements imposed on our populations for decades. We are concerned that cuts to funding in these areas are likely and will lead to crisis situations in many of our communities. Housing and health care services are paramount to the basic survival of our people and should be a shared priority for all concerned as we try to move forward, strengthening our citizens, communities and nation.

Regional Chief Collins, whose community recently concluded a 160-year-old land claim, also hopes the summit of First Nations Chiefs and Prime Minister Stephen Harper will make a commitment to streamline the existing land claims policy and procedures.

"First Nations, through land claims, are attempting to correct some of the wrongs that have been inflicted upon our citizens by Canada and Ontario not holding to the true agreements of our treaties and inherent rights," says Chief Collins. "Yet, even with the processes and strides that we are making in bringing forth and settling claims, the processes are long and costly, directed by Canada and decided upon by the very government who broke the pacts. It is our position that First Nations should have stronger positions and control mechanisms in these processes in order to fairly and reasonably solve these issues as Nations."

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.

# **UNION OF ONTARIO INDIANS**

Head Office: Nipissing First Nation  
P.O. Box 711 North Bay, Ontario P1B 8J8  
Phone: (705) 497-9127 Fax: (705) 497-9135  
E-mail: [info@anishinabek.ca](mailto:info@anishinabek.ca) <http://www.anishinabek.ca>



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**For more information contact:**

Marci Becking  
Communications Officer  
Union of Ontario Indians  
Phone: (705) 497-9127 (ext. 2290)  
Cell: (705) 494-0735  
E-mail: [becmar@anishinabek.ca](mailto:becmar@anishinabek.ca)

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