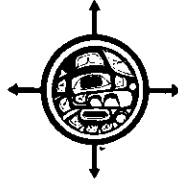


OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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B.C. Rail/C.N. Rail Deal: Callous Disregard of Aboriginal Peoples

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver - July 14, 2004) The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs membership offered their unanimous support to the Stl'atl'imx communities along the B.C. Rail corridor who have vowed to continue to oppose the B.C.Rail/C.N. Rail deal, with shutting down the rail line, if necessary. The B.C. Rail/C.N. Rail is a long term lease, for up to 990 years, which privatizes B.C. Rail and allows the C.N.R., a private company, to acquire significant public assets.

"The province has acted with a callous disregard for Aboriginal Title and Rights and their legal obligations to Aboriginal Peoples in pushing through this deal. As long as this Provincial Liberal government and private companies such as C.N.R. are willing to make secret backroom deals, without consulting with Aboriginal Peoples, we will have no choice but to take direct action to protect our Title and Rights," said Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

"The province is behaving like a bully in the school yard, assuming all of the power to force its decisions through without any consideration of the Aboriginal Title and Rights of the Aboriginal People who will be directly impacted by this agreement." Chief Stewart Phillip was joined in expressing solidarity with the Stl'atl'imx by the UBCIC Chiefs Council who unanimously dismissed the provincial *BC Rail Benefits (First Nations) Trust Act*.

Chief Stewart Phillip highlighted the problems with the trust that the province is proposing (legislation is currently pending): "The amount of money that the province has offered in the trust is a one-time only arrangement, and offers Aboriginal communities none of the on-going benefits, such as the ability to tax the rail line or share in on-going benefits, that non-Aboriginal communities are receiving. Aboriginal Title includes the right to choose to what uses lands can be put, and the province has blatantly disregarded that legal reality."

"The province and C.N. Rail create an atmosphere of uncertainty and strife by ignoring the legal and constitutional rights of Aboriginal Peoples. Aboriginal Peoples will be forced to deny rail line access to force the implementation of legal decisions such as *Delgamuukw* and *Haida*. If the province and C.N.R. do not revisit this decision, they will see increasing levels of conflict and discord. They have left Aboriginal Peoples with no other options," Chief Phillip concluded.

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