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## First Nations Leadership Council

### INFORMATION BULLETIN

#### Leadership Council

On March 17, 2005, the Regional Chief of the BCAFN, the Task Group of the FNS, and the political executive of the UBCIC signed the *Leadership Accord*.

The purpose of the Accord is to: affirm mutual respect; formalize a cooperative working relationship to politically represent the interests of BC First Nations and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all BC First Nations; and focus on a range of issues and initiatives of common interest or concern among BC First Nations, including consultation and accommodation, national processes, and social and economic program and service issues.

Work under the Leadership Accord is guided by the following principles:

- The Parties recognize and respect each other's respective mandate;
- The Parties will be mindful that they each represent a diversity of perspectives on issues relating to Aboriginal title, rights and interests;
- The Parties commit to work to advance the interests of First Nations in political level discussions amongst themselves and with governments;
- The Parties will represent their respective memberships in any discussions that directly involve government and industry.

Through the Accord, the Parties commit to engage in an ongoing process of dialogue through regular leadership meetings to achieve the purposes of this Accord and, where possible, develop common understandings, strategies and/or positions on identified issues of mutual concern or priority. The Parties also agree to establish working groups on identified issues

of concern or priority to advance those issues politically.

The relationship established through the *Leadership Accord* remains strong. Although some successes have been achieved (New Relationship, Transformative Change Accord, New Relationship Trust, others), much remains to be done. The mandate of the FNLC is determined only through the mandates of each of its participating organizations – the BCAFN, FNS, and UBCIC – as established via resolution of their respective memberships.

The FNLC is a political process, not a new organization. Its purpose is to generate political power through cooperation and collaboration between the existing provincial First Nations organizations. Although the FNLC works with governments to develop frameworks for issues such as shared decision-making and consultation and accommodation, these efforts are never to impede government-to-government discussions and negotiations between individual First Nations and governments.

The staff of the three participating FNLC organizations are responsible for following up on resolutions passed at their respective Chiefs' assemblies, and work together on issues where all three organizations have a mandate.

The BCAFN, FNS and UBCIC are committed to maintaining unity on matters of common concern to benefit all BC First Nations, as well as to respecting the autonomy of each organization in achieving progress on issues specific to their respective memberships.

#### UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

On September 13, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by an

overwhelming majority of 143 in favour, 4 opposed and 11 abstentions. This Declaration, which has been in development for more than two decades, is intended to recognize the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples. Fundamental human rights which have been upheld in this Declaration include the inherent rights related to our traditional lands, territories and natural resources, our self-determination, our unqualified recognition as Peoples, our own cultures, languages and identities. The adoption of the Declaration by the United Nations may transform the lives of millions of Indigenous People around the world.

### **Federal Engagement**

On August 21, 2007, the FNLC met with the new Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Hon. Chuck Strahl and the Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Hon. Michael de Jong. This meeting was hosted in Ktunaxa Nation Territory (Cranbrook).

During the meeting, the FNLC provided an update to the new Minister on ongoing work with his predecessor, the Hon. Jim Prentice, and emphasized the need for continuity in this work. Minister de Jong supported the need for continuity, and for federal engagement through a tripartite New Relationship-type arrangement.

It was agreed that the Parties will work to develop a tripartite document, setting out commitments to improve policy (i.e. Comprehensive Claims Policy, Specific Claims Policy, Inherent Right of Self-Government Policy), process (i.e. negotiations processes), and quality of life (i.e. education, children and families, etc.) issues.

### **New Relationship**

In the New Relationship, commitments were made to a new government-to-government relationship based on respect, recognition and accommodation of aboriginal title and rights and to reconciliation of Aboriginal and

Crown titles and jurisdictions. First Nations and the Province also agreed to establish processes and institutions for shared decision-making about the land and resources and for revenue and benefit sharing. The New Relationship acknowledges that aboriginal title includes the inherent right for the *community* to make decisions as to the use of the land.

Pursuant to the New Relationship, the FNLC and BC are undertaking work at a high level to develop frameworks and create “tools” to implement the New Relationship. The New Relationship must not be used as an excuse not to engage with First Nations directly and the policy level discussions are not intended to impede upon or displace First Nations negotiations with the Crown. In fact, these community-level government-to-government negotiations provide valuable insights and guidance to broader discussions.

Each First Nation has the right to a government-to-government relationship with the Crown, and the authority to enter into negotiations and agreements to suit the unique circumstances of the community.

A joint FNLC-BC Recognition Working Group is tasked with the main deliverables from the New Relationship document – producing principles & mechanisms for: recognition & Honour of the Crown, consultation/accommodation, shared decision-making, revenue & benefit sharing, and other matters. This group is currently focused on Recognition legislation as the first priority.

Other working groups achieving progress under the New Relationship include the Resolutions Strategy Side Table; Telling Our Stories Committee; Crown Land Allocation Framework Working Group; Aquaculture Working Group; and the Ecosystem Stewardship Planning Working Group.

For three days out of each month, the FNLC meets with provincial

officials to set direction, review progress and have high-level discussion on progress under the New Relationship and other matters of common concern. The FNLC will be meeting with the province in the fall to gauge progress under, and identify barriers and obstacles to full implementation of, the New Relationship.

### **Fisheries**

A key item in the BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan is the establishment of a BC First Nations Fisheries Council. The FNLC was been mandated, through resolution, to hold a province-wide meeting, open to all BC First Nations, to develop the First Nations Fisheries Council concept. This BC First Nations Fisheries Council Forum was held on May 29-30, hosted by Musqueam Nation at the Crown St. Gym. Delegates to the Forum developed a “BC First Nations Fisheries Council Concept Paper”, which was adopted by resolution of the BCAFN and UBCIC in June. The FNLC has recently sent a call for applications to the BC First Nations Fisheries Council and will make appointments to the Council by the end of October. Please contact us if you did not receive the call for submissions.

### **Aquaculture Working Group**

On September 5-6, the FNLC Aquaculture Working Group met with the Provincial government. The purpose of the Working Group is to work with provincial representatives to make recommendations to Cabinet on aquaculture matters in BC, in the spirit of the New Relationship and guided by the BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan.

### **Housing and Infrastructure**

The FNLC is working with federal and provincial governments to develop a high-level Memorandum of Understanding on Housing and Infrastructure. This MoU will commit the Parties to work collaboratively to develop interlinked on- and off-reserve housing and infrastructure strategies.

### **Economic Development**

The FNLC hosted a meeting in July to discuss BC First Nations economic development and human resource development. The meeting was attended by federal and provincial governments, First Nations representatives, and the business community. This group agreed to explore the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to establish an Economic Development Partners Group – an advisory body on First Nations economic development. A small working group has been struck to develop this MoU and a framework for a province-wide BC First Nations Economic Development Strategy.

This Framework will be shared with First Nations for comment and feedback in a series of regional sessions in October and November. **Your feedback is very important and we encourage you to attend.** The FNLC and the Regional Program Management Advisory Committee will be sending out a notice with dates and locations in the next week.

### Health

The First Nations Health Council is currently developing workplans and budgets pursuant to the *Transformative Change Accord: First Nations Health Plan* and the *Tripartite First Nations Health Plan*. Priority areas for this year include: community health plans; governance structure for First Nations health in BC; mental health and addictions (including healing residential school traumas); ehealth; and chronic disease management (including a First Nations ActNow program). Community engagement is also a key priority, and dialogue sessions will be held throughout the province in the fall.

### Early Childhood Development

A group of individuals and organizations with an interest in Early Childhood Development (including the FNLC, First Nations Education Steering Committee, First Nations Schools Association, Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements, First Nations Health Council, BC

Aboriginal Child Care Society and others) have been meeting to discuss ways to improve coordination and collaboration amongst themselves, to improve the lives of BC First Nations children. The group (“BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Council”) has produced a Memorandum of Understanding that was approved at the June BCAFN meeting. The Council has also been mandated to develop a draft BC First Nations Early Childhood Development Action Plan for review and consideration of BC First Nations.

### Technology

On September 13, over 60 First Nations participants involving chiefs and technical staff from across the province wrapped up two days of information sharing and strategic planning on the provincial land referral system.

The Prince George workshop dealt with a host of issues related to the referral system which is responsible for inundating First Nations communities with complex information requests under short timelines. Participants resolved to collaborate in the development of new technologies including new policy proposals to help them deal with referrals.

A workshop summary report will be prepared over the coming weeks and presented to First Nations and the First Nations Leadership Council.

### Culture and Heritage

The existing *Heritage Conservation Act* and associated management regime does not recognize Aboriginal Title and Rights, nor does it adequately address the needs and interests of First Nations as it relates to their culture and heritage resources. A Joint Working Group on First Nations Heritage Conservation has been created to work with BC to a) make recommendations with respect to amendments to the *Heritage Conservation Act*, b) identify culture and heritage site management possibilities within the existing

legislative regime and c) improve the protection and conservation of First Nations heritage sites, cultural property, ancient human remains and sacred and spiritual sites.

### Justice

A BC First Nations Justice Forum took place on May 14-16, 2007, at the Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites in Vancouver, BC. These discussions resulted in a draft BC First Nations Justice Action Plan which was subsequently shared with all BC First Nations for their review and comment. The revised Action Plan was endorsed by resolution of the BCAFN and UBCIC in June. A related resolution was passed in support of a key action item in the Action Plan – the formation of a BC First Nations Justice Council. Work will now begin to identify representatives and resources for the Justice Council.

### FNLC Meeting Notes

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

- The FNLC is planning a “Child at the Centre” forum in November to address Children and Families issues.
- FNLC and the Gaming Revenue-Sharing Steering Committee met with Minister de Jong to discuss the implementation of a gaming revenue-sharing agreement
- FNLC is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Representative for Children and Youth; this will be presented at upcoming FNS and UBCIC meetings for resolution
- FNLC has developed a template Declaration / Protocol to sign with First Nations organizations to improve coordination and collaboration on all matters
- FNLC participating in Cabinet Committee on Climate Change
- FNLC and BC have established a new youth internship program

## Calendar of Events

- **September 19-21:** UBCIC Annual General Assembly
- **September 26-28:** First Nations Summit meeting
- **November 21-22:** UBCIC Chiefs Council

*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 Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Vice-President Chief Robert Shintah; Chief Lynda Price*

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

