



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ASSEMBLY OF  
FIRST NATIONS

507-100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC  
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-922-7733  
Fx: 604-922-7433



FIRST  
NATIONS  
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC  
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903  
Fx: 604-926-9923  
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



500-342 Water Street  
Vancouver, BC  
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231  
Fx: 604-684-5726

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 11, 2008**

### **Canada's apology a critical step for Aboriginal people**

**Coast Salish Traditional Territory/West Vancouver** – First Nations Leaders today welcomed Prime Minister Stephen Harper's statement of apology on behalf of Canada for the government's role in the Indian Residential School System. Today the Leadership Council stands in support of residential school survivors and their families. This is also a day to remember those who died because of the residential school system.

"The full story of the residential school system's impact on our people has yet to be told," said Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit. "The responses to the apology are both individual and collective. It is extremely important that we respect the many survivors who, in their own discretion and time, will consider the Prime Minister's apology and determine how, in their own interest, each of them will deal with it. Collectively, we celebrate and stand on the dignity of who we are and celebrate our survival. Together, we will build for our individual and collective well-being. We ask Canadians to join with us in this important historical moment to talk about and understand the depths and consequences of the multi-layered and intergenerational impacts on our people."

"Despite the best efforts of the residential school system to destroy our language and culture, thanks to the resilience of the survivors and our ancestors, our identity and culture is still very much alive today and will continue to thrive, as will our languages, well into the future," said Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo) of the BC Assembly of First Nations, "I am hopeful today's apology can help the survivors in their individual journeys towards healing and as my Granny Elsie says, that tomorrow all Canadians will work together to 'turn this heavy page' of our dark history".

"For most Canadians it would be considered absolutely criminal to think of children being forcibly removed from their families, experiencing sexual and physical abuse, living in substandard conditions and being stripped of their cultural identity," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "By apologizing publicly for the residential school atrocities, we hope that all Canadians will learn from the past and ensure that no such disgusting genocidal programs are ever designed, legislated and carried out in Canada ever again".

Although it would be impossible for an apology from the Government of Canada to rectify the decades of abuse and cultural genocide experienced at residential schools, it is a critical step forward in the path to reconciliation.

*The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the B.C. Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.*

*The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.*

**For more information please contact:**

Grand Chief Edward John  
Political Executive, First Nations Summit 778-772-8218

Chief Judith Sayers  
Political Executive, First Nations Summit 778-838-6743

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip  
President, UBCIC: 250-490-5314

Colin Braker  
Communications Director Office: 604-926-9903  
First Nations Summit: Cell: 604-328-4094

Ryneld Starr  
BC Assembly of First Nations: 604-922-7733

Kelly Aldinger Office: 604-638-7453  
NATIONAL Public Relations: Cell: 604-817-0231