

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Aboriginal People Stand United for Children and Families

June 10 and June 11, 2002

Tsawwassen, BC

At a historic and landmark provincial meeting of leaders from the First Nations Summit (Child Welfare Committee), Union of BC Indian Chiefs, United Native Nations, Metis Provincial Council of BC, Bands, Tribal Councils and service delivery organizations, Aboriginal People met to discuss and agree on a way to work together to assert their inherent right of governance over the lives of their children and families.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development hosted this meeting in Tsawwassen in Coast Salish Territory and was seeking direction on what responsibility Aboriginal People want to exercise over child and family services.

Chief Stewart Phillip — President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, presented a comprehensive resolution that recommended the development of Regional Aboriginal Authorities as a necessary step towards asserting our inherent right to self-determination. Also, the resolution unequivocally calls for a series of Aboriginal authorities. The delegates made it abundantly clear that a blended Aboriginal-non Aboriginal authority model will not suit the diverse cultural needs of the Aboriginal communities. Regional Aboriginal Authorities will serve to reduce the disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal children in care (currently at 43% of the child-in-care population).

This resolution was fully endorsed by the First Nations Summit (Child Welfare Committee), Metis Provincial Council of BC, the United Native Nations, and the, Band/Tribal Governments, and a diverse range of local and provincial Aboriginal service delivery organizations such as the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents, and delegated Aboriginal child welfare agencies. This landmark agreement will be known as the “Tsawwassen Accord.”

Ministry officials at this meeting were asked to inform Minister Hogg of this unanimous decision. The Aboriginal community now requires a clear commitment from the Minister to work in partnership to develop and implement these Aboriginal authorities in a timely and respectful manner.

For further details, contact any of the following organizations:

Chief Betty Patrick,
Chief's Child Welfare Committee, First Nations Summit 250-692-6030 / 250-692-4708

Scott Clark (President),
United Native Nations 604-688-1821 / cell 604-219-7190

Chief Stewart Phillip (President),
Union of BC Indian Chiefs 604-684-0231 / cell 250-490-5314

Harley Desjarlais (President),
Metis Provincial Council of BC 604-801-5853