



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 4, 2009

First Nations leadership expresses gratitude and respect for Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine

507-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-922-7733
Fx: 604-922-7433



1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



500-342 Water Street
Vancouver, BC
V6B 1B6

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – First Nations leadership in BC expressed heartfelt gratitude and respect for Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Phil Fontaine who confirmed his retirement today.

Over the past nine years as National Chief, Phil Fontaine has earned the trust and appreciation of First Nations people across the country and all Canadians through his vision and tireless advocacy efforts. National Chief Phil Fontaine is a dedicated and highly respected leader and statesman in Canada and internationally. He has been instrumental in facilitating change and advancement for First Nations people from the time he was first elected to public office.

“Phil has been a role model and his work has gone far beyond the First Nations’ community to benefit all Canadians. His every word and action has been done so in the spirit of advancing the causes of our people. His tireless efforts have had international impact, drawing the attention of indigenous people the world over and inspiring them to pursue greater justice for their people,” says BC Regional Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, “He has done an exceptional job and we wish him the best in his future endeavors.”

“Phil Fontaine can be content to know, as he leaves the national chief office, he has gained the respect and gratitude of First Nations across Canada. We watched a Canadian prime minister stand up in the house of commons and apologize to all the victims of Canada’s residential schools thanks in large part to the relentless advocacy by our National Chief,” said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, “I thank him for the years he has dedicated to ensuring the voices of our people are heard and wish him well as he moves on to the next stage of his illustrious career.”

“Phil Fontaine has worked tirelessly as an advocate for all First Nations people from coast to coast during his three terms as National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. We thank National Chief Fontaine for his time and efforts to work towards closing the devastating social and economic gaps faced by First Nations in Canada as well as his powerful leadership in ensuring the successful resolution and settlement of claims arising out of the 150 year Indian residential school tragedy” said Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Summit political executive. “We also thank National Chief Fontaine’s family and the Sagkeeng First Nation in Manitoba for their generous support and their willingness to share the National Chief’s time with First Nations across Canada.”

The highlight of the National Chief's career is leading the successful resolution and settlement of claims arising out of the 150-year Indian residential school tragedy. The Final Settlement Agreement is the largest, most unique and most comprehensive settlement in Canadian history. Worth over C\$5.2 billion dollars in individual compensation, the settlement also includes a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an education fund, healing resources and commemoration funding.

-30-

The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

The Council works together to politically represent the interests of First Nations in British Columbia and develop strategies and actions to bring about significant and substantive changes to government policy that will benefit all First Nations in British Columbia.

For more information please contact:

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President, UBCIC: 250-490-5314

Ryneld Starr
BC Assembly of First Nations: 604-922-7733

Colin Braker
Communications Director Office: 604-926-9903
First Nations Summit: Cell: 604-328-4094