



**For Immediate Release**

## **Anishinabek Grand Council Chief: We are not aboriginal**

UOI OFFICES (Nipissing First Nation) May 18, 2011 – The new Conservative majority government has started its term in office by slighting First Nations citizens, says Anishinabek Nation leader Patrick Madahbee.

“We are not aboriginal – we are Anishinabek,” said the Grand Council Chief on behalf of 39 member First Nations, after learning that cabinet member John Duncan will carry the new title of Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. “Trying to lump First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples together might save space on the minister’s business card, but it is disrespectful of the truly distinct nature of the communities with whom he needs to establish better relationships.

“How would Stephen Harper like it if he were introduced as the prime minister of Panamerica?

“On June 11, 2008, he apologized for past injustices like Indian residential schools, and pledged that his government needed to move forward in partnership with First Peoples. Minister Duncan needs to demonstrate his understanding that the history, cultures and contemporary issues facing First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are entirely different. The best way to do that is not to call us all by the same name.

“Since 1763 the Crown in Canada has recognized that what were previously referred to as the Indian tribes of North America were in future to be treated as nations. That was the beginning of the sacred treaty relationship between First Nations and Canada. There is no such thing as an aboriginal treaty, or an aboriginal nation.

“It looks like there will be many lessons for the Harper government to learn over the next four years.”

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.



**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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