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CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 16, 2011**

CHIEFS OF ONTARIO APPALLED OVER DISMISSAL OF JUSTICE FOR FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN BY THE CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL

TORONTO, ON — As a continuous advocate for First Nations children, the Chiefs of Ontario are appalled by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) decision on March 14, 2011, to dismiss a complaint involving the inadequate funding of child welfare services on reserve by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The case has been dismissed on the basis of legal technicalities.

“Based upon the proceedings to date, we fully anticipated that the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal chairperson would find a way to dismiss this case,” stated Grand Chief Randall Phillips of the Association of Allied and Iroquois Indians, who also holds the Social Services Portfolio for the Chiefs of Ontario. “As a result of this decision, the Chiefs of Ontario will participate in requesting a judicial review.”

In 2007, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint to the CHRT. The Chiefs of Ontario has intervenor status on this complaint. The argument was put forward, substantiated by compelling evidence, that the Canadian government racially discriminates against First Nations children by not providing adequate funding of child welfare services on reserve, which are at levels less than the provinces and territories. The CHRT has refused to compare two different service providers (federal and provincial governments) who deliver services to two different service recipients (on reserve children and off reserve non-Aboriginal children). The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada has stated their intentions to immediately seek a judicial review of the CHRT’s decision to the Federal Court.

“First Nations children deserve the same level of services provided to off reserve, non-Aboriginal children. The institutionalization of discrimination witnessed in the provision of unequal child welfare benefits is unacceptable,” said Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse. “The Canadian government must be held accountable for the inequity faced by First Nations children. This shame must be brought to the attention of the general public and justice must be available to our children.”

“We applaud and support the dedicated efforts of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations. We especially acknowledge every individual and organization at the forefront of this struggle who work tirelessly to deliver services to our First Nations children in need,” said Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse.

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In addition, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) contains three Articles (Article 2, 7, 22) that relate directly to the protection of Indigenous children and their right to be free from any kind of discrimination. The UNDRIP, reluctantly adopted by Canada, supports the need to re-examine the impact on First Nations peoples of the current child welfare system.

The Chiefs in Ontario, comprising the 133 First Nations in Ontario, is a political forum and secretariat for collective decision-making, action and advocacy.

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