

Natives want leader to have political punch

LONDON, ^{May 11/91} Ont. (CP) —

Canadian natives want their next leader to have the political power of the prime minister or a provincial premier, says one candidate.

"I think we'll be electing Canada's 11th premier in Winnipeg next month," Bill Wilson, who is campaigning to become the next grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said Friday.

The assembly, an umbrella group for most of the country's status Indians, will be voting for a new leader at its Winnipeg convention next month.

Wilson, who currently heads the First Nations Congress of British Columbia, is one of six candidates hoping to replace Georges Erasmus, who is stepping down.

Wilson, one of 400 delegates attending the opening of the Indigenous Peoples Conference, said native issues were brought into focus following last summer's standoff with the army at Oka, Que.

"We had the international stage with Oka. I don't think we should walk off that stage now."

But Chief Billy Two Rivers of the Kahnawake Mohawk community near Montreal, said little has changed since Oka.