Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

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NAN DISSAPPOINTED FIRST NATIONS ISSUES NOT RAISED, BUT PREPARED TO WORK WITH CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy is disappointed that First Nations issues were not a major focus of the 2008 federal election, but is prepared to work with the newly-elected Conservative government to resolve critical issues facing the people of Nishnawbe Aski and First Nations across the country.

"I am very disappointed that there was insufficient focus on Aboriginal issues during this campaign on the national and local levels and that there were no firm commitments to issues affecting NAN First Nations," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. "But we are prepared to work hard with this Conservative government and all parties to develop solutions to the many urgent issues facing our communities."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper led the Conservative Party of Canada to a consecutive minority government Tuesday. The Conservatives won one of the five federal ridings either within or overlapping NAN's catchment area – Kenora (which contains 26 NAN First Nation communities within its boundaries – the highest concentration of NAN communities of all the ridings) – while the New Democrat Party won Thunder Bay-Superior North, Timmins-James Bay, Nickel Belt and Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing. The Thunder Bay-Rainy River riding does not have NAN First Nation settlements located directly within it, but does contain a large concentration of NAN membership living and working within it.

Major issues facing NAN communities include immediate as well as long term goals toward addressing the high cost of living, high rates of unemployment, low educational outcomes, poor policing services, delays in the registration of Aboriginal children's births on First Nations as well as solutions to the housing and infrastructure crisis and equal access to quality health care for NAN First Nation members.

Beardy said the glaring disparity between the standard of living in First Nation communities and the rest of Canada must be addressed.

"First Nations are facing dire socio-economic conditions with unemployment soaring to around 85 per cent in NAN communities, so it is imperative that First Nations be included in the recovery of the Canadian economy," he said. "The Government of Canada must stop withholding funds and making cuts to much-needed programs and services for our communities while the cost of living on First Nations is rising and causing never-before-seen levels of poverty and declining health in our people."

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities within James Bay Treaty 9 and Treaty 5 territory – an area covering two-thirds of the province of Ontario.

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