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First Nations Leadership Council

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Introduction

All comments, feedback, and inquiries on these bulletins are welcome; contact information is provided in the column to the left. These reports are issued on the 15th day of each month.

AFN Annual General Assembly

On July 11-13, the Assembly of First Nations held its Annual General Assembly in Vancouver. Phil Fontaine was re-elected to his third term (second consecutive) as National Chief with 75.66% of the vote. The First Nations Leadership Council congratulates the National Chief on his re-election, and looks forward to working closely with the national AFN on matters affecting BC First Nations.

The AFN Assembly also provided delegates with the opportunity to discuss a number of important topics, including internal issues (renewal), national issues (residential schools, accountability, social, land rights, recognition and implementation of First Nations governments), intergovernmental issues (health care, fiscal imbalance), and international issues (border crossings, draft *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*).

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) was pleased to host a well-attended welcome reception for AFN delegates and other invited guests on the evening of July 11 at the Vancouver Aquarium.

Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Address to AFN Assembly

On July 13, 2006, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jim Prentice addressed delegates at the AFN Assembly in Vancouver. Minister Prentice explained his government's opposition to the UN

believes the text needs more clarity. He also affirmed the government's commitment to hold an independent judicial inquiry into the Fraser River sockeye fishery, and to put an end to "race-based" commercial fisheries.

Minister Prentice outlined his three-point plan for aboriginal issues, to be implemented in consultation with First Nations:

1. Improve quality of life in the areas of water, housing, health, education and others.
2. Establish a new legislative and regulatory framework by replacing the Indian Act and creating new stringent and enforceable standards on reserves.
3. Expedite specific and comprehensive claims, and treaty land entitlements.

First Nations in attendance did not support the Minister's comments, particularly relating to the government's plan to end First Nations economic access to the fishery, which the courts have stressed is not "race-based".

Delegates also stressed the need for First Nations to remain united in the face of significant federal policy changes on aboriginal issues.

First Nations Summit Executive

On June 15, 2006, Grand Chief Edward John (Akile Ch'oh), Dave Porter and Chief Judith Sayers (Kekinusuqs), were elected to the First Nations Summit Task Group by leaders representing First Nations currently engaged in, or supportive of, treaty negotiations in BC. The members of the First Nations Summit Task Group are also members of the FNLC.

Daniel Watts of the Hupacasath First Nation and Chief Leah George-Wilson of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation

were also re-elected as Co-Chairs of the First Nations Summit. The Co-Chairs are responsible for chairing First Nations Summit meetings as well as the Summit's administration and day-to-day operations.

Forest & Range Opportunities

The FNLC has working with provincial representatives to develop a mutually acceptable Forest & Range Opportunities (FRO) Agreement framework.

We are pleased to report that this work is now complete, and that the new framework was provided to all BC First Nations on June 30, 2006. Please contact one of the FNLC member organizations if your First Nation did not receive a copy.

Mountain Pine Beetle

Now that the contribution agreement has been signed between the First Nations Leadership Council and the Province, the Working Group must now finalize a transfer agreement.

In order to do that, financial accountability infrastructure must be in place that complements the programs designed for First Nations communities impacted by the mountain pine beetle.

This process is in its final stages and is expected to be complete by the end of summer.

Further programs have been proposed in cooperation with the Province as part of the lobby for continued federal funding. It is not known at this time when a positive response will be received.

Finally, work continues on the establishment of the First Nations Forestry Council. In effort to include all BC First Nations, the Working Group will be distributing a newsletter to all First Nations communities that will discuss related forestry issues.

UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

On June 29, the new United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution of support for the draft *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* with 30 states voting in favour, Canada and Russia voting against, 12 abstentions, and 3 absences.

For over twenty years, law experts, States and indigenous peoples from all parts of the world have been developing a *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This document sets out the urgent and basic human rights of indigenous peoples and societies. Until very recently, Canada has demonstrated remarkable leadership and unwavering support in the development of the *Declaration*. Since the federal election, however, Canada has changed its position on the document, initially raising concerns and lobbying States to re-open discussions and negotiations, and finally voting against the *Declaration*, despite a motion of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs (supported by Committee members from the Liberal, Bloc Quebecois and New Democratic parties) calling on the government to support its adoption.

The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* will now be brought forward to the United Nations General Assembly for consideration. The First Nations Leadership Council will continue to urge the federal government reaffirm its support for the *Declaration* and commence efforts to encourage its adoption by the General Assembly.

Transformative Change Accord

In late June, the FNLC sent a copy of the *Transformative Change Accord* to over 200 Members of Parliament. Through sharing this information broadly, the FNLC hopes to raise awareness that the *Accord* is a signed, tripartite agreement that is intended to build upon other agreements such as the *New Relationship and First Nations-Federal Crown Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments* and

implement a made-in-BC approach to reconciling title and rights and improving socio-economic conditions.

The *Transformative Change Accord* requires the parties to develop an implementation strategy by December 2006. The FNLC has been working with the provincial government and First Nations organizations to develop "phase one" of this plan, which will include action areas and activities for the next 1-2 years. We hope to have an early draft of this phase one plan complete by the end of the month; this will assist in our efforts to raise federal government awareness of its obligations under the *Transformative Change Accord*. This plan will also provide the foundation for the broader, more comprehensive 10-year implementation strategy to be developed through discussion and consultation with BC First Nations.

Education

On July 5, 2006, Premier Gordon Campbell, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jim Prentice, Chief Negotiator Nathan Matthew and First Nations Education Steering Committee President Deborah Jeffry signed a historic agreement to recognize First Nations' jurisdiction over First Nations' education in British Columbia.

The Framework Agreement signed on July 5 is the result of six years of negotiations, and allows First Nations who choose to negotiate a bilateral Canada-First Nation Education Jurisdiction Agreement to remove themselves from sections 114-122 of the *Indian Act*, and assume jurisdiction for on-reserve K-12 education, including teacher certification, school certification and establishment of curriculum and examination standards (jurisdiction over early childhood development and post-secondary education will be negotiated in the future). Students who graduate from First Nations Schools under a Jurisdiction Agreement will receive both a Dogwood Certificate and a

graduation certificate from the First Nation. The Framework Agreement has a term of seven years, which can be renewed upon agreement of all parties.

Canada and BC will now develop and recommend enabling legislation to allow Canada and First Nations to begin negotiating individual Jurisdiction Agreements, funding agreements and implementation plans (templates for these have been prepared). The First Nations Education Steering Committee will work with interested First Nations to assist them in developing education laws and establishing Community Education Authorities to deliver education programs and services.

The First Nations Leadership Council views the signing of the Education Jurisdiction Framework Agreement and the British Columbia First Nations Education Agreement as critical steps in providing better opportunities for success by First Nations learners.

Technology

Connectivity

Broadband internet connectivity to all First Nations communities remains a priority for the FNLC and the First Nations Technology Council (FNTC). In the February 21, 2006 Budget, the Province committed \$10m to connect the remaining un-served or under-served communities; this funding is contingent on matching dollars from the federal government. The FNLC and FNTC continue to work with the province to lobby Canada to secure matching funds that will allow the connectivity build to begin. In the meantime, BC is sending Community Engagement Specialists in to the targeted communities to work with community champions and to gather information that will be used when the telecommunications rollout begins.

Community Technology Plans

At the 2nd Annual First Nations Technology Conference/2006 Summit, the FNTC launched the

Community Technology Planning Toolkit in draft format. FNTC has begun to test the Toolkit which has been designed to help communities inventory and plan for their technology needs. The Toolkit consists of a Guide, Template and 8 Worksheets – all of which can be downloaded from the FNTC website at www.fntc.info. If you're interested in being one of the test communities for the Toolkit or to get more information, contact Sue Hanley at suehanley@fntc.info.

Information on the FNTC/NVIT pilot project for training certified computer and network technicians is also available at www.fntc.info.

New Relationship Trust

The New Relationship Trust Board of Directors has commenced its work to create a strategic plan and other supporting structures for the \$100 million fund, including developing appropriate communications materials and mechanisms. Inquiries can be forwarded to the following interim contact information:

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Highway of Tears

On March 30 and 31, 2006, a Highway of Tears Symposium was held in Prince George in response to the murders and disappearances of mainly Aboriginal women along Highway 16 in northern BC. The symposium was organized by First Nations and Aboriginal organizations in the Prince George area, and was attended by the victims' families, concerned citizens, numerous community and provincial agencies and organizations, RCMP officers, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal elected representatives.

On June 21, 2006, a Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report based on the discussions held on March 30

and 31 was released. This report and its 33 recommendations detail a comprehensive and collaborative approach to preventing any further tragic murders and disappearances.

This report can be viewed online at: http://www.highwayoftears.ca/sympo_siumrecommendations.pdf.

National Aboriginal Day Celebrations

Many celebrations were held across British Columbia to mark the 10th anniversary of National Aboriginal Day on June 21, 2006. Five days of celebrations took place on the grounds of the Vancouver Art Gallery, featuring ceremonies, speakers, singers, dancers, and a variety of cultural activities. The centerpiece of the June 21st celebration was an official repatriation ceremony for the Haisla G'psgolox Totem Pole, more than a century after it was carved and almost 80 years since it was taken from Haisla lands to the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm, Sweden. The First Nations Leadership Council congratulates the Haisla Nation on this historic repatriation – the first time a First Nation in Canada has repatriated a totem pole from overseas – and hopes that it will set a precedent for the return of cultural property currently held by museums all over the world to BC First Nations.

Other Notes

- The FNLC is continuing to work on the planning for an Energy Summit to be held in Prince George, with a target date of late October 2006.
- Efforts continue to convene a BC First Nations Fisheries Forum to develop a BC First Nations Fisheries Strategy, with a target date of early October 2006.

Calendar of Events

- **July 18-20:** 30th Annual Elders Gathering (Port Alberni)
- **September 20-22:** UBCIC Annual General Assembly (Vancouver)
- **September 27-29:** FNS Meeting (Kamloops)