



Nadleh Whut'en First Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2012

Open Letter:

Implementation of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Nadleh Whut'en First Nation - Fraser Lake, BC, Canada - The Nadleh Whut'en First Nation council would like to inform the citizens of Canada, the provincial and federal governments, as well as third-parties conducting business or interested in conducting business within our territory that we are developing and implementing a suite of policies consistent with supporting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the 'UN Declaration'). These policies will be created from our traditional laws and jurisdiction that we have never given up. We are seeking to improve the standard of living for our peoples as well as ensuring that future generations benefit from our ancestors teachings.

The Nadleh Whut'en territory is located in north central interior of the lands now known as British Columbia (BC), and our main community is located on the eastern shores of Nadleh Bunket (Fraser Lake). Our people have lived here since time immemorial and we have never surrendered by force or agreement our rights to our lands, resources or culture. Canadians and the world need to know the stories of our history – and that we continue to govern our lands according to our laws – in order to understand how we can reach reconciliation and a path forward for future generations. "We will tell the world our story on our terms, with dignity and respect," said Chief Martin Louie. "Never again will we have to explain to visitors about our ownership to our homeland, and our children will never again be taken away from us and feel ashamed of being Dakelh, or Yinka Dene. We are people of the land, and it is land and resources that we need to protect for current and future generations."



The Nadleh Whut'en people of the Carrier (Dakelh) Nation have followed our ancestors' guidance since time immemorial. The UN Declaration is consistent with and supports our traditional laws, and as such outlines worthy principles to support and implement as we negotiate agreements and reconcile our rights. The UN Declaration contains international human rights standards which Canada has endorsed, demonstrating Canada's support for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world (article 43). The Canadian Constitution (Section 35, *Constitution Act, 1982*) guarantees that our rights and title must be recognized and respected; the Canadian courts have also supported First Nations rights and jurisdiction to their lands, resources and governance. The UN Declaration contains forty-six (46) articles that affirms our inherent rights as Indigenous peoples, and provides a framework for justice and reconciliation now and into the future, applying existing human rights standards to the specific cultural and social circumstances of First Nations peoples.

Government (federal, provincial and municipal) and third parties that have interests in our territory will be notified about these new policies as they are developed and publically released. Adequate financial support *must* be provided for us to engage and review proposals that impact our territory. The Nadleh Whut'en First Nation is not against development but it must be done in ways that respect our traditional laws of the land.

www.nadleh.ca (available in early August 2012)

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