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

Resolution no. 2011-18

RE: First Nations Search and Rescue Action for Missing Persons

WHEREAS many First Nations communities in BC have an Emergency Plan, but recent and tragic events have identified a number of gaps in our capacity to carry out effective search and rescue efforts for missing persons;

WHEREAS the Provincial Emergency Program's (PEP) Search and Rescue groups for missing persons are voluntary and typically sustain a search for a short amount of time. Further, such groups are typically not familiar with the extensive territories of First Nations, severely impacting the effectiveness of search efforts;

WHEREAS the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* sets out:

> **Article 23:** Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions;

WHEREAS the First Nations Emergency Services Society of British Columbia (FNESS) provides assistance to BC First Nations communities to develop emergency plans, which includes: an evaluation/identification of community risks; a system for notifying officials/agencies who must respond; a description of responsibilities for key positions and who will fill these positions; a description of the communications system to be used; a list of resources for finding information; and contacts and equipment that can be accessed in a hurry;

WHEREAS the British Columbia Search and Rescue Association (BCSRA) is a non-profit association with a mandate to enhance provision of volunteer search and rescue services in the province, and its activities include providing meeting forums for Search and Rescue professionals in BC, accessing funding

for training, and providing occupational health and safety support. The BCSRA includes Search and Rescue volunteers from all over the province and agency representatives from PEP, the RCMP, the BC Association of Municipal Police, the Justice Institute of BC, the BC Ambulance Service, and the Fire Chiefs' Association of BC;

WHEREAS BC's network of PEP recognized Search and Rescue volunteers utilize training through the Search and Rescue program in the Emergency Management Division of the Justice Institute of BC;

WHEREAS currently PEP does not have Search and Rescue training efforts targeted toward First Nations missing persons in BC.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council recognizes the urgent need to improve the capacity of First Nations in BC to carry out effective search and rescue efforts for First Nations missing persons;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council calls on the Province of BC to provide training through PEP for First Nations to have their own Search and Rescue groups, which would receive the same benefits as all other provincial Search and Rescue groups including reimbursement for expenses according to PEP policies and WCB coverage while on an Operation (Task) or authorized Training event;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council directs the UBCIC Executive to communicate with the British Columbia Search and Rescue Association to seek resourcing for First Nations communities to have their own search and rescue groups;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council calls on the First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) to include comprehensive search and rescue planning for missing persons in developing Emergency Plans for First Nations communities;

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council strongly encourages First Nations in BC to incorporate the scenario of missing persons into their own Emergency Plans.

Moved: **Chief Judy Wilson, Neskonlith Indian Band**
Seconded: **Chief Kevin Whitney, T'ít'q'et First Nation**
Disposition: **Carried**
Date: **June 2nd, 2011**