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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 25, 2013

BC Chiefs and leaders sign declaration endorsing the eight action items set out by the AFN Executive

(Coast Salish Territory / Vancouver) – BC Chiefs and leaders gathered for a meeting in Vancouver this week to discuss the recent meetings held in Ottawa, to create dialogue around the AFN Consensus Document “*Fundamental Change, Remedies and Actions Required Immediately*” and to create an opportunity for BC Chiefs to continue to strategize on an approach for BC First Nations moving forward. The Chiefs and leaders unanimously passed a resolution in support of the following declaration;

“DRIVING CHANGE FOR OUR CHILDREN”

A DECLARATION OF THE FIRST NATIONS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

“On every one of our priorities, we will continue to press for justice, for fairness, for respect and for change as determined by our First Nations. It is our responsibility to drive change for our children, grounded in our rights and culture, we must be prepared to seize every opportunity to achieve the future they deserve.”

National Chief Shawn A-in-Chut Atleo, January 2013

We, the Indigenous leaders of British Columbia, come together united in our resolve, determination and responsibility for our children, families, communities, Nations and territories. We therefore endorse the following eight action items set out in the Assembly of First Nations consensus document dated January 11, 2013:

1. Commitment to an immediate high level working process with Treaty Nation leadership for establishing frameworks with necessary mandates for the implementation and enforcement of Treaties on a Treaty by Treaty basis, between the Treaty parties Nation-to-Nation.
2. Facilitating fair, expeditious resolution of land claims through reforming the comprehensive claims policy based on recognition and affirmation of inherent rights rather than extinguishment.
3. Resource Equity, Benefit and Revenue Sharing – building on treaty implementation and enforcement and comprehensive claims resolution there must be a framework that addresses shared governance of resource development and the fair sharing of all forms of revenues and benefits generated from resource development.
4. All legislation must be unquestionably consistent with s.35 of the Canadian Constitution and the UNDRIP. Legislation and provisions of legislation as in C-38 and C-45 that contravene our Treaty and inherent rights must be reconsidered and implementation of these provisions be put to a halt. We must have an environmental regulatory regime in this country that respects our rights. Legislation that tinkers around the edges of the Indian Act must stop and be replaced with support for First Nation government and nation re-building including a mechanism for our Nations to push away from the Indian Act as they determine. To fulfill the original relationship, Canada must put in place an ongoing process that all new bills and policies of the federal government must be in full compliance with section 35 and consistent with international human rights standards.
5. Fundamentally transformed fiscal relationship guaranteeing fairness and sustainability and removing all arbitrary caps and burdens on the current inefficient, ineffective and unfair funding relationship for First Nation programs and services.

6. Immediate Commitment to the establishment of a National Public Commission of Inquiry on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls, including special focus on murdered and missing Indigenous women, and the broader factors that lead to increased vulnerability among Indigenous peoples.
7. A guarantee, as in Shannen's Dream, of First Nation schools in every First Nation that each and every First Nations parent and child can be proud of, that fully reflects our languages and cultures and provides a safe and supportive place to learn.
8. In order to be effective, progress on these areas will require fundamental change in the machinery of government including direct political oversight, a dedicated Cabinet Committee with a secretariat within the Privy Council Office with specific responsibility for the First Nation-Crown relationship to oversee implementation.

We, the undersigned, represent First Nations who carry a mandate to advance our Aboriginal Title and Rights and Treaty Rights in our homelands today referred to as British Columbia, and exercise our authorities in making this Declaration. We welcome other First Nations not present today to support to this Declaration if they so choose.

Signed this 24th day of January 2013
Musqueam Nation Territory

For more information and further comment:

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