

THE NEW RELATIONSHIP

Progress report

Education Jurisdiction Framework Agreement signed

On July 5, 2006, Premier Gordon Campbell, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jim Prentice, Chief Negotiator Nathan Matthew and First Nations Education Steering Committee President Deborah Jeffrey signed a historic agreement to recognize First Nations' jurisdiction over First Nations' education on-reserve in British Columbia – a key action item under the tripartite *Transformative Change Accord* signed last November.

The Framework Agreement signed on July 5 is the result of six years of negotiations, and allows First Nations who choose to negotiate a bilateral Canada-First Nation Education Jurisdiction Agreement to remove themselves from sections 114-122 of the Indian Act, and assume jurisdiction for on-reserve K-12 education. This includes teacher certification, school certification and establishment of curriculum and examination standards (jurisdiction over



July 5, 2006 First Nations Education Agreement Signing Ceremony, Xweme'Ich'stn School, North Vancouver (front row: left to right) The Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier of BC; Nathan Matthew, First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC); The Honourable Jim Prentice, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; (back row: left to right) The Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Education; The Honourable Tom Christensen, former Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation; Grand Chief Edward John, Member of the First Nations Summit Political Executive and First Nations Leadership Council; Tyrone McNeil, Vice-President, FNESC; Jennifer Guscott, A/Regional Director General (BC), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

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News Flash: New Minister appointed to Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

On August 15, Michael de Jong became B.C.'s Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. Hon. Tom Christensen will be Minister of Children and Family Development. Minister de Jong said he is honoured to be in the portfolio at a time when British Columbia is leading Canada in developing a relationship with First Nations built on mutual respect, recognition and reconciliation.

"I can't think of a better time to be involved in the development of a New Relationship with First Nations," he said. "Look at how far British Columbia has come under this government in the last couple of years. With the leadership of the Premier, we really are leading the country now and it's very exciting." De Jong will be meeting with the First Nations Leadership Council as a key priority.

Education Framework Agreement

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early childhood development and post-secondary education will be negotiated in the future). Participating First Nations schools can issue their own graduation certificates. They can also confer the provincial Dogwood Certificate to qualified grads. The Framework Agreement has a term of seven years, which can be renewed upon agreement of all parties.

Canada and BC will now develop and recommend enabling legislation to allow Canada and First Nations to begin negotiating individual Jurisdiction Agreements, funding agreements and implementation plans (templates for these have been prepared). The First Nations Education Steering Committee will work with interested First Nations to assist them in developing education laws and establishing Community Education Authorities to deliver education programs and services.

The First Nations Leadership Council and BC view these education agreements as critical steps to providing First Nations learners better opportunities for success.

Provincial Government and First Nations Work to Implement Political Accords

Premier Campbell and First Nations Leadership Council Support agreements with First Nations

On May 4, First Nations Leadership Council members joined Premier Campbell in the legislature, to support the Premier's statement urging Ottawa to live up to the commitments made at the First Ministers' and Aboriginal Leaders' Summit last November. Premier Campbell's statement on the *Transformative Change Accord* and the Kelowna agreement came after the federal government tabled its first budget, which did not uphold the financial commitments made in Kelowna by the former prime minister.

Urging Ottawa to support its \$5-billion commitment to the Kelowna agreement, Campbell said: "The future of First Nations as a true partner in Canada, with constitutionally protected rights and title, warrants a fundamental rethinking of confederation. All governments, including First Nations governments, need to know they can count on stable revenue streams to provide the services for which they are responsible. That was implicit in the five-year commitment made in Kelowna. Long-term funding

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Premier Gordon Campbell, May 4, 2006

must be found, focused and committed if we are to meet the goal of closing the gaps for Aboriginal people within the next decade.

"Mr. Speaker, I characterized that agreement as Canada's 'moment of truth.' It was our time to do something that has eluded our nation for 138 years. It was our chance to end the disparities in health, education, housing and economic opportunity. All first ministers rose to that moment of truth alongside Canada's Aboriginal leaders to undertake that challenge. Having made that extraordinary national commitment, any unilateral reversal will invite consequences that only make us poorer as a nation."

The First Nations Leadership Council joined Premier Campbell in calling on Prime Minister Stephen Harper to live up to financial commitments in the *Kelowna Accord*, stating "Your

government has stated that its new Aboriginal policy is to be based on 'accountability and taking responsibility'. We strongly suggest that your government do the same, and uphold the honour of the Crown by fulfilling its commitments in the *Kelowna Accord*, and work with us in British Columbia to implement these commitments through the *Transformative Change Accord*. The First Nations Leadership Council also initiated other public information activities, including media releases in support of the Premier's statement and of former Prime Minister Paul Martin's Private Member's Bill (C-292) to implement the Kelowna commitments; an open letter to Prime Minister Harper; a First Nations letter-writing campaign; and distributing information on the *Transformative Change Accord* to Members of Parliament.

Support for Indigenous Language Preservation

At the fourth annual *First Citizens' Forum* last March, Premier Gordon Campbell announced an additional \$1 million to support the work of the *First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council* – preserving, promoting and revitalizing Aboriginal languages and cultures. The Council will administer distribution of the funds to Aboriginal communities representing different language families in B.C.



Celebrating the work of the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council at the First Citizens' Forum in March

British Columbia is home to more than 60 per cent of Canada's indigenous languages. Many of these languages are in danger of being lost forever; some are already extinct.

Aboriginal culture plays a

distinct and important role in the history of British Columbia, and support for language preservation marks another step in British Columbia's commitment to build a New Relationship with First Nations.

Each year the *First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council* supports projects to revitalize and promote indigenous languages in British Columbia through classes, curriculum development,

documentation and immersion programs. The *First Citizens' Forum* was established in 2002 to create a direct means for Aboriginal citizens to communicate with government about their priorities and ideas.

Council of the Federation Meeting

The Council of the Federation (all provincial and territorial premiers) met in St. John's Newfoundland on July 26-28, 2006. The Council of the Federation was created by Premiers to promote cooperation and closer ties between provinces and territories; foster meaningful relations between governments; and demonstrate leadership on issues important to all Canadians.

One of these issues is the Kelowna agreement - commitments made by the Government of Canada, provincial and territorial leaders, and leaders of national Aboriginal organizations to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal peoples across the country.

Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Leadership Council also signed the *Transformative Change Accord* - a made-in-BC approach to closing the socio-economic gap, improving relationships, and reconciling Aboriginal title and rights with those of the Crown. The First Nations Leadership Council and the Province have been developing an implementation plan for this Accord to help inform Council of the Federation discussions, stimulate discussions with the federal government and advance efforts to improve the lives of all Aboriginal Canadians.

Haisla Nation Repatriation of G'psgolox Totem Pole

The persistence of the Haisla Nation, sustained by a connection to their culture and heritage, was rewarded with the successful repatriation of their 134-year-old G'psgolox totem pole. Named after the chief who had it carved in 1872, the G'psgolox pole spent over three-quarters of a century in a European museum.

Chief G'psgolox ordered the pole carved after an encounter with Tsooda, a mythical being who advised the chief how to reclaim his children from death after a smallpox epidemic decimated the Kitlope

people. The pole was carved in 1872/1876 and was erected at the Kitlope village site of Misk'usa.

Without the Haisla's knowledge, a Swedish diplomat acquired the pole in 1929 and shipped it to Sweden. The Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm kept the pole, where the Haisla finally discovered it in 1991.

A 15-year process that included raising almost \$50,000 and sending Haisla delegations to Sweden, led by repatriation committee chair Gerald Amos and elder Louisa Smith, resulted in the

pole's return last March. The Haisla carved a replacement pole to remain on display at the Stockholm museum.

The pole served as the centrepiece for an official repatriation ceremony attended by the Haisla Nation, the First Nations Leadership Council and Premier Gordon Campbell on June 21, during the 10th anniversary celebrations of National Aboriginal Day in Vancouver. In an emotional tribute to the perseverance of the Haisla people and their will to triumph over adversity, the First Nations

Leadership Council, former Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Tom Christensen, Ingrid Iremark, Sweden's Ambassador to Canada, and chiefs and elders from host First Nations, joined several hundred people on the Vancouver Art Gallery grounds.

The pole's repatriation is historic, and marks the first time a First Nation in Canada has repatriated a totem pole from overseas.



BC TO HOST NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HEALTH SUMMIT

The *Transformative Change Accord*, signed on November 25, 2005, commits the signatories to a ten-year timeframe to close gaps in quality of life between Aboriginal people and other British Columbians. The Accord identifies health as one of those gaps.

Carrying forward his commitment to the goals of the Transformative Change Accord, Premier Campbell has committed to work in partnership with the First Nations Leadership Council to host a national Aboriginal Health Summit this fall. The Summit would bring together Aboriginal leaders, community leaders, government officials and medical professionals.

FIRST NATIONS ACCESS TO BROADBAND

Broadband Internet connectivity to First Nations communities remains a priority for both the provincial government and First Nations. Both the Province and First Nations are committed to providing Broadband services to unserved and underserved communities and are currently working to secure the funding to proceed. In the meantime, B.C. has sent Community Engagement Specialists into specific communities to work with community champions and to gather information that will be used when the telecommunications rollout begins.

National Aboriginal Day Celebrations

June 21, 2006 marked the 10th anniversary of *National Aboriginal Day*. Five days of celebrations on the grounds of the Vancouver Art Gallery drew large crowds and featured ceremonies, speakers, singers, dancers, and an array of cultural activities.

The *Aboriginal Art and Culture Celebration Society*, a non-profit organization promoting Aboriginal culture and identity, organized the five-day program of performances and cultural events, the largest *National Aboriginal Day* celebration in Canada. B.C. contributed \$200,000 for events on June

21-22, including an emotional repatriation ceremony of an historic Haisla Nation totem pole.

“On *National Aboriginal Day*, we celebrate First Peoples and recognize the vibrant culture, history and many contributions Aboriginal people make to our country and province,” said Tom Christensen, former Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. “In British Columbia, we are building a New Relationship with First Nations and Aboriginal people based on mutual respect, recognition and reconcilia-

tion of Aboriginal rights.”

“*National Aboriginal Day* provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the progress that we have made under the New Relationship, educate all British Columbians about this important process and the rich contributions of Aboriginal peoples, and most importantly, honour and recognize First Nations peoples, cultures and communities,” said Grand Chief Edward John, member of the *First Nations Leadership Council*.



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT EXECUTIVE

On June 15, 2006, Grand Chief Edward John (Akile Ch’oh), Dave Porter and Chief Judith Sayers (Kekinusuqs), were elected to the First Nations Summit Task Group by leaders representing First Nations currently engaged in, or supportive of, treaty negotiations in BC. The First Nations Summit Task Group is the political executive of the First Nations Summit, which speaks on behalf of those First Nations involved in the treaty negotiation process in British Columbia. The members of the First Nations Summit Task Group are also members of the First Nations Leadership Council.

Daniel Watts of the Hupacasath First Nation and Chief Leah George-Wilson of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation were also re-elected as Co-Chairs of the First Nations Summit. The Co-Chairs are responsible for chairing First Nations Summit meetings as well as the Summit’s administration and day-to-day operations.

NEW RELATIONSHIP TRUST

The New Relationship Trust Board of Directors has commenced its work to create a strategic plan and other supporting structures for the \$100 million fund, and regional consultation sessions with First Nations are underway. For further information, please visit their website at www.newrelationshiptrust.ca, or contact:

New Relationship Trust Board of Directors
PO Box 48464
595 Burrard St.
Vancouver BC V7X 1A2

Tel: (604) 925-3338
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Assembly of First Nations 27th Annual General Assembly

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) hosted the 27th Annual General Assembly at the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition, July 11 – 13, 2006. This noteworthy gathering was co-hosted by the BC First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) following a nationwide tendering process. The gathering allowed for Chiefs and delegates from across Canada to engage in important socio-political dialogue and to participate in a democratic election to select the next National Chief.

On July 12, 2006, Phil Fontaine was re-elected to his third term (second consecutive) as National Chief. The role of the National Chief is to advocate and work for the 633 First Nations in Canada. The *First Nations Leadership Council* (FNLC) and the Province of British Columbia congratulate the National Chief on his re-election and look forward to continuing to work with the AFN on matters affecting First Nations of British Columbia.

Regional Chief A-in-chut Shawn Atleo provided

opening remarks for the Assembly: "We've seen a tremendous year of developments. It has been a long time coming that we stand together and that we work together. We have a vision for what's called a New Relationship. It might not be here yet...it's something we shoot for."

BC Premier Gordon Campbell continued to demonstrate his commitment to the New Relationship and *Transformative Change Accord* in his keynote on July 11: "We have set our sights on a goal," Premier Campbell said. "The goal is to close the gaps – the educational gaps, the healthcare gaps, the



housing and community gaps, and the gaps that have existed between communities for too long. We will pursue that goal relentlessly, guided by First Nations leadership, guided by First Nations people."

Other esteemed speakers included the federal Indian Affairs and Northern Development Minister Jim Prentice, New Democratic Party Leader Jack Layton, and Allen Parker of the National Congress of American Indians.

The AFN Assembly also provided delegates with the opportunity to discuss a number of important topics, structural reorganization, national issues (residential schools, accountability, social, land rights, recognition and implementation of First Nations governments), intergovernmental issues (health care, fiscal imbalance), and international issues (border crossings, draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

30th Annual Elders Gathering Held

The 30th Annual BC Elders Gathering was held on July 18-20, hosted in Port Alberni by Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and Tseshaht First Nation. More than 3,000 Elders from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Alaska and Washington attended the event, and participated in a number of workshops rang-

ing from practical (such as healthy medications and dealing with Pensions Canada), to serious (such as elder abuse and the residential schools compensation package), to fun (such as singles and healthy flirting).

Premier Gordon Campbell spoke at the opening ceremonies, and was bestowed

the name Chamatook, meaning one who is able to do the right thing and bring harmony, by the Ahousaht First Nation. Premier Campbell vowed to live up to the name, and addressed the Elders, honouring their contributions to the past, present and future well-being of First Nations.

First Nations Managing Beetle Impact

Over 90 First Nation communities live in areas where the forests are infested by the mountain pine beetle. That makes the mountain pine beetle epidemic a serious problem for many First Nations people who depend on a healthy forest sector to support their cultures and languages, provide foods and medicines, and sustain the local economy.

To mitigate the impacts of the mountain pine beetle, First Nation Chiefs ratified a funding agreement and benefits proposal developed by the Ministry of Forests and Range and the First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Interim Working Group. The agreement proposes reallocating funding from the \$100 million the federal government provided last year to support an implementation strategy for the Canada/B.C. Mountain Pine Beetle Emergency Response. The proposed reallocation will fund wildfire protection and measures to reduce forest fire hazards on Crown land surrounding First Nation reserves. It will support a First Nations

Forestry Council and provide resources to enable First Nation communities to make long-term plans to help their communities cope with the devastation brought by the infestation. In addition, the funds will support research priorities identified by First Nations.

The agreement came on April 20 at a forum in Prince George attended by representatives from over 100 First Nations and tribal councils gathered to hear the Interim Working Group

report on impacted communities. “There has been a tremendous amount of effort on the part of the Working Group to get to this point,” said Dave Porter of the *First Nations Leadership Council*. “I thank them and I view this development as an indicator that the New Relationship is beginning to produce results on the ground.”

Mandated by the First Nations Leadership Council, the Interim Working Group supports implementation of



the B.C. First Nations Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, announced last year. For more information, visit the Working Group’s website at www.fnmpb.ca

Initiative Offers Resources in Bug Battle

The Province of British Columbia is providing more resources to help First Nations communities cope with the long term impact of the mountain pine beetle infestation.

In April, 2005, Premier Gordon Campbell announced funding for the Northern Development Initiative with a \$50 million increase, from \$135 million to \$185 million later that fall. About \$30 million of the new funding is slated specifically for pine beetle recovery projects.

The current mountain pine beetle outbreak, the worst forest insect epidemic in Canadian history, is threatening the lodgepole pine forest in the interior of central and southern British Columbia. This infestation has the potential to drastically lower the amount of available wood for harvesting in future years and will adversely impact forestry in many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities alike.

The Province established the Northern Development Initiative last fall to give northern communities, including First Nations, the funding, control and ability to identify and pursue new opportunities for sustainable economic growth and job creation in the Peace, Prince George, Northwest and Cariboo-Chilcotin/Lillooet regions.

There is a process to apply for funding. For details contact the Northern Development Initiative office in Prince George at 250-561-2525. Also, check the website at www.nditrust.ca



B.C. Spirit Bear named official provincial mammal

Further evidence of a growing awareness of the diversity, value and importance of Aboriginal heritage came forward in a big way in early April, when Premier Gordon Campbell introduced legislation to make the Spirit Bear the official provincial mammal emblem of British Columbia. "The Spirit Bear is a magnificent symbol for our province, embodying the unique character of B.C.'s natural environment and the rich culture and heritage of our Aboriginal people," Campbell said.

The Spirit Bear joins the list of British Columbia's official symbols. In addition, thousands of visitors to the Royal British Columbia

Museum in Victoria will see a new Spirit Bear display in the natural history gallery.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

The First Nations Leadership Council and the Province are working together on the following New Relationship initiatives, among others:

- > Transformative Change Accord Implementation Plan
- > New consultation and accommodation framework
- > Review of the provincial litigation strategy
- > Land use planning
- > Communications and public information

UPCOMING CALENDAR:

September 20-22: UBCIC Annual General Meeting, Vancouver location TBD

September 27-29: First Nations Summit Meeting, Kamloops

Fall, 2006: BCAFN General Assembly, Vancouver location TBD

November 28, 2006: National Aboriginal Health Summit, location TBD

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

BC Assembly of First Nations www.bcafn.ca

Union of BC Indian Chiefs www.ubcic.bc.ca

First Nations Summit www.fns.bc.ca

Government of British Columbia www.gov.bc.ca

For more information on the New Relationship, click on "The New Relationship with Aboriginal People"

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
www.gov.bc.ca/arr

BC First Nations Interim Mountain Pine Beetle Working Group
www.fnmpb.ca

The New Relationship document
www.gov.bc.ca/popt/the_new_relationship.htm



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