



**BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS**

***PRESENTATION TO THE 8th ANNUAL BC NATURAL RESOURCE FORUM:
NEW PARTNERSHIPS, NEW MARKETS***

**PUGLAAS (JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD)
REGIONAL CHIEF
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
January 13, 2011**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Gilakas'la. Greetings Elders, Chiefs, Honourable Ministers Bell, Penner and Bond, and to all the delegates. My name is Jody Wilson-Raybould. My traditional name is Puglaas and I come from the Musgamagw-Tsawateneuk/Laich Kwil Tach people, part of the Kwakwaka'wakw, the Kwakwala speaking people of northern Vancouver Island where I live, with my husband, in my village of Cape Mudge where I also serve as a member of Council.

I would like to acknowledge the territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, and thank them for allowing us to be on their lands to hold this forum.

I am pleased to be participating in this the 8th Annual BC Natural Resource Forum whose theme is 'New Partnerships, New Markets'.

This forum is being held at an important time in our Province – a critical time where “partnerships” are becoming increasingly necessary in the area of resource development and extraction. And, in particular, partnerships between government and First Nations and industry and First Nations.

Background

Historically First Nations and First Nations' people have been involved in the natural resource industries in this province. My own community for example, Cape Mudge, is a fishing village. Many of our community Members were, or still are, commercial fishermen. Some of you may remember the old five dollar bill with BCP 45. It was skipped and

owned by a gentleman who still lives a few doors down from me at home – Ollie Chickite. My grandfather Charlie Wilson, in fact, owned a fleet of fishing boats and at one time employed many of our people up and down the coast. This can be said of many of our fishing villages scattered up and down BC's rugged coast line.

In fact, the economy of BC, built on natural resource extraction, would not have developed as quickly or to the same degree in the early days of its history had it not been for the involvement of our peoples in the economy - both as wage labourers and also as partners.

You may not be aware, but in the interior of BC the best cowboys and the best ranchers were, in fact, Indians. Our people were heavily involved in the cattle business. We were also involved in early logging ventures. So what happened? Well as time moved on and more and more people settled in increasing numbers this brought greater competition. As the economy moved more towards agriculture and other pursuits our peoples began to be systematically, both politically and legally, isolated from the growing and evolving settler society and the growing economy.

The policies of governor Trutch and other government officials were simply to exclude Indians and to deny our opportunity in favour of newcomers. When the colony was created, initially our people could actually vote in public elections, but this right was taken away and so with it our political influence. So too was our ability to pre-empt land taken away. Instead our peoples were moved on to reserves and governed separately from the settlers under the paternalistic *Indian Act* which subjugated our people to the status of wards under the

protection of the state - an Act which still applies today to most of our people and our Nations. A far cry from being partners in the opening up of a new economy and a new colony based on natural resource extraction and development.

Our people were, of course, not silent to this change in our circumstances having originally welcomed the settlers then only to become their wards. Over time we began to raise legal and political arguments centered on the questions of un-extinguished 'Indian' title, as it was known in the 19th century; our legal rights as the original inhabitants to the land and her resources.

In 1910, the Chiefs of the interior tribes sent a Declaration to Sir Wilfred Laurier, then Prime Minister of Canada, explaining their frustration with what they called the 'new whites'. Let me read you some of what they said – it is insightful:

“Just 52 years ago the other whites came to this country. They found us the same as the first or "real whites" had found us, only we had larger bands of horses, some cattle and in many places we cultivated the land. They found us happy, healthy, strong and numerous...

The "real whites" we found were good people. We could depend on their word, and we trusted and respected them. They did not interfere with us nor attempt to break up our tribal organizations, laws, and customs...

Some of our Chiefs said, "These people wish to be partners with us in our country. We must, therefore, be the same as brothers to them and live as one family. We will share equally in everything-half and half-in land, water and timber, and so on. What is ours will be theirs and what is theirs will be ours. We will help each other to be great and good..."

The whites made a government in Victoria... Their chiefs dwelt there...they did not deny the Indian tribes owned the whole country and everything in it. They told us we did. We were hopeful.

The Declaration continues in this vein for awhile and then turns to the crux of the matter.

We have no grudge against the white race as a whole nor against the settlers, but we want to have an equal chance with them of making a living...

We demand that our land question be settled and ask that treaties be made between the government and each of our tribes, in the same manner as accomplished with the Indian tribes of the other provinces of Canada and in the neighbouring parts of the United States.

We desire that every matter of importance to each tribe be a subject of treaty, so we may have a definite understanding with the government on all questions to date between us and them.

Similar demands were made by the Chiefs on the coast and elsewhere across the Province including the Nisga'a who even travelled to England in 1913. At its core the chiefs at the time were asking for a treaty between themselves and the Crown with an equitable sharing of the natural resources.

The manner in which 'Indian' issues were being addressed in the former colony did not go by unnoticed internationally. From an article found in a copy of the *Times* of London from December 7, 1877, some 33 years before the Sir Wilfred Laurier Memorial, this 'notice' is expressed quite clearly. I would like to read you a couple of passages as it is very prophetic and also to the point.

Still it must be said that the Indians here – it matter not by whom – have been badly handled, especially in connection with their land reserves As a sample of the general muddle, the condition of Indian affairs in this province could not be equalled. First and foremost there is the question of the un-extinguished Indian title in the soil. The Canadian policy is to recognise this title, but the Crown has not recognized it – at least on the mainland portion of the Province, and some, indeed, say that the Crown from the first has distinctly denied it in the colony of British Columbia. It would cost a great sum of money to extinguish the Indian title here, and if it be not extinguished this province, which contains about one-third of the all the Indians in Canada, will be in this respect an exceptional area. Who is to find the money for this purpose? The practical difficulties in settling this question are so great that it has

*not been raised at present, there being some hope that the (reserve) Commissioners may adjust matters so as to prevent the necessity of it being raised. **But what guarantee can there be that the Indians themselves will not raise it at some future, perhaps not distant time?***

And of course we are still raising these issues in the present in the 'not so distant time'.

Skip 133 years to December of 2010 and consider another international story recently published in the UK based *Guardian Weekly*, and the French based *Le Monde*, regarding major resource development projects proposed in Canada and in BC specifically. In the article the reporter talks about proposed major projects such as the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, the Northern Gateway project and Taseko Mines. She looks at the issues facing these projects as a result of Aboriginal rights and title. Here are a couple of short passages from the article:

The views of Canada's indigenous peoples on mining projects, pipelines and hydroelectric dams carry increasing weight in the decision-making process...

The demands of native Americans, and their right to be consulted on the impact of such projects on their traditional way of life, are now an important factor...

(and) highlights the extent to which government and business must make allowance for indigenous peoples when planning major projects on land the First Nations consider their own.

International attention to our issues of course has also been heightened in the wake of the endorsement of the “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” by all Nation states including the former holdouts, Canada and the United States. Articles 10, 18, 19, 26, 27, 28, and 29 address land and resource issues and Article 26 specifically addresses our ability to influence and control the use of our traditional territories. Article 26 states:

- 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.*
- 2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.*
- 3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.*

Today, thankfully, and due in large part to the strong leaders that have come before us, we as First Nations’ peoples are beginning to emerge from the darkest period of our time. As a result of years of litigation and the political efforts of our leaders there are, in fact, now many new opportunities for our Nations to move beyond the colonial period and

walk through what I call the “post-colonial door” – to re-establish our governance and our access to the lands and resources of this province; to create new partnerships in order to participate in the economy; to address our social issues resulting from the colonial legacy and to improve the lives of our people. I am optimistic.

BCAFN Four Pillars

When I ran for Regional Chief in 2009 I ran on a platform that we are now currently implementing at the BCAFN. The plan has four pillars that are reflective of where we have come from and where we want to go in re-building our Nations, individual by individual, community by community, Nation by Nation.

The four interrelated pillars are (1) the establishment of strong and appropriate governance, (2) fair land and resource settlements, (3) education, and (4) individual health. The last two are recognition that we cannot take advantage of our opportunities if we do not have a healthy and well educated citizenry.

For me the key to achieving success in all four pillars lies with the first: the establishment of strong and appropriate governance. Strong and appropriate governance is truly necessary for us to be successful. All the research shows that if our Nations are to reach our full potential and maximize our opportunities we need to govern ourselves appropriately. Without it there is too much political and legal uncertainty, leading to wasted energy and money. Energy and money we can't afford to waste.

Jurisdiction and control over land and resources is, of course, one aspect of governance. As such it cannot be isolated from the much broader question of how First Nations' governments will ultimately be re-established post *Indian Act* and the substantial challenges of moving beyond the *Indian Act*.

First Nations' governments are not like other governments in Canada. Our systems of government are in a state of transition. Prior to colonization, historically our Nations were self-governing operating within our tribal structures. Each of our Nations had ways in which access to lands and resources were controlled.

After colonization, as I have previously remarked, we were put under federal administrative authority and our people and our economies were governed separate and apart from non-Aboriginal Canada through the *Indian Act*; neither an appropriate framework for First Nation's people - nor for any people for that matter.

The legacy of this colonial history is the significant challenge we now face in re-establishing appropriate governance including jurisdiction over land and resource management that respects our cultures and traditions but that also meets today's governance needs. While most Canadians take it for granted that there is a well-established system of government and laws within a legal framework that has been developed over many years, this is not the case for First Nations peoples and certainly not the case for the small reserves that were set aside for us.

Each community, either individually or in groups depending upon cultural and social ties and issues of proper title holder will need to determine how they will govern themselves, and build their contemporary institutions of governance...starting for the most part with their existing reserves.

At the BCAFN we are developing a “Governance Community Engagement and Self-Assessment Tool” which we hope will assist communities to begin this process of transformation if they have not already started, or if they have, to refine their plan. So that our leaders and our citizens with the support of their staff, can deconstruct their current *Indian Act* reality and begin laying a path for post-*Indian Act* governance, building the institutions they need to govern and make decisions. It is the vision that every community will be able to have this conversation and begin moving forward developing their own colonial “exit” strategy and that the transformation can take place in a generation.

The second pillar in our plan involves the concept of “fair lands and resource settlements”. Our Nations, our communities, need own source revenue and for many this will come from opportunities to sustainably exploit the resource wealth from our territories. We cannot rely solely on federal transfers.

At some point a few year back now, the Province of BC under the leadership of Premier Gordon Campbell made the shift from seeing First Nations’ involvement in resource development as a legal issue and

hindrance to economic development but rather saw it as an opportunity for new partnerships and cooperation as part of what is being called the 'New Relationship'. We went from the Premier holding a negative referendum on treaty negotiations and Aboriginal rights and title to entering into a Transformative Change Accord with the leadership of BC setting out an ambitious agenda that has led to numerous resources related agreements, revenue sharing and other partnerships. While for some/many this has not gone far enough, the reality is there are opportunities and we need to capitalize and expand upon them. We need to ensure that every First Nation has the opportunity to benefit from revenue sharing and access to the resources generated from natural resource extraction where those activities are sustainable and do not adversely impact Aboriginal rights and title; opportunities must be available to all and not just those First Nations that can afford the lawyers, or have the political connections, or perhaps are located in a geographical hot spot. This is key – fair land and resource settlements that fund the rebuilding of our societies, create jobs, help pay for our governments and providing the programs and services our people develop and deliver in our own communities.

I expect that many of you in industry had come to this realization years ago and before Mr. Campbell's apparent epiphany; perhaps some of you advised him accordingly - especially those of you who have been working with our Nations for years.

Revenue sharing is one of the results of this change in policy. Unlike in the past, we are now no longer talking about the possibility, or idea, of revenue sharing but rather the specifics of the programs that are being

developed and the extent of the sharing. This is progress. It is in this context that I wish to make a few observations regarding the new forestry arrangements.

The first revenue sharing arrangements in BC were in forestry. The Ministry of Forests was well ahead of the other line Ministries in this area. Some five years ago now the Ministry developed a program to share revenues from forestry and to provide access to the industry through what were called forest and range agreements. Although there were issues with these agreements that actually led to litigation, many Nations took up the opportunity. This program is currently being revamped. We encourage the Crown to listen to First Nations' concerns as the program evolves. The resources that flow from these agreements are very important to many of our Nations. Currently, I understand, First Nations are being offered revenue sharing at 3% of the revenue the province collects in the First Nation's territory. While this increases for First Nations with Reconciliation Agreements or treaties this does not help the vast majority of our First Nations and even then the shares are really too low. The 3% is being offered to often the most impoverished First Nations, on almost a "take-it-or-leave-it" basis which is of concern. The levels of revenue sharing should be increased to be more meaningful and reflective of our interests as the Aboriginal right and title holders.

Staying with forestry, some First Nations have faced challenges with successfully managing forest tenures offered under the current programs for a number of reasons including lack of resources and capacity and having to deal with short-term tenures while markets are

at an all-time low. The First Nations Forestry Council, established by BCAFN, the Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs, has been working with government officials to identify some of these tenure viability issues. I encourage Minister Bell here today to continue to work with our Council and affected First Nations and find solutions to these issues.

One of the proposed solutions that I understand was initially accepted by the Minister of Forests was to forgive First Nations' the requirement to pay annual rent – the standard tenure fee - because of the existence of Aboriginal title and rights. It is hard for our leaders to accept paying rent to the province for land that our Nations have Aboriginal title to. This past summer, our Nations were told that, in fact, the rent would not be forgivable and all requests for payment were due and payable. This issue has created tremendous challenges in our communities both politically and potentially legally. I respectfully ask you here today to encourage your government to reconsider its position on rents.

Continuing on the theme of fair access to land and resources, it was, of course, the modern BC treaty making process that was intended to resolve comprehensively and once and for all, the 'Indian land question'. There were great expectations. However, since the process started in 1993 there have only been two Final Agreements and a couple of Agreements-In-Principle, although a hand-full of others are expected. As a former Commissioner on the BC Treaty Commission – one of the two commissioners elected by First Nations - I am well aware of the complexity of the treaty process and the inherent difficulties with the process. It is basically a political process which has, since the

process began, been over-taken by legal decisions and other events through the passage of time.

Court cases such as *Delgamuukw*, *Haida* and *Taku*, along with increased political support within government, have brought greater clarity and understanding to what Aboriginal rights and title mean and how they must be taken into consideration when resource development is proposed within our traditional territories. It is not surprising that advancements have been made outside of the Treaty process. BC officials must now act where there is a reasonable presumption of Aboriginal title and thus agreements need to be reached. For legal reasons BC can't wait for a treaty. In fact, economically, neither can First Nations nor do most want to. In truth, unless there are significant changes to the BC treaty making process and in particular the approaches taken by Canada and BC to some of the substantive issues at the table it is unlikely, in my opinion, there will be many more treaties, if any, signed other than those that are very close to completion. This is unfortunate but true.

Notwithstanding the present issues with the BC treaty making process, settlement of the land question remains fundamental for all our Nations in BC. Without adequate access to land and resources our Nations will never reach our full potential.

Challenges and Opportunities

As I have said, the Courts have provided direction on our rights and title. They have established the principle that the Crown must consult

and accommodate First Nations where Aboriginal rights and title might be impacted. While this has helped changed the way government, and by implication industry, deals with First Nations, it has also created new challenges.

In BC, I think it is fair to say that it is now almost next-to-impossible for a significant resource development to take place within the traditional territory of a First Nation or First Nations without meaningful involvement of the First Nation or Nations. So it begs the question “With whom do you consult and perhaps enter into an accommodation or benefits agreement?” And when First Nations and business or industry so desire, with whom do you enter into a business relationship?

And so I return to the fundamental importance of governance reform. In the absence of appropriate governance at the First Nations or tribal level it is not only difficult to know with whom you are expected to do business but also whether the political and legal structure of the group you are dealing with has the authority and/or political legitimacy to engage with you. And are they the proper Aboriginal title holder? A serious problem for First Nations if we are to take advantage of opportunities and develop our economies, but also now, a serious problem for the Crown and industry.

To put it another way, the very limitations of *Indian Act* reserve based government that hindered the ability of our Nations to develop the economies on our reserve lands are now the same impediments to engaging as effectively as we could with industry and businesses off-

reserve within our broader traditional territories and therefore impacting the broader economy. Add to that the questions of who is the proper title holder and the problem is compounded. This problem is particularly compounded where there are differing perspectives on resource development projects.

In some cases there will not be agreement amongst all our First Nations as to whether a particular development should proceed. Knowing who to consult with and who is the 'proper title holder' or who can speak on behalf of the proper title holder, becomes very important in such cases. Many Nations occupied different territories over time so it depends on what date we use. Territory was and is shared and there were and are multiple title holders. Also, the current deficiencies in governance mean it is often hard to determine who can rightfully and legitimately speak and/or for the proper title holder.

Whether it is clear or not who the title holder or holders are, the legal and political consequence of any decision made can have lasting and significant impact on the project or on the relationship with First Nations and between First Nations. The issue is further complicated where First Nations may clearly not be the proper title holder but their Aboriginal rights are nonetheless potentially affected by a development project.

There are many examples in this province where First Nations have differing opinions over projects. For example in the case with the Mt. Milligan mining project, the McLeod Lake Indian Band entered into a revenue sharing agreement with the Province while the neighbouring

First Nation, Nak'azdli, was opposed to the mine. The federal government approved this project in the face of opposition from some First Nations who expressed misgivings about the consultation process and did not feel they were adequately consulted throughout the process. While it may be difficult to determine the proper title holder or who can speak for the proper title holder on Crown lands until these issues are resolved definitively in a post-colonial/post-*Indian Act* world, it is absolutely necessary for government and industry to ensure that all First Nations who may have rights and interests in the area are consulted and accommodated. Ultimately I am sure these issues will be dealt with as we move further away from our colonial period of government and limited access to our traditional territories and re-establish our institutions of governance and resolve issues of proper title holder and who speaks for the title holder. But it is going to take time and effort. It will take leadership. It will also take financial resources.

The BCAFN, the Summit and the Union, have called on both governments to support processes to resolve questions of proper title holder for the purposes of consultation and accommodation that move beyond the treaty process and are inclusive of all First Nations.

It should really be of no surprise to you all that our Nations will have a diversity of opinion on resource development activities. In many ways this reflects the diversity of opinion within mainstream society when it comes to development.

However, I do emphasise, based on what has been taught to me, that there is still an underlying or fundamental respect by all our Nations for our natural environment; this is reflected in the stories and teachings of our respective cultures and traditions; we are taught not to destroy that which provides. Keeping this in mind, resource development must not take place at the expense of destroying the environment that has sustained us for generations. As our partners you need to know this and respect this world view and know that the remaining natural resources that will come from our territories and will increasingly go to new markets will not be allowed to be exploited in a manner that will render our territories unable to sustain our peoples into the future.

On this note, recently the federal government accepted the findings of the environmental review panel and rejected Taseko Mines Prosperity copper-gold mine proposal. The Tsilhqot'in Nation strongly opposed the proposal as it would have completely destroyed Fish Lake, a traditional food source and sacred site for the Tsilhqot'in people. We all need to learn from this experience: First Nations in BC are, on principle, of course, not opposed to mining. Witness the recent important revenue sharing agreement in BC involving the Tk'emlups and Skeetchestn and the McLeod Lake First Nations. However development cannot come at an unacceptable cost to the environment or to our cultures and our way of life. That would be counterproductive. This was the case with 'Prosperity Mine'. Developments where the impacts outweigh the potential gains, I can assure you, will be opposed. Developments on First Nations' traditional territories need to be done in partnership with our Nations respecting our world view.

Turning now to another major proposed development in BC and Alberta, which has recently been getting considerable press, Enbridge's Northern Gateway Pipeline project – a 1,200 kilometre pipeline carrying unrefined bitumen from the tar sands in Alberta to Kitimat on the BC Coast. As you know, there is significant and formidable opposition to the project. While the company may have been working with First Nations and is proposing an equity program not unlike that in place for the recently approved Mackenzie pipeline project, this is unfortunately an example of a proposed development project that has been running full-steam ahead without solidifying partnerships with all the First Nations along the pipeline route or those that could be affected downstream and on the coast. This is one of those cases where some First Nations have now entered into partnerships and agree with the proposed pipeline and associated developments while others don't; and particularly those that are along the Fraser River and have now formed a coalition to oppose the pipeline. Obviously not all of these communities have Aboriginal title issues as they are not along the route of the pipeline or geographically close to it but do have serious concerns regarding their rights including the right to fish that could be affected by the pipeline in the event of a rupture in the line and pollution of the watershed. This is what one new article referred to as "Harper's Pipeline Nightmare".

Again, First Nations are not, on principle, adverse to energy and mining development. However, there are a number of key areas of concern in the mining sector impacting First Nations' communities in BC. To address our concerns, our political organizations in BC have established the BC First Nations Energy and Mining Council and, on the direction

from and working with the First Nations' Chiefs and their communities, we are working together seeking reforms on a number of different issues. For example, reforms to the environmental assessment processes, the No Net Loss Policy & Metal Mining and Effluent Regulations and to the mining 'free entry system' as well as working with BC to review the policy around revenue sharing and Impact Benefit Agreements, ensuring that all First Nations benefit from resource extraction. I call on the province to work with BC First Nations to address these and other important issues to ensure that energy and mineral resources are managed and developed in ways that protect and sustain the environment while enhancing the social, cultural, economic and political well-being of First Nations in BC.

In concluding my remarks I would like to leave you with some parting thoughts with regards to dealing with our Nations; particularly for companies looking to establish or re-establish partnerships with First Nations.

Firstly, while the crystallization of our title and rights now requires consultation with us and in many cases accommodation for our interests, please do not simply look at First Nations' governments as an obstacle to resource extraction or a 'box' to tick off on a checklist for what needs to be accomplished in order to get access to natural resources. I guarantee you that if you approach our issues in this way it is far less likely your project will ever succeed. As I have already said, it is next to impossible for a major development project to proceed without the proper aboriginal title holder - or holders - full participation.

Second - approach First Nations' governments from the perspective that it is likely you will be asked to enter into a partnership of some sort and that this partnership can bring value to the overall project and therefore investors.

Third - deal with First Nations early or first before any other body or group.

Fourth - be prepared to scale back your expectations and timelines if there are concerns by our people as represented by their governments about the size and scope of the development activity. Our Nations, again as I have said, will not accept development at any cost even if they are going to benefit from revenue sharing or will be involved in some capacity with the actual business.

Fifth - please do not consider only the provincial government as the authorizing body for resource development. As First Nations' governance re-emerges and as we establish land use plans and development guidelines within our traditional territories our Nations' governments will increasingly become involved in the approval processes for natural resource extraction in their respective territories. There will be, and already is in some cases - namely with the Haida Nation - true shared-decision making with BC. This is a good thing. It provides certainty for all.

Sixth - please do not confuse the role of our leaders in their capacity as representatives of our governments and stewards of the lands, and the role of our leaders -sometimes the same people and sometimes not -

that are involved in the business arms of our Nations - the development companies run by our First Nations or indeed run by our citizens as private enterprises. This is important as these confusions can be easily made where our governments are seen as both the approving body for resource development activities - the body with whom consultation is addressed- but also may be seen as the directors of the business arm of the First Nation leading to potential conflicts of interest.

Seventh – notwithstanding issues you might have with a First Nation or group at any point in time, please support our ongoing efforts for governance reform and Nation building. Stronger Nations properly constituted with clear powers and authority and the capacity to govern will help ensure more meaningful engagement, leading to increased potential for lasting partnerships as well as meeting the evolving legal requirements for consultation and accommodation - either by the Crown or by industry.

And finally the last piece of advice is that the last six considerations apply equally to First Nation run business as they do to non-First Nation run companies– whether the business activity takes place through community owned enterprises or privately owned enterprises.

Conclusion

First Nations' involvement as full partners in the BC economy is central to our plans for facilitating real change in our communities. For real change to occur in a meaningful and broad way, all our communities must go through their own process of local transformation, healing, rebuilding, call it what you may. Our colonial period must officially end.

The process of change won't be led by the federal government, the provincial government or any other external organization. At the core it is a political process of change that has started with us. Change will be supported by the people who are directly and most significantly affected. This means the citizens of our communities, the business leaders who have a mutual interest in seeing stable and appropriate government and other Canadians.

It will, of course, require continued federal government, and where appropriate provincial government, support as well. There will be a need for future legislation – both federal and provincial and First Nation. This is a mammoth task and not one to be undertaken lightly. There are 633 First Nations or Bands in Canada and 203 in BC.

So in closing we each in this room have a role to play and an interest in supporting First Nations during this transition period. In the BC Region, as we roll out our governance community engagement and self-assessment tool, we will be looking for your support and help. So someday when we meet as an Assembly of First Nations, it truly is an assembly of post-colonial First Nations.

And finally, in moving forward with governance reform we should never lose sight of the underlying objective. Participating in resource development and achieving business success is not the end in itself but is rather a means to an end. That end being healthier and more prosperous First Nations' communities with our people enjoying a higher standard of living with practicing and thriving cultures.

Today there is a general consensus that supporting First Nations' developing appropriate governance and having fair access to land and resources is simply the right thing to do. And why is it the right thing to do? Because BC's economy and First Nations, and our collective futures, are intertwined.

Gilakas'la