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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BC First Nations Develop a BC First Nations Energy Action Plan at Three Day Strategic Summit on Energy Issues

Coast Salish Traditional Territory (Vancouver) – More than 200 Chiefs and First Nations representatives gathered at the Chief Joe Mathias Squamish Nation Centre this week to discuss energy development opportunities and challenges facing First Nations communities and to give expression to the New Relationship between BC First Nations and the provincial government with regard to the energy sector. Over the last three days Chiefs, elders, and other delegates developed a First Nations Energy Action Plan.

Key speakers at the three day energy summit included environmental scientist David Suzuki, US Consul General Lewis Lukens, and BC Minister of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources Richard Neufeld, all of whom acknowledged the importance to cooperate with First Nations on energy-related projects.

“The development of a First Nations energy action plan to engage government and industry on all energy related matters will give provide a voice for First Nations to look at the enormous opportunities and challenges ahead of us,” stated Dave Porter, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive.

“The BC First Nations Energy Summit has provided an opportunity for First Nations to come together and assert their respective and collective authority in shaping Energy policy in BC,” said Regional Chief Shawn Atleo of the BC Assembly of First Nations. “We want to ensure that First Nations voices and jurisdiction are respected and recognized in an effort to contribute to current and future energy development and debates in BC.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs observed “First Nations are expressing their deep concerns on how large-scale projects, such as the proposed Site C dam project on the Peace River in northeastern BC, not only impact their Aboriginal Title and Rights but as well what are the immediate and cumulative environmental impacts of such proposals. We are the stewards of our respective territories and we must be very mindful of our grandchildren's environmental inheritance. We also must work together on vital issues such as climate change.”

"We are witnessing immense changes in our world and we see all around us examples of the result of the overuse of non-renewable resources. Now is the time for First Nations to proactively engage the federal and provincial governments to ensure our voices are heard," added Grand Chief Edward John, also a member of the First Nations Summit political executive.

The Chiefs and representatives in attendance at the three day energy summit have provided support in principle to the Energy Action plan and will now bring it back to their respective communities for their internal ratification processes.

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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.

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