



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Canadian First Nations Give Gift of Friendship to China

*For Immediate Release*  
July 6th, 2010

**(Chengdu, People's Republic of China)** – First Nations from Canada have further strengthened ties with China and the Qiang Minority Peoples from Beichuan, the area most devastated by the May 12, 2008 earthquake. First Nations representatives from British Columbia including Grand Chief Edward John, Dan Smith, Stan Bevan and Wilfred Bennett along with Canada's Governor General Michaëlle Jean held a traditional ceremony and delivered the gift of a totem pole. The Beichuan government Party Secretary and the Qiang youth and elders exchanged cultural performances as the totem pole was unveiled.

The totem pole was also discussed directly with Chinese President Hu Jintao when Grand Chief Edward John met him in Ottawa on June 24th. The President showed a keen interest in this gift of friendship and healing for those that were impacted by the 2008 earthquake. On July 5th another meeting was held between the Governor General of Canada and the Chinese President in Beijing. "Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean spoke to President Hu in a bilateral meeting and he responded to the initiative in a very positive way," Grand Chief John stated.

Dan Smith, political executive stated, "The Chinese people and First Nations have a strong connection that is based upon our deep cultures and our relationship is built upon sincere friendship. Our hosts in China treated us with the greatest respect and I would expect that the doors are open a little further for First Nations in Canada and the Chinese to collaborate on any number of matters."

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Attachment: Grand Chief Edward John's speech: July 4th, 2010 in Chengdu, Sichuan, China.  
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First Nations Summit



# FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

## Lasting Friendship

Honourable Guests, Elders, Chiefs, and youth,

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada,

His Excellency, Mr. Jean-Daniel Lafond,

Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Environment,

Mr. JING Da Zhong (**“Jing Da Jong”**), Beichuan County Governor,

Mr. LUO Minghua, (**“Lwo Ming hwa”**), Vice Chairman, Beichuan County Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee,

Mr. MU Guangyuan, (**“Moo Gwan You-An”**) Qiang elder and spiritual leader,

Mr. SHENG Jianwu, (**“Shung Jian Woo”**) Curator of Sichuan Museum,

Two years ago, on a trade delegation of First Nations as Chiefs and leaders, we were graciously invited to witness what was left from the incredible damage and loss caused by the Wenchuan earthquake. We travelled to Beichuan and we saw, heard and felt people grieving for loved ones lost when the earth moved its mountains.

But we also saw people, determined and resolute, rebuilding their lives, families, homes and communities. We met the Qiang children in colorful regalia singing and dancing as their ancestors did. **We exchanged drums with Mr. Jing Da Jong.** All of this touched our hearts. When the earth moved its mountains, it was the spirit of the people which moved them to rebuild and carry on.

When we returned to our communities we explained what we saw, heard, and felt. Our Chiefs and communities thought it would be appropriate to honour the loved ones that were lost and the courage of the survivors to rebuild. As a tribute to friendship, a totem pole was commissioned by our Chiefs. Thanks to the generosity of our people, the governments of British Columbia and Canada, and the private sector, this tribute pole was carved by Indigenous First Nations artists, instructors, and students at Northwest Community College. It was blessed by the Tsimshian Chiefs and Elders before it was transported to Ottawa.

The crests on this pole, the eagle and grizzly bear, are symbols of our teachings and cultures, of our loving relations with our ancestors, of our deep roots in the lands we love and care for, and of our hopes for the many generations who will follow in our footsteps.

Through the support and generosity of Her Excellency our Governor General Michaëlle Jean, this tribute pole was transported by aircraft to Chengdu. We all know that the country where she was born also suffered a massive earthquake causing very significant losses of lives and infrastructure. **We hold them in our hearts also.** Last week I was honoured to be invited to join Her Excellency and Chairman Hu Jin Tao at a state luncheon at her residence in Ottawa, Canada. I was given a few minutes to talk directly with Chairman Hu and shared with him the story of the totem pole that we honour you with today. We bring this sacred pole with humility. In our teachings we know it is our duty to honour the loved ones we lose; to wipe away the tears of those still grieving and with compassion to help lift the spirit of those who must carry on.

**(“Ko De Bay”)** *(Thank you in Qiang language)*

**Grand Chief Edward John, Tl'azt'en Nation, Canada**  
First Nations Summit Political Executive

July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in Chengdu, People's Republic of China