



PRESS RELEASE

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February 11, 2010

AFN Regional Chief Carries Olympic Torch to highlight the opportunities and challenges of Indigenous Nations in their journey to a prosperous and healthy future

Coast Salish Territory – Today at approximately 11:19 am near Deer Lake in Burnaby, Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould of the BC Assembly of First Nations carried the Olympic torch in support of the 203 Indigenous Nations within BC and the journey they are all undertaking in moving to a more prosperous and healthy future. “The flame symbolizes the hope and optimism of our people and the promise of a better future” said Regional Chief Jody Wilson-Raybould. “It was a great honour to carry the Olympic torch” she added.

“As Indigenous peoples we are rebuilding our Nations and moving beyond the dark shadow colonialism and the archaic laws that attempted to strip Indigenous people of our rights, our land and our dignity. Today we are on an important journey to rebuild a more economically prosperous and healthy future for our children and grandchildren with practicing and thriving cultures” said Wilson-Raybould. “This hope was evidenced by the thousands of Aboriginal people who embraced the Olympic spirit and participated in the 2010 Torch Relay.” The Flame has visited 119 indigenous communities with over 300 aboriginal participants as torch bearers, flame attendants and elder fire keepers. Thousands more participated in local community events.

Despite progress there remain many challenges facing Indigenous peoples. First Nations in B.C. are diverse. “While many of our Indigenous Nations have made great strides forward in terms of achieving self-government and economic prosperity, many others have not” Wilson-Raybould remarked. “We must build on our success so no Nation is left out or behind” she added. “It is especially for the citizens of these Nations that I carry the torch in support of their difficult journey.”

“I also carry the torch in support of our young people who love sports yet as adults far too few of us remain physically active,” she noted, “leading to record rates of diabetes and other related conditions amongst Indigenous people. For our children and grandchildren, I encourage every adult to be active so that we can help guide them to a healthier and happier future.”

“A legacy of these Games will be the lasting impact on our communities and the relationships we create” said Raybould-Wilson. “I encourage all visitors to the Games to learn about our peoples, our history, our culture, our challenges and our vision for the future.”

“Finally I carry the Torch in support of our ancestors who ensured that even in the darkest days of colonialism that our culture did not perish and our spirit was not vanquished. And to everyone I welcome you to the 2010 Winter Olympics!” she concluded.

The Regional Chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations is elected by the 203 Chiefs of BC. The Assembly of First Nations is the national political organization representing First Nations across Canada.

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