

Bear Mountain Deal Draws First Nation Criticism

Written by

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Bear Mountain Draft Agreement Fundamentally Flawed: UBCIC Fully Supports Tsartlip First Nation

December 15, 2006

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver BC ? Grand Chief Stewart Phillip and Chief Robert Shintah attended the Tsartlip community dinner last night to bear to witness the discussion of the agreement-in-principles as publicly presented on December 13th.

"Bluntly put, the talks have been completely flawed and dysfunctional. The Tsartlip leadership did not have the opportunity to report, consult and seek instruction from their members on a consistent and ongoing basis. In short, the Band's negotiators were muzzled," said Grand Chief Phillip. "Tsartlip was never really allowed to advance their concerns around total preservation of the sacred cave or raising the fundamental issues of spiritual rights."

Chief Shintah observed, "It looks like the other parties are in a hurry to quickly sign off these agreements. So much so, they appear ready to not only dismiss the Tsartlip community's spiritual concerns but to literally bulldoze over their concerns."

"The tenor of the process was a simple one: the cave is lost and the cave will be destroyed to facilitate a resumption of development issues." The other parties were biased in favor of expediting an agreement to avoid further conflict. It is now apparent that none of them, other

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than the Tsartlip, were committed to the spiritual issue of preserving the cave,? commented Grand Chief Phillip.

?The Union of BC Indian Chiefs unequivocally and unconditionally supports the Tsartlip First Nation in their efforts to better the draft agreements as presented. We call for the discussions to be re-structured with a clearer mandate and with a different mediator. Further, the destruction of our sacred areas, burial sites by unregulated land-use development will continue to be a source of increasing social, political and legal conflict. The Heritage Conservation Act needs to be totally revamped to reflect the principles of respect and reconciliation,? concluded Grand Chief Phillip.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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The **UBCIC** is a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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