



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
March 19, 2008

First Nations Summit publicly releases letter to Minister Strahl and issues statement on the jailing of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Chief and Council

Coast Salish Traditional Territory/West Vancouver – Given the seriousness of the situation that is occurring in Ontario, where on March 17 the elected Chief and Council of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation were unjustly criminalized and jailed for standing up for their constitutional rights, the First Nations Summit is taking the unusual step of releasing to the public a copy of its correspondence to the federal minister of Indian Affairs, Chuck Strahl, on the matter.

Along with the letter, the Summit issues this statement:

The jailing of these indigenous leaders in favour of a mining exploration company is political persecution and represents a menacing shift in the official attitude in this country toward First Nations and their political representatives. And so what was once only associated with repressive regimes elsewhere in the world is now occurring here in Canada. The Government of Canada has a fiduciary responsibility to look out for the interests of First Nations where their interests are threatened by other parties. It cannot hide behind jurisdictional excuses in order to avoid this responsibility. Where is the Canadian government on this matter?

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Attachment: FNS Letter to Minister Strahl

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Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca

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March 18, 2008

Honourable Chuck Strahl
Minister of Indian Affairs & Northern Development
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0H4

Mr. Minister:

Re: Canada's breach of confidence in allowing the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug leadership to be unjustly incarcerated

Yesterday, the Chief and Councilors of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation were unjustly incarcerated for protecting their people's human rights, aboriginal and treaty rights, traditional lands, and community interests from an incursion by an exploratory mining company.

Canada, which has by constitutional and case law the authority to protect aboriginal rights and aboriginal title interests, including treaty rights, has completely and shamefully abandoned its fiduciary obligations in this matter.

Your department and your government has stood silently by while the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug leadership has been unfairly criminalized for protecting their interests within their traditional territories, which are recognized and affirmed in the constitution.

Your government must quickly take on an honourable role in this situation, such that what is now happening within the traditional lands of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug is effectively halted and reversed.

The eyes of all First Nations in Canada are watching.

Sincerely,

FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT POLITICAL EXECUTIVE

Original signed by
Grand Chief Edward John

Original signed by
Chief Judith Sayers

Original signed by
Dave Porter

cc.
Prime Minister of Canada
Justice Minister of Canada
Premier of British Columbia
Assembly of First Nations National Chief
Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation Chief and Council
Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs President
B.C. Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief