

British Columbia All Chiefs' Task Force Launches Coordinated Action Awareness Campaign

Coast Salish Territory, February 3, 2010—The British Columbia All Chiefs' Task Force announced today that its Coordinated Action Working Group has launched an awareness campaign targeted at the national and international media attending the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympics Games to highlight Canada's refusal to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the consequences of this decision.

"We support the spirit of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games and applaud the partnership with the Four Host First Nations. Yet while this is a great starting point, there is much work which still needs to be done after the Games to address Aboriginal human rights, poverty, missing and murdered women, and rights and title. The first step in resolving these issues is for all Canadians to urge the Federal Government to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples— an international instrument supported by 145 states that sets out the minimum human rights standards of Indigenous peoples worldwide," says Chief Wayne Christian, Chair of the BC All Chiefs' Coordinated Action Working Group and chief spokesperson for the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council.

First Nations leadership supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to ensure the survival, dignity and well-being for their communities, children and next generations. "The cost for Canada not to support the Declaration will be highlighted in First Nations poverty, further missing women, human rights complaints and continued land and resource disputes. By not adopting the Declaration, Canadian's reputation as a leader in international human rights is called into question. " says Cliff Atleo, president of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.

"During these difficult economic times, it makes resounding sense for Canada to adopt the UN Declaration as it supports strong Nations and vibrant families and communities, which will benefit First Nations and non-First Nations alike," says Beverley Clifton Percival Chair, BC All Chiefs' Task Force member and Negotiator, Gitksan Hereditary Chiefs.

In September 2007, the United Nations General Assembly passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) following over 25 years of work. Overwhelming support was demonstrated with 144 states voting in favour of the declaration. This monumental adoption affirms the minimum standards required for the "survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous people of the world."The UNDRIP recognizes the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples including fundamental human rights for First Nations such as inherent rights to traditional lands and territories, self-determination, and unqualified recognition of First Nations peoples, cultures, languages, and identities.

However, Canada is one of only four nations to have voted against the UNDRIP. Australia has since decided to support the UNDRIP, and the United States and New Zealand are currently reviewing their position. Canada's House of Commons passed a motion on April 8, 2008 endorsing the UNDRIP and calling upon Parliament and the Government of Canada to "fully implement the standards contained therein"; however, Canada has yet to sign on.

First Nations are continuing to demonstrate the need for Canada to adopt this UNDRIP as it will profoundly benefit First Nations and non-First Nations alike.

19th Annual Women's Memorial March

To kick off the Coordinated Action Awareness Campaign, Chief Wayne Christian has issued a call to action to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples worldwide to support the families of murdered and missing Aboriginal women across Canada by focusing support on the 19th Annual Women's Memorial March held each year on February 14 in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Support can be provided by joining the Women's Memorial March circulating information about the Memorial March; and organizing support marches in communities across the country to coincide with the Memorial March in Vancouver. In these ways, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples alike can demonstrate support for the families of the murdered and missing women and demand that Canada hold a public inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women in BC and across Canada. For additional information on the Memorial March visit <http://womensmemorialmarch.wordpress.com/>

About the British Columbia All Chiefs' Task Force:

In August 2009, a First Nations Task Force composed of volunteer First Nation leaders from across the province, was established by First Nations to raise awareness and recognition of Aboriginal title and rights at the provincial, national and international levels, as well as with the general public.

Find additional information and news about the All Chief's Task Force at <http://firstnationstaskforce.wordpress.com>

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