

Chilean Indigenous Representatives Meet With Matawa Chiefs

Thunder Bay, Ontario – August 20, 2012: A delegation of Government officials and Indigenous Peoples from Chile met with Matawa First Nations Chiefs today to exchange information and discuss issues surrounding sustainable mining in Aboriginal territories.

It was a very emotional moment for Chilean visitors and Matawa Chiefs and staff when the opening drum ceremony finished. One member of the Chilean delegation began to cry, stating that she didn't know what she was feeling. Another commented on how moving the drum was and what a connection it must be to the earth.

"I visited the Maori in New Zealand earlier this year and I think I know how they feel," said Chief Johnny Yellowhead of Nibinimik First Nation, "I felt overwhelmed meeting the other keepers of Mother Earth when I first met with the Maori. That is what we are, the keepers of Mother Earth, and when we meet, it is significant. The Maori's came to visit our Chiefs earlier this month at our AGM in Webiquie. We have a lot to learn from each other's experiences."

"It is amazing how much our First Nations have in common with other Indigenous Peoples around the world. They are dealing with similar issues in their territories, even with some of the same mining companies that we have here in Northern and Northwestern Ontario, including Goldcorp Inc. and Barrick Gold Corporation. It helps to share information and strategies," said Chief Harry Papah of Eabametoong First Nation.

"The Chilean visitors have had similar issues with consultation, accommodation and consent as we have, and they have environmental concerns about their lands too. I am glad we are having this meeting and also the meeting earlier this month with the Maori. Industry and governments continue to move ahead in our territories without appropriate consultation and accommodation or consent. The more we meet with other Indigenous Peoples, the less we feel alone, and the more empowered we feel. I think Indigenous Peoples around the world are coming together in a global movement to exercise our rights according to the United Nations Charter. It can only make us stronger. We feel the bond of our connection to the land and of our cultures," said Chief Roger Wesley of Constance Lake First Nation.

The meeting was scheduled after a request was made earlier this month from an international consultant representing the Chilean Government officials and the Indigenous delegation. During their visit to Canada, the Chilean representatives will attend various meetings in parts of the country, and tour mining operations.

Yesterday in Toronto, the Chileans met with the National Resources Canada Minerals and Metals Sector (MMS) to discuss technical and social sustainability, sustainable intervention models, and public and private collaboration tools and agreements with the First Nations. On Wednesday, following their Matawa meeting, they will travel to Marathon to study the Environmental Management Systems and Sustainability Programs of the Hemlo Gold Mine. They will also meet with the Ojibways of the Pic River, and the community of Pic Mobert to share experiences about the Hemlo Gold Mine Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Cooperation Agreement.

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Chiefs Attending the Meeting: Chief Cornelius Wabasse, Webequie First Nation; Chief Allen Towegishig, Long Lake #58 First Nation, Chief Sonny Gagnon Aroland First Nation; Chief Celia Echum, Ginoogaming First Nation; Chief Roger Wesley, Constance Lake First Nation; Chief Johnny Yellowhead, Nibinamik First Nation; Chief Harry Papah, Eabametoong First Nation.

Matawa First Nations Management Inc, is a Tribal Council with a membership of nine Ojibway and Cree First Nations. Five Matawa First Nations are remote and are currently accessible only by air or winter road. Matawa First Nations Management provides advisory services and program delivery to Matawa First Nations.

Matawa Member First Nations: Aroland First Nation, Constance Lake First Nation, Eabametoong First Nation, Ginoogaming First Nation, Long Lake #58 First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Neskantaga First Nation, Nibinamik First Nation, Webequie First Nation

Background Chile

Indigenous Population:

The indigenous population of Chile numbers approximately 700,000 people.

- *The Mapuche are the majority indigenous population and reside mostly in the southern regions of Chile and parts of Argentina.*