



For Immediate Release

Need to hear First Nations voices on environment

AAMJIWNAANG FN (January 19, 2012) – Anishinabek Nation Southwest Regional Chief Chris Plain says that First Nations are being burdened by environmental assessments and communities are not able to participate in all consultations regarding aboriginal and Treaty rights with Ontario or the federal government.

"The benefit of undertaking an environmental assessment is that environmental effects may be identified, minimized, mitigated or avoided," says Regional Chief Plain. "Each federal and provincial governing body has its own requirement and process."

But Chief Plain says that First Nations often do not have the resources or technical staff to comment on proposed projects' environmental impacts. The consultation process is inadequate and fails to meaningfully consider many values of importance to First Nations. Effective consultation should mean more than how many First Nations are consulted by the Crown or project proponents.

"First Nations in the present environmental assessment process are mere stakeholders," says the Regional Chief. "They have no power or authority over the design of the process or the ultimate decision. First Nations should be directly involved as it is their traditional territory that is being impacted by the decision-making of others."

Re-establishing the Treaty relationship will be one of the topics of the Crown-First Nations gathering in Ottawa on January 24.

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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