



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



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

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
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GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, PROVINCE OF B.C. AND FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL SIGN FIRST NATIONS HOUSING MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver –The First Nations Leadership Council, Government of Canada, and Province of B.C. today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), agreeing to work together to develop a comprehensive approach to improve housing for First Nations communities, individuals and families both on and off reserve.

"Nothing is more important to First Nations individuals than having a healthy, high-quality environment in which to live," said Chief Judith Sayers, First Nations Summit Task Group member. "For too long our people have lived in substandard, unhealthy homes which affect our physical and emotional well being. We need comprehensive, strategic action to address the critical housing crisis First Nations in BC are facing."

This agreement will acknowledge that working in partnership is necessary to overcome barriers and to address the housing gaps between First Nations people and other British Columbians. It will also commit to exploring innovative approaches to improve housing and infrastructure for First Nations, individuals and families, including housing programs currently in place, and set out an initial framework for the collaborative development of interlinked on and off reserve housing strategies.

"The ability to provide shelter for one's family is one of those basic needs that far too many First Nations struggle with", said B.C. Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo). "This MoU signifies the fact that we all recognize and accept our responsibility to give our children the best possible chance to live in a home that allows them to feel safe and secure. It is heartening to think of what may be accomplished when the promise of this MoU is reached."

"For too long the Indigenous People of this country have been deprived of the fundamental human right of decent, affordable housing," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "In fact, many, many of our people are homeless. Therefore, we must avail ourselves of every opportunity to rectify this completely unacceptable situation. The First Nations Housing Memorandum of Understanding may represent an important first step."

A committee representing all parties to the MoU will be formed within three months to collaboratively develop a plan for interlinked on and off reserve housing strategies in support of First Nations individuals and families. The Government of Canada, Province of B.C. and First Nations Leadership Council will then meet annually to discuss progress in implementing the MoU.

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC 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 Stewart Phillip
President, UBCIC:

250-490-5314

Colin Braker
Communications Director
First Nations Summit:

Office: 604-926-9903

Cell: 604-328-4094

Ryneld Starr
BC Assembly of First Nations:

604-922-7733