



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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Treaty Negotiations Process on Life Support

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – The leadership of the First Nations Summit are in full agreement with observations contained in the 2009 BC Treaty Commission (BCTC) annual report which was released this morning in Victoria.

“We find ourselves at an incredibly fragile and dangerous point in time as many BC First Nations attempt to negotiate fair, just and honourable treaties with Canada and British Columbia”, said Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit political executive.

“As the BCTC annual report has indicated, 16 long years of negotiations have passed with only 2 agreements reached and little light at the end of the tunnel for those First Nations remaining at negotiating tables. This is cause for major concern for First Nations have accrued millions upon millions of dollars in loans to participate in negotiations. We are in full agreement with the observations of BCTC Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre that failure to act now and reach substantive progress could result in the dissolution of the treaty process.

Chief Commissioner Pierre states;

*Given First Nations' growing debt load and the fragile state of our country's economy, getting beyond the barriers to settlement and reconciliation in the BC treaty process must be an urgent priority. Failure to act in a constructive and progressive manner will result in more litigation, confrontation, economic uncertainty and **potentially the dissolution of the treaty process** with no viable alternative. (Emphasis added) (Chief Commissioner Sophie Pierre, 2009 BCTC Annual Report)*

“First Nations have shown great commitment over the past 18 months in working together as well as with BC and Canada to create opportunities to remove the impediments faced at treaty negotiation tables”, added Grand Chief Doug Kelly of the First Nations Summit political executive.

Last year, more than 60 First Nations joined together under the Common Table process to identify and work on opportunities to resolve six specific areas that have consistently been impediments to reaching agreements; recognition and certainty,

Constitutional status of lands, co-management and shared decision making, fisheries, governance, and fiscal relations.

“Many First Nations showed their commitment by coming together under the Common Table to identify proposals and work towards solutions on these 6 critical areas; unfortunately Canada and BC clearly showed us their lack of commitment by taking more than 12 months to respond to these significant efforts,” added Chief Kelly.

“It is once and for all time for Canada and BC to come to the negotiations table with a renewed commitment and revised mandates that will lead to fair, just and honourable treaties with First Nations in BC”, said Dan Smith, also of the First Nations summit political executive.

“First Nations need to see immediate and clear evidence of these renewed commitments, not be given reasons and excuses why government policies cannot be changed”, added Mr. Smith.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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