

## First Nations Overlooked Part of Economy - Madahbee

Ottawa (ots/PRNewswire) -

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Instead of boasting about Canada's success in avoiding much of the impacts of the recent global economic downturn at this week's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Prime Minister Stephen Harper should be sharing with them a ground-breaking Canadian plan to stimulate its economy with initiatives that create genuine partnerships with First Peoples.

Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee, one of 120 First Nations leaders from across Canada to participate in what was billed as a historic Crown-First Nations Gathering, said the post-event consensus was that Canada is intent on pushing through its own legislative agenda for First Nations, instead of working with them on comprehensive and creative solutions.

Madahbee said Canada is missing out on an opportunity to be seen as a leader on the world stage. "The National Chief has told Prime Minister Harper that a comprehensive action plan would add CDN \$400 billion to the Canadian economy, and eliminate CDN \$150 billion in social costs. There are 400 million Indigenous peoples around the globe -- over a million in Canada. We are the fastest growing population. We are the students and workers of the future. Why do governments constantly overlook us?"

"If financial self-sufficiency of First Nations" is truly the "end-goal" of the Canadian government, they need to be talking to us about the treaty promises and resource revenue-sharing. This is the only way to create certainty for corporate projects. They can no longer expect to barge into our territories without dealing with First Nations peoples."

"We have epidemic health and social issues, gross inequities in funding for our students, and virtually no share in the billions in resources being stolen from our traditional territories," said Madahbee, speaking for 39 member communities of the Anishinabek Nation. "What we heard from Mr. Harper was a lame re-hashing of his

government's so-called accomplishments for our communities and citizens."

Madahbee said the Gathering began with some sources of optimism, a ceremonial opening that included numerous references to the Royal Proclamation of 1763, by which the Crown in Canada envisioned a nation-to-nation relationship in its dealings with First Peoples.

"But the Harper Conservatives just cannot bring themselves to truly honour the treaty relationship of sharing upon which Canada's creation was based. They should be convening First Ministers' meetings involving our people and the provinces to create comprehensive action plans.

"Instead, they continue to rely on their bureaucrats who, like the ones who created the racist Indian Act in 1876, still act more as roadblocks to First Nations progress than facilitators.

The Prime Minister himself said in Ottawa that the old rules - like the Indian Act - don't get good results.

"Let's start working together on some new rules."

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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