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FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Statement

For Immediate Release
May 21, 2014

BC First Nations Leadership Council fully supports Kwakiutl First Nations' direct action against Island Timberland and their call for implementation of the 1851 Douglas Treaty

Coast Salish Territory (Vancouver, BC) – The BC First Nations Leadership Council (BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and Union of BC Indian Chiefs) would like to express full support for the Kwakiutl First Nation in their on-going action to end Island Timberland's clear cutting of a 700 year old red cedar forest on Kwakiutl traditional territories. The protest is a reflection of the dire need for the federal and provincial governments to uphold the honour of the Crown and fully implement the 1851 Douglas Treaty.

In 2007, the Province of BC approved the removal of 14,139 hectares of "private" land from Tree Farm License 6. This decision diminished provincial authority to those lands and as a result, Island Timberland has enacted forestry practices which do not properly consider the long-term cumulative impacts to Kwakiutl First Nation treaty rights.

The Kwakiutl First Nation holds constitutionally protected rights under the 1851 Douglas Treaty, including provisions for the use and protection of village sites and enclosed fields at present and for future generations. This clear-cutting cannot continue as monumental red cedar represents an irreplaceable element of culture and way of life for the Kwakiutl First Nation.

In July 2013, the BC Supreme Court ruled in *Chartrand v. The District Manager* [2012 BCSC 1068] that while consultation regarding the decision to remove private lands from TFL 6 had occurred, the federal and provincial governments must engage with the Kwakiutl First Nation on treaty rights, title and interests without any further litigation, expense or delay. This has yet to occur.

The First Nations Leadership Council urges the federal and provincial government to first meet with the Kwakiutl First Nation, and Island Timberland where appropriate, to seek resolution of this issue and commit to a broader dialogue on the implementation of the 1851 Douglas Treaty.

It is true that many BC First Nations understand the importance of economic development and support mutually respectful relations with industry; however, where the costs of economic development are too high and positive relationships cannot be reached then the sad reality is that First Nations have very few avenues left with which to respond. Without serious commitment from all parties to engage meaningfully this will continue to be the case.

For further comment please contact:

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