



For Immediate Release

First Nations launch blue-ribbon campaign to protect Great Lakes

UOI OFFICES (March 22, 2011) - First Nations across Ontario chose World Water Week to launch a light blue ribbon campaign. And if plans proceed this spring to ship nuclear waste through the Great Lakes watershed, those decorative pins could become battle ribbons.

"The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Bruce Power Corporation claim that First Nations were sufficiently consulted, but my community was never consulted," said Southwest Regional Anishinabek Nation Chief Chris Plain, who presented concerns about the proposed nuclear waste shipment to the Ministry of Natural Resources Standing Committee in Ottawa on March 10. "In fact, I know most of the Chiefs and Councils who are signatories to treaties all along the Great Lakes were never consulted. The duty to consult and accommodate must be done with the rights holders and we were never consulted."

Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee says that the Anishinabek Nation will be challenging the decision of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

"We will do everything in our power to prevent the Ontario and Federal governments and the nuclear power industry from using our precious waterways as a garbage disposal route," said Madahbee, who added that Bruce Power's plan would be breaching the rule of law.

"It is contrary to Supreme Court decisions, our aboriginal and treaty rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the laws of Nature," said the Grand Council Chief, speaking on behalf of 39 member communities of the Anishinabek Nation which occupy all of the Great Lakes shoreline and a significant part of its basin.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says that States must take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior, and informed consent. It also affirms the right of Indigenous peoples to conserve and protect the environment and productive capacity of their territories.

"The Anishinabek, Mushkegowuk, and Onkwehonwe peoples have made clear their relationship, rights, and responsibilities to the lands and waters, which are drawn from sacred law and traditional law," Madahbee added. "We need to protect the lands, waters and all living entities for seven generations to come."

The United Nations reports that more than one billion people around the world lack access to safe drinking water, including over 100 First Nation communities in Canada. Globally, two million tons of sewage and industrial and agricultural waste are poured into the world's waters every day, and at least 1.8 million children under five years of age die every year from water-



related diseases, or one every 20 seconds. More people die as a result of polluted water than are killed by all forms of violence, including wars.

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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