

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Statement

Wednesday March 2, 2016

Indigenous Peoples Must be Partners in Canada's Climate Change Discussions

"Indigenous peoples have known for thousands of years how to care for our planet. The rest of us have a lot to learn and no time to waste." – Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, speaking at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris, France, December 2015.

Indigenous Peoples expect the fulfilment of the Liberal government's commitment to a renewed Nation-to-Nation relationship, and for Prime Minister Trudeau to bring real action to his pre and post-election commitments of ensuring Indigenous Peoples an inclusive and substantive role in the development, implementation and management of the framework for combating climate change in Canada.

The signing of the Paris Climate Agreement committed countries to limit the average global surface temperature increase to a maximum of 2 °C and to "pursue efforts to" cap the temperature gain at 1.5 °C with the goal of a carbon-neutral world by 2050. Following the signing, Prime Minister Trudeau pledged a meeting with Canada's Premiers within 90 days to present a "pan-Canadian" framework for combating climate change.

Today, a small group of Indigenous leaders will be meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau and the Premiers to discuss climate change ahead of tomorrow's First Ministers' Meeting.

The Liberal government has been very public and explicit in its commitment to renew the relationship between the federal government and Indigenous Peoples based on our Indigenous human rights and our inherent rights protected under the Constitution. This relationship must be based on the recognition and respect for our inherent Title and Rights and Treaty rights and include as committed, the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Peoples are uniquely positioned to address climate change. We are observing and experiencing firsthand, on the ground, the devastating impacts of climate change, such as, increased floods and wildfires, the warming seawaters, the precipitous decline of wild salmon stocks and moose populations, and the devastating impacts of the mountain pine-beetle epidemic. These impacts go to the heart of our connections to our lands, resources and territories, and therefore, our inherent rights. We have many thousands of years of traditional knowledge about our territories and bring to the table important, relevant and unique perspectives on how the environment is changing, the causes of this change, and solutions for addressing impacts and restoring habitat.



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Indigenous Nations in BC have grave concerns regarding the BC Government's fervent promotion of BC as an "environmental leader" in Canada, without actively engaging the Indigenous Peoples of this land, and while actively promoting highly contentious and environmentally destructive and irresponsible mega-projects - such as BC Hydro's Site C Dam and the construction of the Petronas LNG plant in the Skeena River estuary. We must walk-the-walk on climate change and environmental leadership, including through the exploration and promotion of clean energy options.

We are extremely concerned that the Government of Canada is quickly moving forward in development of a "pan-Canadian" framework on climate change without the appropriate consultation with and consent of Indigenous peoples from the very beginning.

Today is an opportunity for true Nation-to-Nation partnership to protect our shared environment and to uphold our collective responsibilities for ensuring the integrity of our environment for our future generations to enjoy.

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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.

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