



**Union of
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**Indigenous Child-at-the-Centre
Forum**

On Jan. 23-25th, the FNLC hosted a three day Indigenous Child-at-the-Centre Forum in Vancouver, which brought together Chiefs, leaders and political and technical partners to develop a First Nations Indigenous Child at the Centre Action Plan. This forum was an opportunity for First Nations leaders and key political and technical partners to determine what is needed to ensure First Nations can fully exercise self-determination in relation to children and families and to develop a draft Action Plan that sets out a vision, principles, key topics and actions items.

During the forum, First Nations leaders signed an MOU with the Representative for Children and Youth, secured a commitment from Premier Campbell for the support of Jordan's Principle and issued a declaration of commitment entitled "Walking Together to Keep Indigenous Children at the Centre", committing to the exercise of our inherent rights and responsibility for the survival, dignity and well-being of our children. The preamble states the following:

The spirituality and cultural identity of a child must come first and foremost and serve as the principle that firmly grounds us as we undertake this work. As leaders, we commit to always put the spiritual, cultural and emotional well-being of our children at the very heart of all of our discussions, We commit to putting aside our political difference in light of this principle that must lead all of our affairs.

A follow-up forum is planned for Fall 2008.

Economic Opportunities Forum

On Feb. 13-15th, the BC Regional Chief hosted an Economic Opportunities Forum in Vancouver. The main objective of this Economic Opportunities Forum was for Chiefs and other delegates to come

together in order to create strategies and direction for BC First Nations to work together in unity in the area of sustainable economic development and human resource development to ensure that First Nations title and rights are recognized and accommodated in British Columbia.

During this forum the FNLC and Province of British Columbia released their joint report entitled "Journey to Economic Independence: BC First Nations Perspectives". This report was commissioned with the goal of gathering information from various First Nations in order to provide an overview of successful approaches to creating economic opportunities in First Nations communities

Implementing the 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. Fundamental 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 FNLC and the AFN will be hosting a conference on February 19-21 to raise awareness about the Declaration and counter the misconceptions advanced by the Canadian government.

Mountain Pine Beetle

From February 4-8, 2008, First Nations Forestry Council President Leonard Thomas and FNFC Board member and FNLC member Dave Porter traveled to Ottawa to serve notice to federal politicians that inaction on the MPB issue is placing communities and lives at risk.

Meetings were held with the Minister of Indian Affairs, Minister of Environment, and the Minister of

Natural Resources. The team also met with the Liberal BC caucus and the party's Indian Affairs critic, and with NDP Leader Jack Layton and key members of his caucus. In addition, Thomas and Porter met with the Globe and Mail and other media. In these meetings, the FNFC team raised the following points:

- The pine beetle has already destroyed an area greater than that of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia combined, leaving our front line First Nations communities surrounded by vast dead and dying forests that are a tinderbox waiting for a spark.
- As fire season approaches our immediate priority is the safety of these communities, followed by their livelihoods and their culture. The FNFC estimates that \$135 million is required to achieve minimum safety standards for MPB-affected First Nations.
- The federal government must live up to its commitment to provide \$1 billion in funding to address this crisis, and do so in a manner that allows the provincial government to live up to its commitment to provide 20% of this funding directly to First Nations

The FNFC will continue efforts to raise awareness, generate action and identify resources for this important issue.

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.

On September 20th, the FNLC and the Province of BC issued a Joint Statement on the New Relationship highlighting that the Province and FNLC are undertaking work to develop frameworks and tools to assist the Province and BC First Nations to implement the New Relationship. The FNLC and Province respect First Nations autonomy and recognize that First Nations are the holders of Aboriginal Title and Rights. The purpose of the New Relationship is to bring about policy changes and set a course forward that will be of benefit to all First Nations.

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.

For more information go to: www.ubcic.bc.ca/News_Releases/UBCICNews09210701.htm

New Relationship Working Groups

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. On Feb. 9th, the FNLC had an opportunity meet with Premier Campbell and Minister De Jong to

discuss the Recognition Legislation proposal. It has become increasingly clear that this is an opportunity for the Provincial government to provide real, on-the-ground results of the New Relationship.

Other working groups under the New Relationship include the Resolutions Strategy Side Table; Aquaculture Working Group; Working Group on First Nations Heritage Conservation and the Ecosystem Stewardship Planning Working Group.

BC First Nations Fisheries Council

The BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (the "First Nations Leadership Council") have adopted a *BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan*. The BC First Nations Fisheries Council has recently been appointed by the First Nations Leadership Council to lead the implementation of this *Action Plan*. The interim members of the BC First Nations Council are Grand Chief Doug Kelly (Tseem Th'ewali) (Stó:lō Tribal Council) – Chairman, Michelle Corfield (Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council), Percy Starr (Kitasoo Nation), Howie Wright, M.Sc., R.P.Bio., (Gitxsan Nation/Okanagan Nation Alliance Fisheries Department), Chief Allan Claxton (Tsawout First Nations) and Chief Thomas Alexis (Tl'azt'en Nation)

The appointments to the Fisheries Council were approved by resolution at the BCAFN Regional Chiefs Assembly and the First Nations Summit. The mandate from the Chiefs in Assembly is to direct the council to complete a work plan, pursuant to the Fisheries Action Plan and immediate issues, to be reviewed by the Chiefs in Assembly at a future time.

The *Action Plan* establishes an ambitious agenda for First Nations and the fishery. One of the fundamental components of this agenda is establishing and maintaining relationships with governments, partner organizations and others in our efforts to achieve true recognition and reconciliation. After the Councils inaugural meeting

in early January 2008, the Fisheries Council reached out to First Nations from across the province to listen to First Nations' perspectives on the issues listed below:

1. Priority issues in the BC First Nations Fisheries Action Plan;
2. How to best work together for the benefit of BC First Nations; and
3. What a permanent First Nations Fisheries Council would look like.

The Fisheries Council looks forward to working in partnership with you to achieve our common goals, and ensure a healthy, sustainable fishery for all of our communities. Please do not hesitate to contact us to begin the process of relationship-building through information exchange and dialogue at BCAFN Ph: 604-902-7733

First Nations Heritage Conservation Working Group

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.

One of the action items outlined in our workplan is to engage with key partners and/or organizations. This has resulted in a working relationship between the working group and the Archeological Society of BC (ASBC). The ASBC is currently compiling real examples that demonstrate the current threats to First Nations heritage sites across the Province to assist in a public awareness campaign. To gain public support, real examples are needed to clearly demonstrate the current threats to First Nations heritage sites. The ASBC invites you to submit accounts of unauthorized archaeological site destruction, loss, disturbance and looting that you may have experienced. While detailed accounts are important, requested

confidentiality of any information will be respected. Anonymous submissions are welcome. The information will be compiled by the ASBC Public Education and Outreach Committee into a summary report, which will be available to participants. A selection of examples, facts and information may be more broadly shared and communicated in public forums, websites, news articles and other public educational forums.

Submissions, as well as any questions about this or any part of the ASBC's public awareness campaign can be directed to asbc.president@gmail.com or at PO Box 520, Bentall Station, Vancouver, BC, V6C 2W3.

Housing and Infrastructure

The FNLC, Province of BC and the Government of Canada are currently developing a Housing and Infrastructure Memorandum of Understanding to improve coordination and collaboration, and commit the parties to develop complementary on- and off-reserve housing and infrastructure action plans.

The FNLC is working with the Province of BC to develop its off-reserve Aboriginal housing plan. The province is currently hosting a series of regional engagement sessions on this issue across the province. Invitations to these sessions were sent to each First Nation in BC.

The off-reserve Aboriginal housing plan will be coordinated with an on-reserve housing and infrastructure action plan that will be collaboratively developed between First Nations and the federal government in the coming months.

Forestry

The FNLC and the First Nations Forestry Council are co-hosting a First Nations Forestry Forum on March 11-13, 2008 at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver. The main outcome of the Forum will be a draft BC First Nations Forestry Action Plan to help guide the work of

the Forestry Council. Speakers confirmed for the Forum include Minister Rich Coleman, Chief Roger Williams, Ben Parfitt, and many other representatives from First Nations, governments and other forestry-related organizations in BC. For further details, please visit the FNFC website at www.fnforestrycouncil.ca.

A newsletter providing a full update on FNFC activities will be distributed in March.

Technology

The First Nations Information Technology Society (FNITS), the common services organization that is being set up to support technology in communities, is in the final stages of registration. Members of the Founding Board are Keith Matthew, Chief Judy Wilson, Chief Bill Cranmer, Chief Darren Blaney, Katherine Teneese, Norm Leech, Chief Shawn Atleo, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and Grand Chief Ed John. Some of the first tasks will be to define the relationship between FNTC and FNITS, to design an organizational structure, and to develop a governance structure.

The Technology Council will be hosting the 4th Annual Conference on Feb 21-24. This workshop looks at collaboration between First Nations, industry and government. In addition to the workshop, FNTC has been asked by the Integrated Land Information Bureau to work with them to ensure that community needs are met as they design and develop the First Nations GeoBC Gateway. A User Needs Assessment will begin shortly as one way to inform this project.

Together with representatives from several BC Ministries and Federal Departments the FNTC is in the final phase of developing a Connectivity Plan - the goal of which is to bring 'industrial strength' connectivity to all 203 First Nations. Some funding has been allocated to begin implementing the Plan and we will continue to lobby both BC and Canada for more funding until the job is done. The next step will be to use

the Plan as the basis for negotiations with telecommunications carriers.

Frank Paul Inquiry

In February of 2007, the Solicitor General of British Columbia announced that there would be a full public inquiry relating to the death of Frank Paul in December of 1998. Mr. Paul, a First Nations man of Mik'maq descent, died of hypothermia in an alley in the downtown eastside of Vancouver after being released there by a member of the Vancouver Police Department.

Since the announcement of this inquiry, the First Nations Leadership Council has been in constant contact with both the Solicitor General and Attorney General of BC. The FNLC has been granted participant status and will be actively involved in the inquiry until its conclusion.

The Frank Paul inquiry began on November 13, 2007 and is expected to run well into 2008. The final report and recommendations are to be presented to the Attorney General no later than May 31, 2008. A rally is being planned to coincide with the release date of the report. Further updates will be provided.

Updates on the Frank Paul inquiry can be found at the website www.frankpaulinquiry.ca.

FNLC Meeting Notes

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

- FNLC met with Premier Gordon Campbell and Minister Mike De Jong on Feb. 9th to discuss the Recognition Legislative Proposal. The Premier committed to formally responding to the proposal in ten days.

Calendar of Events

- **February 19-21:** UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Symposium
- **February 21-24:** FN Technology Conference, Coast Plaza Hotel, Vancouver

- **February 27-28:** UBCIC Chiefs Council. Vancouver, Holiday Inn and Suites Downtown
- **March 5-7:** First Nations Summit Meeting. North Vancouver, Chief Joe Mathias Centre
- **March 11-13:** BC First Nations Forestry Forum

The First Nations Leadership 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.

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*.

For further details on the Accord, please visit www.bcafn.ca