



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Matawa Chiefs Support Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug [KI] First Nation in its Struggle to Protect Traditional Homelands and to Assert the People's Inherent and Treaty Rights.**

**Thunder Bay, October 11, 2011** – Matawa First Nations Chiefs are joining the growing number of voices calling on Premier McGuinty to honour the promise made to KI to establish a joint panel to resolve long-standing issues related to mineral exploration on their homelands. In 2009, just before the KI Chief and Council were jailed for opposing Platinex, the McGuinty Government promised to create a joint panel to resolve mining and mineral exploration issues with KI. The Chief and Council were released from jail by a Court of Appeal decision, but the Province did not follow through and create the joint panel. Matawa Chiefs supported the KI people and their leadership during their struggle with Platinex and with the Province of Ontario. The Matawa Chiefs are supporting KI in its struggle now.

“Today it is KI having to stand up to the government and to the mining companies, tomorrow it could be us,” said Chief Peter Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation. “We have resource companies carrying out activities in our First Nation territories as well. We are trying to work with them. Matawa First Nations are not opposed to development, but industry and the government need to pay more than lip-service to First Nation rights to consultation and accommodation. They need to understand we also have an Inherent Right to make decisions about activities that will affect us. Matawa Chiefs supported KI in their opposition to Platinex, and we support them now.”

Matawa First Nation Chiefs recently signed a joint declaration with Muskegowuk Chiefs in which the parties committed to work on implementing the oral promises made between the Cree and Ojibway people of Northern and Northwestern Ontario, and the crown governments of Canada and Ontario.

*“...We are committed to exercising our inherent and treaty rights, without limitations imposed by others;*

*We will consider the use of any options to ensure that the development of our homelands occur only with the free, informed and prior consent of our First Nations....”*

“The position of Matawa Chiefs in the Oral Treaty Joint Declaration is the same position we hold for all First Nations, especially those that are dealing with the encroachment of industry into their territories. The duty to consult rests with the government. The government needs to consult First Nations appropriately about activities proposed for their homelands. Premier McGuinty needs to do what he promised to do and create a joint panel to resolve KI's long-standing issues as soon as possible.” said Chief Celia Echum of Ginoogaming First Nation.

Within our own territories, Matawa Chiefs are deeply concerned about the type of Environmental Assessment (EA) process that will be used to determine the impacts of two resource development projects in the Ring of Fire. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has announced the formal start of the EA process for the Cliffs Chromite Project, and will announce the start of the EA process for Noront Eagle's Nest Project in early November. The CEAA currently intends to proceed with a Comprehensive EA process for the Cliffs project. Since May 2011 the Matawa First Nations Chiefs have repeatedly demanded that a “Joint Review Panel Environmental Assessment” process be adopted in order to safeguard the sustainability and integrity of their lands. Matawa First Nations are developing consultation and accommodation guidelines aimed at diminishing misunderstandings and clashes with industry and governments. It will also reflect the government-to-government relationship between First Nations, and Canada and Ontario.

## For more information on the Matawa Chiefs support for KI contact:

Chief Peter Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation, (807) 479-2570

Chief Celia Echum, Ginoogaming First Nation, (807)876-2242

---

## About Matawa First Nations

Matawa First Nations is a Tribal Council representing nine Ojibway and Cree First Nations in Northern Ontario. Five of the Matawa First Nations are remote and accessible only by air or winter ice road. Matawa First Nations Management provides a wide range of professional services and program delivery to support its member communities in the areas of administration and finance, health and social services, employment and training, education, communications, technical and environmental, and economic development.

## About The Ring of Fire

The Ring of Fire (ROF) is the name given to an area of the James Bay Lowlands located in Matawa First Nations territories in Northern Ontario. The James Bay Lowlands contain one of the largest intact wetlands in the world. The Ring of Fire region is near McFaulds Lake, North of Marten Falls First Nation and West of Webequie First Nation. The area contains nickel, copper, gold and the largest untapped deposit of chromite in the world. Chromite is used to make stainless steel.

## About the James Bay Treaty

The James Bay Treaty (Treaty No. 9) was one of the last numbered treaties to be signed in Canada. It is the only treaty in Canada that was signed by a province. It was first signed in 1905 and 1906 by the Crown governments of Canada and Ontario, and the Cree, Ojibway and Algonquin Nations of what is now known as Northern and Northwestern Ontario. The nations who signed in 1905-06 included those people occupying the area south of the Albany River. Adhesions with the remaining Cree and Ojibway nations north of the Albany River were signed in 1929 and 1930. The Crown governments rely solely on the textual version of the Treaty terms. The Aboriginal People of Treaty No. 9 maintain that the Treaty was a land sharing arrangement in which no land was given up and that they agreed to oral promises when they made treaty, many of which do not find expression in the Treaty text.

