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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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First Nations Leadership Council Calls on Next Federal Government to Finally Honour Education Agreement

*Latest offers ignore years of talks and jeopardize First Nations
education jurisdiction initiative*

(Coast Salish Territory / Vancouver – April 21, 2011) The BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs are united in their call for the federal government to adequately fund First Nations education in BC, including support for language, culture and technology.

Six years of funding negotiations left the government and BC's First Nations Education Steering Committee just over \$4 million apart – with the main shortfall being funding for languages and culture – but an unexpected federal move has now left those First Nations seeking jurisdiction over their schools facing a choice between less money than they now receive, or losing control of their schools in return for an inadequate increase.

“We need to invest in our future. We need to invest in our people. Education is a key pillar for all First Nations in BC. It is an essential component to our Nation building efforts and to improving the quality of lives of our people which includes practicing and thriving languages and cultures,” said Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould. “Our communities need adequate education funding to ensure that our children and youth develop to their full potential and that the future of our distinct cultures and languages are assured.”

Grand Chief Ed John of the First Nations Summit is dismayed by the federal government's new approach to First Nations education in BC: “First Nations have long supported having an increased role in their children's education I'm appalled at how the federal government has jeopardized this widely praised and successful initiative.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated “Education is an inherent right. We won't stand idly by while the federal government undermines our future by chronically underfunding First Nations education. The UBCIC calls on the federal government to act honourably and provide immediate support for language, culture and technology.”

Since November 2010, Canada has been a signatory to *United Nations Declaration on the Rights on Indigenous Peoples*, and this includes Article 14, which states that ‘Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.’”

Canada should be acknowledged for its recognition of First Nations jurisdiction over our own education in BC. However, in order to accelerate the implementation of First Nations education-related objectives in the BC context, the Government of Canada must fully live up to its commitments under the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, including upholding promises made regarding adequate funding for the education jurisdiction agreements. Only then, will we be able to actually achieve and implement our full jurisdiction. *BC’s First Nations leadership jointly stated: “We must work respectfully and collectively to provide a quality First Nations education system that is adequately resourced and reflects First Nations values.”*

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For more information and further comment:

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