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# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
November 30, 2007

### **First Nations to shine world climate change spotlight on northern boreal forest crisis**

**Coast Salish Traditional Territory (Vancouver)** - Canadian First Nations, who are already on the front lines of the devastation being caused by climate change, will be asserting their voice at meetings being held during the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP 13) talks in Bali next month.

Dave Porter, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive and BC First Nations Leadership Council has been invited to attend and deliver a presentation at a major side meeting on the state of the Boreal forest. He will use the opportunity to talk about the climate-change induced pine-beetle crisis in BC's interior and Boreal forest. This threatens to rival disasters in other major forested areas of the world, such as the rapid destruction of Amazon rain forests, but has yet to gain the same level of international awareness.

"As stewards of the land, First Nations have a leading role to play in responding to the global climate change crisis that they had no hand in creating, but for which they are now among the first to be paying the price," Mr. Porter said.

"The COP 13 talks in Bali and the side meetings on forests are a chance for us to share our experience and ideas with delegations from around the world, to learn from others, and to establish ourselves clearly as participants in the battle to respond to climate change."

Mr. Porter, who leaves for the Bali conference on Monday, will take to the international audience the story of the devastation now being caused to BC's interior and Boreal forests by climate change.

His presentation will include a report of the rapid colonization of the BC Interior by the mountain pine beetle which has flourished because of climate change and has already destroyed more than ten million hectares of old-growth pine – an area that would swallow countries like Portugal or South Korea.

It has created a natural disaster that dwarfs any seen before in the province and is growing worse by the day. The BC Interior is now filled with immense regions of dead and dying forest, creating a massive tinderbox just waiting for a spark to literally set it ablaze. It has now crossed eastward over the Rocky Mountains, infesting more pine, and this devastation is poised to spread through Canada's boreal forests from coast to coast.

The pine beetle infestation is already so entrenched that there is no hope of reversing the damage in the short-term. For now, the priorities are the adaptation and survival of the 103 First Nations communities in the midst of this disaster whose cultures and livelihoods are now in jeopardy, and containment to prevent the destruction from spreading to the rest of Canada's Boreal Forests.

Mr. Porter will be using the Bali Conference to network with other indigenous groups, environmental and conservation organizations and others to share information and ideas, and to engage the Canadian government's official delegation to the conference.

"This is our land, as the courts have yet again confirmed in the this month's historic *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. BC* ruling by the BC Supreme Court, and we must and will be a part of the discussions to find solutions and of the solutions themselves," said Mr. Porter.

Mr. Porter also noted the UN recently adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – and Bali is an opportunity for that Declaration to begin delivering results.

"It is my hope, that, even though the Canadian government sadly chose to be among only four nations who voted against this declaration, it will now demonstrate political will and leadership and work with Canada's Aboriginal leaders to respect and implement the principles and intent of the Declaration", Mr. Porter said.

"We believe that there are opportunities for Canada to work with First Nations to conserve large areas of northern Boreal forest which remains intact, securing vital habitat for forest-dwelling species whose southern ranges are being devastated and storing carbon for the long-term.

"I am going to Bali to assert our First Nations voice and to champion our role in the urgent and pressing battle that we and the rest of the world are all already losing – the war to turn around the devastating march of climate change," Mr. Porter said.

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