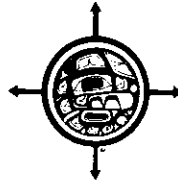


OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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PRESS RELEASE
September 13, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

\$700 Million A Drop in the Bucket

(Vancouver/Coast Salish Territory – September 13, 2004) “Prime Minister Martin’s announcement of \$700 million over five years to improve life of Aboriginal Peoples represents a pitiful small amount in the face of the escalating health crisis facing First Nations communities. For too long, First Nations communities have suffered the brutal reality of the bureaucratic penny-pinching at both the Federal and Provincial governments when it comes to the allocation of health dollars.” Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, was responding to today’s Government of Canada’s announcement.

Chief Phillip continued, “The abysmal state of the health conditions within our communities have been well-documented through work such as the Aboriginal Peoples Survey of Statistics Canada and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which has documented that many First Nations are isolated communities suffering near-epidemic levels of chronic illnesses like diabetes and escalating instances of tragic suicides. Yet the Government of Canada has found it necessary to shut down local First Nations Health Offices and ask those in need to call a 1-800 number in Vancouver.”

Furthermore, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs is deeply and gravely concerned with the idea, advanced by the BC Health Services Minister Colin Hansen, that the transfer of Aboriginal health authority to provincial governments would be sensible as the provinces would do a better job delivering services than Ottawa.

“We hold the view that the Government of Canada holds a constitutionally enshrined responsibility to deliver adequate health services directly to Aboriginal Peoples. Clearly, the delivery of health care services to Aboriginal communities should not be delegated to the very hands that have systematically torn apart the health-care system of all rural British Columbians through the closing hospitals and the slashing health services.”

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