

# Fire erupts over National Chief's comments

*By Marie-Lauren Gregoire with CP files*

OTTAWA - The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations headline-making comments about native leaders and alcohol abuse was still reverberating across the land this week, with at least one angered East Coast chief calling for his resignation.

Matthew Coon Come addressed about 800 aboriginal health experts on Feb. 26, on native health issues. His speech to the conference delegates dealt with alcohol abuse, suicide rates, housing, and health care in aboriginal communities.

Outside the conference, Coon Come was asked by a reporter about the prevalence of alcohol abuse among native leaders. His answer elicited a fiery cascade from East Coast native leaders, and cautionary responses from everyone else.

"Just attend any function, you'll see it," Coon Come was quoted as saying. "If there's a conference, go and see it. See who's having a dance and who's drinking."

East Coast leaders were appalled, with one even demanding Coon Come's resignation. "I'm a little bit outraged. Even if there's an apology from him, I'm not going to accept it. He has to step down," said Chief Lawrence Tooney of the Annapolis Valley, N.S. First Nation. Many other