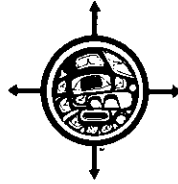


OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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PRESS RELEASE
December 15, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Union of BC Indian Chiefs Fully Supports the Hupacasath First Nation Court Petition **BC Aboriginal Policies Must Change**

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, December 15, 2004) "Once again a BC First Nation is forced to go to court to press the provincial government to act honourably when addressing our Aboriginal Title and Rights. The Union of BC Indian Chiefs share the frustration of the Hupacasath First Nation and supports the community as they seek to defend their Aboriginal Title and Rights," says Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

"In the recent Haida and Taku judgments, the Supreme Court rejected the provincial government's argument that they do not have to consult First Nations about land and resource decisions prior to title and rights being proven in court. As evident with today's filing of the Hupacasath's petition, in terms of the duties of consultation and accommodation, the Gordon Campbell government has a long way to go" observed Chief Phillip.

"As a direct consequence of the sheer arrogance unilateral resource development approaches of the Campbell Government that more and more First Nations are turning to the courts to seek a more fair and just hearing of their Aboriginal issues," says Chief Phillip. "Clearly the current policies of Campbell Government have completely failed. Where the hell is the honour of the Crown when 70,300 hectares of land are removed from Tree Farm Licence 44 in secrecy and without any attempt to meaningfully consult the Hupacasath First Nation?"

Although the Supreme Court held that the duty to consult cannot be delegated to resource companies, tenures granted or modified without meaningful consultation and accommodation of Aboriginal Title and Rights may still be challenged in court, creating a legal and financial liability for resource companies affecting company investors and creditors.

"What Chief Judith Sayer is doing today on behalf of the Hupacasath First Nation exemplifies when the duty to consult and accommodate is not taken seriously, the Campbell Government will find itself before the courts bogged down in a wave of title cases or more land-use confrontations on the land resulting in decades of legal battles." Chief Phillip concluded, "This uncertainty is not good for anyone. Long-term economic certainty will only be achieved through the full recognition and accommodation of Aboriginal Title interests, not by blindly continuing a policy of unilateralism with First Nations in the ineffectual attempt to 'open BC for business.'"

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