



For Immediate Release

Anishinabek mourn passing of Ron Wakegijig

UOI OFFICES, NIPISSING FN (May 5, 2011) – UOI OFFICES, Nipissing First Nation – Anishinabek are mourning the passing into the Spirit World of Ron Wakegijig (Shawani-biness—Bear Clan), a respected political leader and traditional healer in Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve.

“Ron’s death represents a tremendous loss for his family, his community, and the Anishinabek Nation,” said Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee. “When I first got involved in politics I sought him out for advice and have regarded him as a mentor for over 40 years. He was the greatest leader I knew on the First Nations political scene in Canada.”

Wakegijig, 67, served Wikwemikong as Chief for 18 years and was regarded as an exceptional orator in both English and Odawa.

In recent years he was widely respected as an Elder and healer, instrumental in launching the first mental health program for First Nations youth and Rainbow Lodge, an alcohol treatment centre in Wikwemikong. His advice was sought in the design of the Mshkikii-Gamig – Medicine Lodge – in the new Sudbury Regional Hospital.

In 2006 Ron Wakegijig was honoured with an Anishinabek Nation Lifetime Achievement Award, and this past January he received the Order of Ontario.

The Anishinabek Nation established the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949. The UOI is a political advocate for 40 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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