OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS
CHIEFS COUNCIL
JUNE 1ST- JUNE 2ND, 2011
VANCOUVER, B.C.

Resolution no. 2011-23

RE: BC First Nations- China Strategy and Relationship Building

WHEREAS the Chinese and BC First Nations have shared a complex history together with evidence of trade on the coast of British Columbia that pre-dates European contact by hundreds of years;

WHEREAS there is a cultural affinity between the Chinese and First Nations, which is demonstrated through various exchanges both in China and in Canada; recent examples include the totem pole gift to the people who lost their lives in the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake and the Four Host Nations cultural exchange in Beijing for the Beijing Olympics;

WHEREAS the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states in article 32 that "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources";

WHEREAS China's economy is growing rapidly: it is doubling every seven to eight years and by 2027, it is predicted that China will overtake the US economy; as China's economic importance grows, BC First Nations communities face significant opportunities for economic development with China;

WHEREAS Chinese companies are largely unaware that Aboriginal and Treaty rights are protected by the Constitution of Canada; of the relationship that First Nations have with the land; and that First Nations are actively pursuing traditional economies;

WHEREAS the BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council (FNEMC) has developed a BC First Nations- China Strategy to promote collaborative development between First Nations and Chinese businesses and state-owned enterprises involved in natural resource development in Canada.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council recognizes the importance of being proactive in developing relationships with China in both the management of natural resource development in British Columbia as well as in the promotion of First Nations products to Chinese markets;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council supports the First Nations Energy and Mining Council in the work it has undertaken to highlight the importance of First Nations' relationship with China, and in developing a proactive BC First Nations- China Strategy and action plan;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council hereby endorses the attached seven action areas taken from the BC First Nations- China Strategy, and will make this document available to their membership;

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED upon endorsement of this resolution by the BC Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Summit, the UBCIC Chiefs Council directs the First Nations Energy and Mining Council to continue their efforts to secure funding for the BC First Nations-China Strategy and to implement the attached seven action areas from the First Nations China Strategy.

Moved: **Chief Geronimo Squinas, Lhooskuz Dene Nation**
Seconded: **Chief Jonathan Kruger, Penticton Indian Band**
Disposition: **Carried**
Date: **June 2nd, 2011**

BC First Nations-China Strategy Briefing Paper

The BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council (FNEMC) has developed a BC First Nations-China Strategy to promote collaborative development between First Nations and Chinese businesses and state-owned enterprises involved in natural resource development in Canada. The strategy is a pro-active approach to the future and endeavours to build the capacity of our youth and expand our First Nations entrepreneurs to respond to the increasing presence of China-related opportunities in British Columbia.

FNEMC is one of several sector-specific councils created as a result of the 2005 *New Relationship* with British Columbia to assist the 203 BC First Nations communities in advancing their interests. FNEMC's mandate is to identify priority issues for First Nations to address collectively. One such opportunity is the relationship between First Nations and China.

As China's economic importance grows, BC communities face significant opportunities for economic development with China. Many Chinese companies doing business in Canada, particularly those involved in resource extraction, are not familiar with the requirement to consult and accommodate First Nations. Chinese companies are largely unaware that First Nations rights are protected by the Constitution of Canada, the relationship that First Nations have with the land and that First Nations are actively pursuing traditional economies.

First Nations communities are being approached by numerous Chinese companies that are interested in gaining access to their traditional territories. Some companies are very proactive and doing the right thing by talking to First Nations communities at the earliest stages; others are unfamiliar with the existence of treaty rights and Aboriginal title and rights within our respective territories.

A properly resourced BC First Nations-China Strategy will ensure First Nations are prepared to respond to the variety of requests and will increase the opportunities for positive benefits.

The BC First Nations-China Strategy consists of seven Action Areas:

1) **First Nations capacity building**
   FNEMC will identify interested youth to build their capacity and understanding of China and the opportunities that exist. Through working with universities, industry associations, and provincial and federal governments, FNEMC will improve First Nations internal capacity and engage with China on a wide variety of initiatives.
2) **Promote opportunities for engagement with China interests**
   FNEMC is promoting annual visits/trade missions for First Nations to China and for China representatives to BC/Canada.
3) **Establish a China Desk**
   FNEMC's China Desk will be one of the 'go-to' centres for First Nations seeking to access the Chinese market for their products and will also help First Nations respond to Chinese interests seeking to develop relationships with them.
4) **Develop best practices on engagement**
   FNEMC will enhance collaboration by creating a process for Chinese investors that promotes adequate consultation and accommodation with First Nations.
5) **Expand market opportunities for First Nations in China**
   The FNEMC will assist First Nations to seize opportunities to market products or services in China.

6) **Work with the provincial and federal governments to develop mutual benefits/opportunities**.
FNEMC has asked the governments of BC and Canada to appoint a joint First Nations/Provincial and Federal technical working group.

7) **Create a unified message**
FNEMC will lead development of a strong branding strategy both in and outside of Canada to ensure government and business see First Nations as part of the solution.

This BC First Nations-China Strategy is being presented to the Chiefs of British Columbia for their input and approval. FNEMC continues to work with the provincial government on initiatives such as:

- Staffing the China Desk,
- Organizing a trade mission to China in October 2011,
- The Asia Pacific Gateway Initiative,
- a First Nations internship program in China, and
- Announcing the BC First Nations-China Strategy at the July 2011 Council of the Federation meeting in BC.