



March 21, 2007

Phone Scam Alert- First Nations Communities Do Not Solicit Monies This Way!

Vancouver, BC: March is Fraud Prevention month, and the RCMP and the BC First Nations Leadership Council are concerned about a number of phone calls being made around BC that are fraudulent in nature.

Over the past few months, a number of individuals and businesses received phone calls from individuals who portrayed themselves as Aboriginal leaders, elders, or representatives of Bands etc. asking for money to support individuals or communities that have been the victim of personal or even high profile tragedies. The fraudsters have claimed they are raising money to assist Aboriginal individuals who have lost their homes in a fire, or even claim they are helping people who have medical costs they can't pay for.

First Nations Leadership Council of BC, which is comprised of political executives of the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the BC Assembly of First Nations, would like to advise British Columbians that they would not solicit funds in the manner.

“We are worried that fraudsters may be trying to take advantage of the work and reputation of our First Nations communities,” says Insp. Frank Gallagher, Officer in Charge of Aboriginal Policing Services in British Columbia. “We are committed to working with our Aboriginal communities to increase awareness about these scams that not only take advantage of our First Nations communities, but the generous British Columbians who often want to find ways to assist”.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and a member of the BC First Nations Leadership Council says, “My family and I have been targeted by these devious scam artists many times. The scam artist describes a death in my family and solicits emergency loans from the unsuspecting victims. The real victims in this fraud scheme are the compassionate people who are offering help to a family experiencing the tragic loss of loved one. These are acts that are despicable and disgusting practice of deception”.

“We are concerned that individuals chose to falsely identify themselves in this way in an attempt to obtain funds”, say Inspector Kevin DeBruyckere from the “E” Division Commercial Crime Section. Insp. DeBruyckere says, “Investigations of this nature have shown that fraudsters often sound very official and have learned to convince people of their authority. By using an authority figure’s name, they play on your sense of duty and willingness to assist your community and its leaders, thus compelling one to sometimes comply with the request. An integral component of fraud prevention is public education”.

It is important for the public not to be afraid to ask questions. Get the individual’s name and phone number, so that you can call back and verify who they are. And to be safe, DO NOT give out any personal information over the phone. You can also contact Phonebusters at 1-888-495-8501 or www.phonebusters.com. They can assist you with the validity of the call and can make you aware of other recent scams.

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