

First Nations Leadership Council

INFORMATION BULLETIN



**Union of
British Columbia
Indian Chiefs**

Vancouver Office:
500 - 342 Water Street,
Vancouver, BC V6B 1B6
Tel: 604-684-0231, Fax: 604-684-5726
www.ubcic.bc.ca



**FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT**

1200 - 100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2
Tel: 604-926-9903, Fax: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 1-866-990-9939
www.fns.bc.ca



**British Columbia
Assembly of
First Nations**

605 - 100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2
Tel: 604-922-7733
Fax: 604-922-7433
www.bcafn.ca

Introduction

This is the third issue of the First Nations Leadership Council Information Bulletin. These will be distributed on or before the 15th of each month.

All comments, feedback, and inquiries on these bulletins are welcome; contact information is provided in the column to the left.

Federal Throne Speech

On April 4, 2006, Governor General Michaëlle Jean delivered the new federal government's Speech from the Throne. This Speech confirmed the government's five priorities:

1. Cleaning up government by passing the Federal Accountability Act;
2. Cutting the GST;
3. Cracking down on crime;
4. Increasing financial assistance for parents (\$1200 annual child care subsidy to replace the Liberal child care program); and
5. Working with the provinces to establish a wait-times guarantee for patients.

First Nations across Canada expressed disappointment with this Throne Speech. Only two references were made in the Speech to Aboriginal peoples; the first a recognition of young entrepreneurs, and the second a general goal to provide opportunities. Particularly alarming for many First Nations peoples was the Speech's silence on the First Ministers' Meeting commitments (*Kelowna Accord*) and the Residential Schools Agreement in Principle.

At the March 9, 2006 First Nations Summit meeting, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, Jim Prentice, expressed his commitment to "putting the wheels on Kelowna". First Nations will be closely watching the upcoming federal budget for a

better sense of the government's commitment to address the socio-economic circumstances of Aboriginal peoples, and to institute a meaningful government-to-government relationship.

\$100 Million New Relationship Trust

The *New Relationship Trust Act* has been passed by the provincial legislature, and took effect on March 31, 2006. The purpose of the Trust is to assist First Nations to build their capacity to participate in activities under the *New Relationship*, such as land and resource management, land use planning processes, and social, economic and cultural initiatives.

The \$100 million has been transferred to an independent corporation governed by seven directors. Three of these directors are members of the First Nations Leadership Council – Chief Stewart Phillip (UBCIC), Regional Chief Shawn Atleo (BCAFN), and Dave Porter (FNS). The First Nations Leadership Council appointed two directors – Kathryn Teneese (Ktunaxa) and Nathan Matthew (Simpchw). BC appointed the final two directors – Dawn Farrell (executive vice-president of BC Hydro) and Donald Hayes (president of Hayes Forest Services Ltd., director of the Royal BC Museum).

This first Board of Directors is appointed to an eight-month term and, during that time, will consult with First Nations to develop a strategic plan, policies and procedures, and subsequent director criteria, for the Trust. Once the consultations are complete, and the strategic plan and policies and procedures in place, First Nations will have access to the Trust funds. Directors will work to have the Trust in operation as soon as possible.

Litigation Strategy

The provincial government has committed to review its approach to litigation, in particular the defences advanced by the provincial Crown, to find more respectful approaches that are not premised on denial of First Nations and their rights, and that are consistent with the New Relationship.

A core legal team has been formed to provide advice on a more respectful approach to litigation in Aboriginal rights and title cases. This group has been working on a discussion paper – setting out ideas for changes to current systems and policy – that will inform discussions at the political level, as well as at a joint legal side table.

Transformative Change Accord

Early discussions are taking place relating to the *Transformative Change Accord*. Extensive work will be required to complete the tripartite implementation strategy for the Accord, which is to be developed by December 2006.

Current preliminary work under the *Accord* includes:

- Meetings with provincial ministry representatives to share ideas on potential projects and initiatives under the *Accord*;
- Identification of quality of life indicators;
- Data and statistics on BC First Nations currently available; and
- Projects for potential early implementation.

Work is also underway to educate the new federal government on the Accord, and to encourage them to fully engage in the process. Consultations with BC First Nations will be central to determining priorities and projects under the *Accord*, and shaping the *Accord's* implementation strategy.

Mountain Pine Beetle

Work between the First Nations Leadership Council, the Mountain Pine Beetle Interim Working Group, and the province continues, and

includes (among others) the following items of work:

- Creating a protocol between the First Nations Leadership Council and the Ministry of Forests and Range on working relationships;
- Scheduling the second First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Forum;
- First Nations access to, and use of, Mountain Pine Beetle funding; and
- First Nations representation on the BC Mountain Pine Beetle Emergency Response Team.

The Mountain Pine Beetle Interim Working Group and BC held a land use planning workshop in late March. These discussions will help to inform the Mountain Pine Beetle Forum to be held in Prince George in April.

Highway of Tears Symposium

On March 30-31, 2006, a Highway of Tears Symposium was held in Prince George. Members of the First Nations Leadership Council were invited to attend and to say a few words. Like many others, the First Nations Leadership Council has been concerned with the ongoing murders and disappearances of young women – mainly Aboriginal – along the Highway of Tears. This Symposium was an excellent first step in developing a strategy to increase public safety and awareness, preventing any future tragedies, and helping to support the families of the victims.

The First Nations Leadership Council thanks all of the individuals who worked to organize this very important event, and particularly to the families of the victims, who shared their stories and experiences with those in attendance.

Communications

The First Nations Leadership Council and the Province of BC have recently completed a joint “New Relationship Progress Report”, to be issued on a quarterly basis. The first issue joint publication has gone to print, and will be mailed out to all First Nations in BC in the near future.

AFN Renewal

An AFN meeting was held in late March to discuss the AFN Renewal Commission Report, “A Treaty Among Ourselves”. The Chiefs decided that further discussions within the region are required before making final decisions on the recommendations of the Commission, which included a First Nations Auditor-General and a one-person-one-vote system for electing the National Chief.

The AFN Annual General Assembly, co-hosted by the First Nations Leadership Council will be held July 11-13 in Vancouver. AFN Renewal will be a topic for discussion at the Assembly. Elections for National Chief will also take place at that time.

Children & Families

The First Nations Leadership Council has reviewed and embraced the report (“BC Children and Youth Review: An Independent Review of BC’s Child Protection System”) prepared by Ted Hughes, released on April 7. The review provides 62 recommendations for improving the child welfare system, and it endorses a cooperative approach for bringing these recommendations into action.

Hughes’ report clearly notes that commitments and agreements reached in Kelowna at the First Ministers’ meeting need to be upheld and that recognition and reconciliation of historic and systemic barriers that have contributed to the high number of Aboriginal children in care can be achieved through these agreements.

Calendar of Events

- **April 19-20:** Mountain Pine Beetle Forum (Prince George)
- **June 7-8:** UBCIC Chiefs Council Meeting (Vancouver)
- **June 14-16:** First Nations Summit Meeting (Vancouver)
- **July:** BCAFN Annual General Meeting (TBD)
- **July 11-13:** AFN Annual General Assembly (Vancouver)