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First Nations Leadership Council

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Feedback and inquiries on these monthly bulletins are welcome; contact information is provided in the column to the left.

Frank Paul Inquiry

On February 22, 2007 the Solicitor General of BC announced a public inquiry will be held in the case of Frank Joseph Paul, who died in 1998 after Vancouver Police removed him from his cell and left him in an alley to die of exposure.

The FNLC is pleased to hear that this inquiry will move forward. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip indicated that, "For many years, many individuals, groups and organizations marched, lobbied and pushed hard for a full, fair and just investigation and we are pleased to hear that this public inquiry will take place. Although we are awaiting the details of the inquiry, we are willing to work with the police complaints commissioner to ensure that justice is done."

"The family of Frank Paul has long called for an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding his death. We will support them, and the process, in any way we can," said Grand Chief Edward John.

"It is important that we continue to support and encourage justice initiatives, such as this inquiry, which will lead to building and reconciling relationships between First Nations and the justice system," stated Shawn Atleo, BC Regional Chief.

The inquiry is expected to begin within two months.

First Nations Leadership Council mourns loss of Harry Pierre

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is deeply saddened by the sudden loss of respected Dakelh Elder-Statesman, Harry Pierre, 65, who passed away on

February 20 at the Prince George Regional Hospital.

Harry Pierre enjoyed a long political career starting in the 1960s, often serving as Chief of the TI'azt'en Nation. He also served a term as Tribal Chief of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. He was one of the founding Chiefs of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs and the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. He also supported the creation of the First Nations Summit. He always spoke about the importance of the environment, frequently saying 'protect the land and the land will protect you'.

"Chief Pierre was an outspoken fighter and advocate for our people. He made sure our people always questioned the authority of government to unilaterally impose on our lives and lands without regard to our concerns and rights. One example was in the 1960s when he led our people during an extended blockade against a railway line that was being pushed through our communities and lands. He was also a tireless advocate for First Nations youth and encouraged them to continue to maintain their language and cultural ties to the land. He will be sorely missed by family, friends, and colleagues... by his community, by everyone really," said Grand Chief Edward John.

"The Union of BC Indian Chiefs is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Harry Pierre. We shall greatly miss Elder Pierre's strong, visionary leadership as he relentlessly upheld and defended the rights of his people. His unwavering vision of a just resolution of the Land Question in BC shall serve to guide his People for many generations into the future," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

"We are deeply saddened by the sudden loss of our highly esteemed elder, Harry Pierre. Words cannot express the deep and meaningful

contributions our respected leader made for our First Nations people and communities as he embodied the teachings, values, and political will of our people. He is a mentor, leader, and friend whose legacy will be enduring,” said Shawn Atleo.

First Nations Leadership Council joins other Indigenous Peoples in accusing Canada of violating the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination

The FNLC has sent a submission in response to Canada’s report to the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Canada’s report was heard by CERD in Geneva, Switzerland on February 20-21, 2007.

Indigenous Peoples’ submissions were considered along with the Canadian Government’s report during CERD’s review of Canada on Tuesday February 20th, 2007.

The FNLC submission takes exception with Canada’s assertions that it is a champion of human rights in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

“Indigenous peoples in Canada know the true story. Canada has a long history of denial of Aboriginal Title and Rights in this country. We have clearly illustrated in our submission to CERD that Canada has a longstanding policy of denying the existence of Aboriginal Title and Rights which has continually forced Aboriginal people in this country to resort to judicial processes to have the recognition and implementation of their rights legally affirmed”, said Grand Chief Edward John.

“Despite the fact that Section 35 of Canada’s Constitution Act (1982) recognizes and affirms aboriginal and treaty rights, Canada as a matter of policy, systematically and continuously denies and rejects the very existence of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous rights to lands, territories and resources as well as Indigenous rights and authorities to

self government,” stated Shawn Atleo.

“We are utterly astounded at Canada’s shameless hypocrisy as its officials appear before CERD. We fail to see how they can present Canada as a true defender of human rights whether here or elsewhere in the world given the federal government’s recent and shameful denial of Indigenous rights. It is truly disgraceful that Canada was one of only two countries on the UN Human Rights Council to vote against the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in June 2006”, stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip.

The Joint Unity Protocol Initiative of Chief Negotiators from BC First Nations also made its own submission to CERD. Robert Morales, the Chair of the Chief Negotiators forum stated, “Canada has not significantly changed its approach on extinguishment and refusal to recognize aboriginal rights and title. Canada refuses to negotiate treaties based on recognition of aboriginal rights and title. Instead it brings a long list of fixed bottom line positions to the table. We ask how that can be considered negotiating”.

The reports submitted by these organizations as well as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations (CT6FN) address a range of policies and practices violating Indigenous Peoples’ human rights both in and outside of Canada.

New Relationship

There are five key priorities under the New Relationship: achieving recognition; consultation and accommodation (including a new consultation and accommodation framework as a key deliverable for the new year); shared decision-making; revenue sharing; and a review of the Heritage Conservation Act.

Other priorities for 2007 include: ecosystem stewardship planning; Education Forum regarding the underpinnings of provincial policy; litigation side table; and communications.

For three days out of each month, the FNLC meets with provincial officials to set direction, review progress and have high-level discussion on these five priorities. Technical work is mainly achieved through joint working groups.

Transformative Change Accord

Work continues between the FNLC and the province to develop a draft implementation strategy for the Transformative Change Accord. The health plan has been released, and the other sections will soon be ready to distribute to First Nations for comment and advice.

It is hoped that the federal government will fulfill its commitments under the Transformative Change Accord, and engage with the FNLC and BC to develop the comprehensive 10-year plan to improve the quality of life for First Nations in BC – including reconciling title and rights and building a new relationship based on recognition.

Fisheries

A draft BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan has been developed through two fisheries assemblies (held on October 4-5 and November 29, 2006). The Action Plan was distributed to all BC First Nations in late December, with all feedback due by January 26, 2007. The Action Plan is currently being finalized; the final draft will be distributed again to First Nations in the coming weeks.

The BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan will be presented to governments during a province-wide Joint Forum on Fisheries on March 5-6, 2007, at the Joe Mathias Recreation Centre. All First Nations are encouraged to designate a representative to attend this

important event. During the Forum, the FNLC will present the Action Plan, high-level representatives from DFO and other federal departments will provide a response, and delegates will discuss next steps in relationship-building and collaboration.

Please contact us (through the information provided in the left-hand column) for further information.

Energy Summit

The FNLC is inviting all BC First Nations to attend a meeting to develop a strategy and action plan for First Nations regarding the energy sectors in BC. This Energy Summit will take place on April 2-4, 2007 at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in Vancouver.

Historically, First Nations have not been involved in government –to-government decisions as they relate to sustainable development. This must change. The Prime Minister (in the First Nations –Federal Crown Political Accord on Recognition and Implementation of First Nation Governments (RIFNG)) and the BC Premier (in the New Relationship) have committed to jointly develop strategies with First Nations and accommodate our rights and title.

The first day and a half of the Energy Summit will be focused on information sharing and discussion between First Nations, government and industry representatives of the current and numerous energy sectors in British Columbia, including: oil and gas (as well as off shore interests); coal bed methane; hydro electric power, including independent power producers; and alternative and other renewable energy options. The last day and a half is for internal discussion and development of the energy action plan by the Chiefs. An agenda will be distributed in the coming weeks.

Please contact Chris Lewis, BC Assembly of First Nations at (604) 922-7733 or fisheries@bcfn.ca or Dawn Morris, Carrier Sekani Tribal

Council at (250) 562-6279 or firstnationsenergysummit@yahoo.ca for more information or a registration form.

Health

On November 27, 2006, the FNLC, Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia signed a First Nations Health Plan Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and the Leadership Council and BC released a BC First Nations Health Plan. These two agreements are based on the signed tripartite Transformative Change Accord and the BC First Nations Health Blueprint and are designed to close the gaps in health outcomes that exist between First Nations and other British Columbians. For copies of the MoU and Health Plan, please visit www.bcfn.ca; www.fns.bc.ca; www.ubcic.bc.ca.

Work has begun to implement these plans: A First Nations Health Council is in an early stage of development; and a working group is developing a draft tripartite First Nations Health Plan committed to in the MoU.

A province-wide First Nations Health Conference will be held on April 11-12 in Vancouver. The purpose of this Conference will be to review the draft tripartite First Nations Health Plan and receive advice from health professionals and First Nations on the implementation of the action items.

Women's Memorial March

On February 14, 2007, the 16th Annual Women's Memorial March took place. Members of the FNLC attended this important march in honour and remembrance of the many murdered and missing women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

This march is an important event that brings awareness to the increased risk of violence to Aboriginal women, particularly those who live and work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

Provincial Throne Speech and Budget

On February 13, 2007, the provincial Speech from the Throne was delivered, and the provincial budget was released on February 20.

Provincial commitments in the Throne Speech include increased efforts to enhance and preserve First Nations languages and a process to deal with the artwork in the lower rotunda of the Parliament Buildings.

The budget includes funds to enhance reconciliation of Aboriginal title and rights. This year, all of the Ministerial service plans include content on the New Relationship.

FNLC Meeting Notes

At the recommendation of First Nations, this section of the information bulletin is to describe discussion and decisions of FNLC.

- The FNLC is hosting a placement of a law student; this student is conducting a survey of all BC First Nations on priorities and processes for the FNLC. We hope that all First Nations can offer their advice.
- A joint working group on consultation and accommodation has been struck and is meeting regularly to produce a draft framework for consideration
- A joint Steering Committee has been formed to oversee the planning of two First Nations Justice Forums in 2007
- FNLC representatives and others toured the Insite safe injection site
- A technical working group to engage in discussions on land use planning with the provincial government
- A joint working group on the *Heritage Conservation Act* has been struck
- Two video pilot projects have been produced to improve public awareness about First Nations and the New Relationship
- A 6-month secondment position (reporting to the FNLC and government) for a First Nations

individual within the Ministry of Economic Development has been filled

- FNLC working with BC to develop and introduce a new internship program for First Nations youth in March
 - In collaboration with First Nations, BC is undertaking a project to improve the collection, reliability and accessibility of data on First Nations and Aboriginal people
 - A comprehensive study on the status of First Nations and Aboriginal housing in BC is being conducted to assist in developing the Transformative Change Accord implementation strategy.
 - FNLC to meet with INAC to discuss BC Region Strategic Plan
 - The FNLC is supporting an ECD Forum to be held in Vancouver in mid-March, to discuss appropriate “school readiness” measurement tools, a potential ECD MoU, and a First Nations ECD Action Plan. FNEC will send Invitations to key ECD practitioners in First Nations communities in the coming weeks
 - The FNLC met with the Ministry of Advanced Education to review the Post-Secondary Education Strategy
 - FNLC and BC preparing the next edition of the New Relationship Progress Report
 - FNLC met with the Canada School of Public Service regarding professional development for First Nations employees
 - The FNLC is working with the Ministry of Community Services on a brochure on violence against Aboriginal women. Any individuals interested in volunteering as a review committee for the document are encouraged to contact us.
- **March 14-16:** FNS Meeting (Joe Mathias Rec Centre)
 - **March 26-27:** UBCIC Chiefs Council
 - **April 2-4:** First Nations Energy Summit (Joe Mathias Rec Centre)
 - **April 10-11:** BC First Nations Health Conference

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs:

- *BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief A-in-chut, Shawn Atleo;*
- *First Nations Summit Task Group members Grand Chief Edward John, Chief Judith Sayers, Dave Porter;*
- *Union of BC Indian Chiefs President Stewart Phillip, Vice-President Robert Shintah; Chief Lynda Price*

The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.

Calendar of Events

- **February 22-25:** First Nations Technology Council Conference
- **March 5-6:** Joint Fisheries Forum (Joe Mathias Rec Centre)