

# BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS



## REGIONAL CHIEF'S QUARTERLY REPORT

MARCH 2010

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# **Regional Chief's Quarterly Report** **March 2010**

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## INTRODUCTION

Gilakas'la. Since my last report tabled in November 2009, we have been very busy at the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) preparing for implementation of the "*Building on OUR Success*" plan.

As indicated in my first report to the Chiefs it was and is my intention to focus on four (4) key and interrelated areas: (1) strong and appropriate governance, (2) fair lands and resource settlements, (3) improved education, and (4) individual health. The vision is that the plan must empower, connect and support our Nations as each Nation implements its Aboriginal title and rights, including treaty rights...with the ultimate objective: "To make the lives of our people better". Building on your priorities and developing a strategy to move beyond the *Indian Act* and create healthier and stronger communities, we are actively engaging in a number of initiatives and looking for partnership and support.

This report, as with my previous report, will focus on actions and activities that we are undertaking to facilitate implementation of the four cornerstones of the plan. We are in an exciting period of Nation Building and it has started from the ground up!

## **MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER – LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

**Implementation Plan:** The BCAFN has developed an action plan to implement the platform set out in "*Building on OUR Success*". First Nations' input is the key to successful implementation of this plan. To ensure that the interests and objectives of all BC First Nations are reflected in the implementation plan, we will be seeking further input on the plan before tabling it at the BCAFN annual general assembly set for June 2010.

**Dialogue Sessions with First Nations' Leadership, Communities and Youth:** The BCAFN will be hosting meetings with First Nations' leaders, communities and youth throughout British Columbia to introduce the action plan to implement "*Building on OUR Success*" and to obtain further input on the plan. More importantly, the dialogue sessions will provide an opportunity for open discussion on issues of top priority in your community and region and the identification of opportunities for the BCAFN to support you in addressing these issues.

We intend to host regional sessions throughout the province in the coming months, subject to resource limitations. While meeting locations, venues and dates are still being finalized, it is anticipated that during Phase I of the dialogue sessions, meetings will be held at Terrace, Prince George, Williams Lake, the Okanagan, Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. Every effort will be made to host meeting in other regions prior to our June assembly.

The implementation plan will be revised to reflect input obtained through regional sessions and the draft plan will then be sent to all First Nations for their review prior to the BCAFN's June 2010 annual general meeting.

We will be sending out notices for the dates and times of dialogue sessions in the near future and hope that you will be able to attend and participate and encourage others. This is our time and no community should be left out or behind.

**Information Sharing/Webpage:** The BCAFN regularly receives information on federal and provincial policy initiatives and initiatives being undertaken by the national Assembly of First Nations and other provincial/territorial organizations to advance our Aboriginal title and rights, including treaty rights. We often hear concerns expressed by First Nations and First Nations' organizations about the lack of access to information about these various initiatives. We recognize the vital importance of sharing information among First Nations regarding our successes, lessons learned and various federal, provincial and First Nations' initiatives if we are to make progress in advancing our title and rights and improving social and economic conditions for our peoples.

Our goal is to ensure that relevant information is readily accessible by First Nations. In furtherance of this objective, we've been working on updating the BCAFN's website, so that we can facilitate information sharing among First Nations. We hope to unveil our new webpage within the next two to three weeks and would welcome any recommendations from you regarding the type of information that you would like to access through the BCAFN's webpage.

We also wish to acknowledge the important work that the First Nations Technology Council is undertaking to develop an information portal. As we move forward with implementation of the "*Building on OUR Success*" action plan, every effort will be made to ensure that we do not duplicate efforts and that we coordinate our respective efforts.

## **BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESS – IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN**

### **1. Strong and Appropriate Governance**

***"Strong and appropriate governance is necessary if our Nations are to reach our full potential and maximize our opportunities. This is a prerequisite to sustainable and long-term economic development."***

***First Nations' Governance Engagement and Assessment Tool:*** On February 23, 2010, the BCAFN sent out a Request for Proposals (RFP) to develop a "First Nations' Governance Engagement and Assessment Tool" and to prepare a report that summarizes and analyzes existing models of First Nations' governance. The purpose of the "First Nations' Governance Engagement and Assessment Tool" is to assist BC First Nations interested in moving from governance under the *Indian Act* towards self-government and in developing an 'exit strategy' to achieve this objective. In particular, the tool will assist interested First Nations to:

- measure and assess their progress in building/rebuilding their institutions of governance and identifying the types of jurisdiction they need;

- assess and identify gaps in their organizational structures; and,
- develop a critical path to achieve their governance objectives.

This RFP will also involve the preparation of a report that summarizes the following:

- programs, options and initiatives currently available to assist First Nations to advance governance beyond the *Indian Act*, including any requirements for participation in those initiatives;
- funding currently available to First Nations for capacity development and negotiation support; and,
- the range of jurisdictions and authorities available to First Nations through existing programs, policies and initiatives.

Target for initial completion of what will be an evolving Governance Engagement and Assessment Tool is mid April 2010. The BCAFN will continue to discuss this tool with potential partners so once its initial development is complete every Nation that so desires can use the tool and connect with other Nations that are facing the same governance issues. I am aware that throughout Canada there are other efforts underway to develop similar assessment tools and we will continue to look to these experiences as well. In my view, what will be important with our assessment tool is that there is follow-up for communities as you develop your exit strategies from the *Indian Act*. Moreover, this tool will be important where an assessment indicates a need for federal or provincial legislative change and where we need to work together to achieve this change. If you are interested in participating in the development of the 'Governance Engagement and Assessment Tool' or to share your ideas moving forward, please email me at [regionalchief@bcfn.ca](mailto:regionalchief@bcfn.ca).

**AFN - First Nations Governance Portfolio:** The National Chief has established the following five committees: 1) First Nations Families, 2) Exercising and Implementing Rights, 3) First Nations Governments, 4) Environment and Economy, and 5) Management Committee. Regional Chief George Stanley of Alberta and I have been assigned the First Nations' Government portfolio. This portfolio is responsible for the following areas: citizenship and nation building; justice and dispute resolution; comprehensive claims review/negotiations; specific claims/ATR; and urban strategy. This is an important portfolio for our region given the initiatives that we have on-going and our unique experiences in addressing the 'land question'. BC is different with our focus less on implementing and interpreting historical treaties but rather on implementing our title and rights, including treaty rights. I look forward to continuing to bring our issues to the national table and finding the common ground to be able to support one another.

**First Nations' Citizenship and the McIvor Case:** On March 11, 2010, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-3, *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*. Under Bill C-3, the eligible grandchildren of women who lost status as a result of marrying non-Indian men will become entitled to registration as status Indians in accordance with the *Indian Act*. This legislation was introduced in response to a ruling by the BC Court of Appeal in the *McIvor* case, which involved a challenge to the *Indian Act* by Sharon McIvor and her

son Jacob Grismer on the basis that the *Act* treats the descendants of Indian women and Indian men differently. The BC Court of Appeal ruled that sections 6(1)(a) and (c) of the *Indian Act*, which denied Indian status to the grandchildren of Indian women who lost their status as a result of marrying non-Indian men were of no force and effect. The Court gave the Government until April 6, 2010, to rectify the discrimination and amend the offending provisions.

While the federal government is proceeding with amendments to the *Indian Act* to address the Court's ruling regarding gender discrimination under sections 6(1)(a) and (c) of the Act, there remain many descendants of our respective Nations who are still denied full participation in our communities due to the narrow and legalistic definition of who is an "Indian" under the *Indian Act*. This is not acceptable and while I support Bill C-3 as it ends aspects of the ongoing discrimination that is overdue, the long-term solution does not lie in further tinkering with the *Indian Act*.

Our people are our most important resource. Our Nations have an inherent right to determine who is and who is not a Citizen of our Nations in accordance with our own laws, customs and traditions. This is fundamental to self-government. The long-term solution to addressing ongoing discrimination in the *Indian Act* lies in the full recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction over our own citizenship. Many Nations have called upon the Government of Canada to recognize First Nations' jurisdiction over the determination of Citizenship in our respective Nations and to support the implementation of First Nations' Citizenship laws. Section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act* protects the Aboriginal and Treaty rights of First Nations' peoples which includes the right to determine our own Citizenship. This basic right is affirmed in Article 33 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions."

Canada anticipates that approximately 45,000 additional persons will become entitled to registration under the *Indian Act* if Bill C-3 comes into force. While the work continues to ensure that our Nations can determine their own Citizenship, including the rights and responsibilities of their Citizens, the addition of 45,000 persons added to the Indian Register under the *Indian Act* system will inevitably create pressures on the existing resources of First Nations' communities to provide federal programs and services. In order to facilitate a smooth and responsible implementation of Bill C-3, it is essential that adequate resources be made available to First Nations to avoid any further hardship in our First Nations' communities.

As the Bill is now before Parliament we will monitor its progress and seek to make submissions regarding the Bill to the standing committee. Minister Strahl has also announced that his government intends to engage in dialogue with First Nations to address First Nations jurisdiction over citizenship. The BCAFN will seek resources and facilitate dialogue on this important issue, which strikes at the heart of our identities, so that First Nations are prepared for dialogue with Canada but more importantly among ourselves on this most important issue.

***Jurisdiction and Management of Water and Wastewater:*** The issue of water rights, water management and jurisdiction over water is complicated. Currently, as set out in my previous report, Canada is developing a legislative framework for water management on-reserve. The government's intention to proceed with this initiative was set out in the recent federal Throne Speech. British Columbia is also poised to amend the BC *Water Act*. As First Nations, we obviously have an interest in water from source to tap. We need to have a concerted and focused strategy to ensure both access to water as well as the ability to govern and regulate its distribution. The issue both concerns water rights and governance on-reserve as well as off-reserve. As highlighted by the recent events surrounding Brown's Creek watershed and the OKIB dispute with Tolko Industries Ltd. and the Province and with Halalt's dispute with the District of North Cowichan over its proposed \$5.7 million well project development, decisions made off-reserve impact water issues on-reserve. No one would disagree that all First Nations require potable water. The question is what is the best way to ensure access to water that meets our demand as well as to regulate its delivery and use? At its core, like so many issues, this is a question of ownership and jurisdiction.

The BCAFN will continue to monitor the federal and provincial legislative initiatives and search for opportunities to secure the recognition and implementation of First Nations' jurisdiction over water in our territories and protect the quality of drinking water for our peoples. It is also important to understand what our communities are doing with respect to this important issue so we can share our experiences and learn from one another, particularly where some of our Nations have been successful in accessing water and regulating its use. We hope to facilitate information sharing on this important and unfolding issue through our webpage upgrade and at our regional dialogue sessions. If you have any concerns or questions please do not hesitate to contact the BCAFN office directly or email me at [regionalchief@bcfn.ca](mailto:regionalchief@bcfn.ca).

***Indian Government Support Funding:*** Canada reviewed its Indian Government Support Programs in 2009/2010. The advice they received from First Nations' administrators and others supported re-orienting the Indian Government Support Programs towards the core functions of our governments. Our communities also told Canada that they were concerned about the number of applications they are required to make and burdensome reporting requirements. There was also concern expressed about limitations to pensions and benefits funding. As First Nations, we all know there is too little money to run the core functions of our governments. In order to successfully implement the re-design of the federal Indian Government Support programs there will need to be additional resources. However, given the recent financial crisis in Canada and around the world and the state of the Nations' finances it appears there will be no additional funds for 2010/2011 for this purpose. This is unfortunate. Canada, as part of its review is also looking to provide a planning tool to help First Nations set priorities and improve governance capacity. As the BCAFN develops its own governance assessment tool to help prepare our own internal strategies regarding governance, we will be interested in looking at what INAC is proposing and may look to partner where appropriate. Where First Nations are developing appropriate governance there may be

opportunities for different funding arrangements with Canada and possibly access to increased resources.

**AFN Canadian Human Rights Act Regional Meetings:** Until June 19, 2008, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA) did not apply to decisions or actions taken under the authority of the *Indian Act*. With the passage of Bill C-21, An Act to Amend the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, decisions and actions taken under authority of the *Indian Act* by the federal government, federally regulated employers, businesses and entities that provide services to the public can all be reviewed for compliance with the CHRA. So can the content of federal legislation, such as the *Indian Act* itself.

The new law also says the CHRA will apply to decisions or actions taken by First Nations' governments pursuant to their powers under the *Indian Act*, but this will not take effect until June 19, 2011. Before this happens, the national AFN was directed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly and is currently undertaking a study to determine the preparation, capacity and fiscal and human resources that will be required in order for First Nations to meet the challenges under the CHRA. As part of this work the national AFN conducted 10 regional dialogue sessions to obtain input from First Nations on the repeal of Section 67 of the CHRA. If you wish more information on these Regional sessions or to obtain additional background information on the Impact of the Section 67 Repeal please contact our office.

## 2. Fair Lands and Resources Settlements

***“Settlement of the land question remains fundamental to the overall success of our Nations in BC. Without adequate access to land and resources our Nations will never reach our full potential. In addition to sustaining our traditional practices, access to land and access to resources provides our capital – our equity – and therefore our ability to build our economies and support our government.”***

**First Nations' Task Force:** The British Columbia All Chiefs' Task Force has not yet tabled its recommendations. According to the March 1, 2010 update on the activities of the All-Chiefs' Task Force, the Task Force is working with GMG Consulting to prepare a final report as well as a series of options and recommendations (based upon relevant background materials and a series of interviews and surveys) for consideration of Chiefs and leaders at an All-Chiefs' Assembly in May 2010. I look forward to this report.

The two primary goals of the All Chiefs' Task Force are: (1) Communicate the urgency and importance of raising awareness and recognition of Aboriginal title and rights at the provincial, national and international levels, and with the general public, and (2) strive to increase efficiency by better organizing ourselves internally as First Nations in British Columbia by working together on issues of common concern. Simply put what is the best way for us to organize politically in this Province moving forward on our Rights and Title agenda? The more we work collectively the stronger we are! The recent attempts



to move governments, particularly the federal government, to change negotiating mandates on-going through the Common Table show us how our Nations want to work together. We are having some success. Our success has come in the courts, will come in pending litigation and is being achieved both inside and outside of the BC Treaty Process.

At the BCAFN we are encouraging the All Chiefs' Task Force to move quickly with its important work and not delay in bringing forward their recommendations so that you, as leaders, can make the important decisions regarding our relationship with one another and the structure of our provincial organizations, including the various Councils that we have developed and are operational.

Our political institutions serve important purposes including lobbying, taking collective action and sharing information and connecting our Nations. However, they are not governments and do not have any inherent nor delegated jurisdiction. Should our Nations ever want to empower regional or province-wide governing bodies to exercise jurisdiction then our Nations must clearly mandate this direction. If the same processes were followed for individual communities/Nations moving to self-government this would require community votes. These are not decisions that can be made lightly or from the top down. This process of considering appropriate governance is part of a governance assessment within each community involving a determination as to what are the institutions a Nation needs and the extent of jurisdiction for those institutions. These are fundamental questions to be asked and answered during this period of Nation Building as we implement our Aboriginal Title and Rights, including Treaty Rights.

**AFN: "First Nations ~ Crown Relations":** The National Chief and the Executive of the AFN are building upon the Special Chiefs' Assembly held in December 2009 to coordinate our efforts and develop a strategy around Aboriginal Title and Rights and Treaty implementation. This is challenging work given the differences that exist between and among First Nations across Canada, yet it is important work as we seek to collectively advance First Nations and Crown Relations.

A number of national strategy sessions have been held and their focus has been around developing collective political, legal, international, economic and strategic action strategies with the AFN playing the role of coordinating, facilitating, advocating and supporting our Nations moving forward. Underlying all AFN efforts is the principle that no one speaks for a Nation or a Treaty except the duly appointed representative.

In BC, as mentioned previously, we are engaging in Nation building from the ground up and in many areas are leading the country in our approaches and initiatives. Our relationship with the Crown is evolving and is being defined today on the strength of our success in advocating unextinguished Aboriginal title and rights. Many of our Nations in BC do not think they need or want a treaty with the Crown at this time. There is, however, common ground across Canada as many of the Treaty Nations are also going through an exercise of modern Nation building, albeit in the context of their particular treaty. It is this common ground that will unite us nationally.

***Chiefs' Committee on Claims (Specific Claims and Additions to Reserve (ATR):***

The Chiefs' Committee on Claims has been meeting regularly over the last three months and has held two 'think tanks' amongst First Nations' Chiefs and technicians. Discussions have focused on the Specific Claims 5-year Review and other priority issues including Additions to Reserves, ADR Centre/Mediation, Specific Claims Tribunal (rules/appointments/mandate), compensation and funding guidelines. More detailed information will be posted on our website shortly.

### **3. Improved Education**

***“To make the most of opportunities resulting from fair land and resource settlements and true self-determination we need well educated and well trained citizens.”***

**First Nations Education Steering Committee:** First Nations have tasked the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) with addressing a range of education issues. As we move forward with implementation of the education objectives of the “Building on OUR Success” action plan, we will build upon the work of the First Nations Education Steering Committee and coordinate our respective efforts.

**Integration of Services – Concept to Reality:** In 1999, FNESC issued a paper entitled “Integration of Services: concept to reality.” This document sets out a strategy to address issues surrounding vulnerable children and youth. FNESC has established a working group to collaboratively redraft this document and update the strategy. FNESC has invited the BCAFN to be part of the working group. The BCAFN looks forward to working collaboratively with FNESC, the First Nations School Association (FNSA) and other First Nations organizations on this and other initiatives.

### **4. Individual Health**

***“In order to take advantage of our very real opportunities arising from the settlement of land claims and self-determination we need strong families and healthy citizens.”***

**First Nations' Health Council:** First Nations have tasked the First Nations Health Council with responsibility for implementing the Transformative Change Accord, First Nations Health Plan, First Nations Health Plan Memorandum of Understanding and Tripartite First Nations Health Plan and the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan. This is important work that has far reaching implications for our Nations during this period of nation building.

As we move forward with implementation of the health components of the “*Building on OUR Success*” action plan, every effort will be made to ensure that we do not duplicate the work of the First Nations Health Council and to coordinate our respective efforts.

An agreement to establish the “Basis for a Framework on Health Governance” is currently being negotiated between the First Nations Interim Governance Health Committee (established by the Health Council) and federal and provincial partners. A number of letters have been recently copied to the BCAFN office regarding this initiative with concerns. I share the concerns expressed in the letters that the negotiation of any transfer of responsibility for health, especially jurisdiction, from the federal government to First Nations must be nation-based and community driven, and that the “Basis for a Framework Agreement on Health Governance” be brought to First Nations for their review and approval before being initialed by members of the First Nations Health Council or First Nations Interim Health Governance Committee. In response to the concerns raised, I wrote to the co-chairs of the First Nations Health Council and First Nations Interim Health Governance Committee to seek clarification regarding these issues. I also asked that any proposed initialing of the “Basis for a Framework Agreement on Health Governance” be deferred until this matter is brought to First Nations for their review and consideration.

Lastly, I asked the First Nations Health Council to coordinate a meeting among the political executives of the First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the BC Assembly of First Nations, the FNHC co-chairs and the FNIHGC co-chairs at the earliest possible convenience to discuss and find solutions to the concerns raised. We will keep you apprised of efforts to find solutions to the concerns raised by First Nations and First Nation organizations regarding the proposed agreement and to achieve our collective goal of ensuring that initiatives to improve the health of our peoples are Nation-based and community driven. If, ultimately, our Nations do choose to establish regional government for certain jurisdictions, such as health, then we need to determine how approval for such governance structures are created and delegated by our respective Nations.

**2012 World Indigenous Games:** While the Olympics 2010 may have come and gone the legacy of the games for First Nations in terms of sport and the importance of healthy living will continue. During the Olympics I had the opportunity to talk with some of our First Nation Olympians and others who are committed to helping improve health conditions in our communities and increasing our participation in sports. The National Chief has committed to work to increase First Nations’ participation in sport and to partner with athletes such as Clara Hughes to achieve this objective.

The 1<sup>st</sup> World Indigenous Games 2012 will be held in Winnipeg so let’s get our athletes ready and work to have the biggest showing of athletes from BC.

**Aboriginal Child Poverty Meeting:** Child poverty is a key factor that has contributed to the high numbers of First Nations’ children in the child care system in BC, with many First Nations’ children taken from their families due to circumstances related to poverty.

I attended a summit on reducing child poverty that was held in North Vancouver on January 6-7, 2010. Participants at the summit endorsed recommendations made by the Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond to develop a child reduction strategy that sets measurable targets and initiatives. Together with the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the BCAFN wrote to the Premier and Ministers Abbott, Polak and Chong to seek support from the Province to work with us to eliminate poverty among First Nations' children in BC who reside on and off reserves. I also asked for a meeting with the Premier and Ministers at the earliest opportunity to discuss the establishment of a partnership among First Nations and the Province to develop and implement a First Nations child poverty reduction strategy.

***Walk for Justice (Missing and Murdered Women) March, February 14, 2010:*** With many of our leaders I was honoured to be able to participate in the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Memorial March on February 14, 2010 to remember, honour and seek justice for the many murdered and missing women across Canada. Over 2000 people participated in this year's annual Memorial March, which coincidentally occurred during the 2010 Olympics. The hosting of the Memorial March during the Olympics served as a poignant reminder that success in our Nations and for our Peoples is not distributed evenly and that we must work to ensure that no Nation, community or individual is left out or behind.

***Red Cross Meeting:*** On February 2, 2010, I had the opportunity to meet with the Canadian Red Cross Provincial Director and their Aboriginal Outreach Coordinator for the Coastal Region. By way of background on May 23, 2007, the national AFN and the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) signed an MOU committing both parties to work together in the areas of emergency management, injury prevention, abuse and violence prevention and international and humanitarian issues. This MOU discussed how the two parties would assist and coordinate the collaboration between the many agencies that deliver emergency and emergency preparedness services to First Nations' communities in order to increase First Nation capacity in this area. Since this time many steps have been made to expand and enhance relationships with and involvement in First Nations Communities; including disaster management, First aid training, water safety, an injury service prevention survey and child abuse and family violence prevention training. For more information regarding the Canadian Red Cross and its services please contact Kimberly Nemrava, Provincial Director, BC, @ (250) 995-3500, [kimberley.nemrava@redcross.ca](mailto:kimberley.nemrava@redcross.ca) or email me directly at [regionalchief@bcfn.ca](mailto:regionalchief@bcfn.ca).

## **BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS (BCAFN) OPERATIONS**

***Policy Development:*** The BC Assembly of First Nations has developed a governance manual, a human resources manual and a financial controls manual, which set out the society's policies regarding various financial management, corporate governance and human resource matters. As with any policies, there will always be gaps and room for improvement. We are, or will be, working on the development and refinement of the BCAFN's conflict of interest policies and policies to guide the BCAFN's response to

requests from government to engage in dialogue regarding federal and provincial policy and legislative initiatives.

We recently received a request from a group of hereditary chiefs for membership in the BCAFN. At the present time, membership in the society is limited to Indian bands. Thus this application had to be denied. However, as we move forward along the pathway to decolonization, there may be a need to revisit our bylaws and policies regarding eligibility for membership in the BCAFN.

**Budget:** The BCAFN has a limited core budget which we receive from Canada. The cost of the Regional Chief and travel for national business is paid directly by the nation AFN office. From time-to-time the BCAFN enters into contracts with Canada and other bodies for specific projects. It is the direction of the Regional Chief that the core operations of the BCAFN, including the cost of full-time staff, must be accommodated within our core budget. We have developed a revised budget for the BCAFN and its operations and have developed a new chart of accounts that reflects the BCAFN's core responsibilities and operations with separate accounting for specific projects. As stated in our last report, given the limited size of the BCAFN's budget, and not wanting to take away from the resources that need to be directed to our individual Nations, the effectiveness of the BCAFN will be determined by our ability to connect our Nations and share our work and experiences. This is central to the plan. Consequently, we have developed a draft communications strategy to set out how our communities can more effectively work together through the office of the BCAFN Regional Chief to share our stories, our voice and our expertise.

**Staff:** Chris Lewis was recently elected to the Squamish Nation Council, a full-time position, and we were sad to lose a valuable employee to the BCAFN. We thank Chris for his years of service and wish him all the best in his political career.

**Administrative Efficiency:** Finally, and as previously stated, in terms of First Nations' political organisations in BC, I am committed to ensuring that we limit duplication of our efforts and therefore need to consider the most efficient way to organise collectively to advance and implement our title and rights, including treaty rights. Where appropriate we may need to streamline and combine our efforts with the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. To this end we will be advised by the findings of the First Nations Task Force and in my relationship and discussions with the executives of the two provincial organizations.

## ***REMINDERS***

### **2010 AFN National Policy & Planning Forum**

The Assembly of First Nations will hold a National Policy Planning Forum on March 24 – 26, 2010 at TCU Place, Saskatoon's Arts & Convention Centre, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The Conference will offer a variety of discussion sessions for anyone involved in self-government negotiations, commercial activities, lands claims negotiations, program development, education, health delivery and environmental management.

This policy & planning forum will focus on AFN's mandated strategic plan, which is framed by the themes: Supporting First Nation families and communities; exercising and implementing rights; the environment and economy; and supporting First Nation governments.

For further information about this programme please contact Michele Price at the AFN Office by telephone at (613) 241-6789 or 1-8000-267-8860 or by email [mprice@afn.ca](mailto:mprice@afn.ca).

### ***AFN Annual General Assembly***

The Assembly of First Nations will hold its 31<sup>st</sup> Annual General Assembly on July 20-22, 2010 at the Winnipeg Convention Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba. More information to follow.