

Secwepemc'ecw Traditional People's Government

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August, 30, 2004

To all 17 Secwepemc Chiefs and Councils,

Weytkp xexweytp! We organized a peaceful demonstration and occupation of our traditional lands at Skwelkwekwelt. The purpose of this demonstration was to carry on our opposition to the expansion project at the Sun Peaks Ski Resort. The resort recently announced a 285 Million dollar expansion. As you know, this expansion has already destroyed much of our traditional use area and is threatening many more areas. On November 04, 1998, the people strongly opposed to any further development. As well, in 1998, the Elders issued their statement to Mr. Ohkubo, foreign owner of the resort. Since October of 2000, we have kept an active presence at Skwelkwekwelt. Over 7 of our structures, homes, and sweat lodges, have been demolished by the Province of 'bc' using their illegal acts – the land's act, highways act, etc.

On Sunday, August 29, we began a physical occupation by cutting trees, without a provincial permit, and began construction of our building. This occupation at Skwelkwekwelt will serve to assert and exercise our Secwepemc Title over these lands and to protect these lands from destruction.

Both of these events were well attended by our traditional Elders and people as well as many different support groups. We are very grateful for their support and appreciate it tremendously.

We welcomed them into our territory because they share the same concerns about the destruction of the land as we do. Once they are educated on our land issues, they supported us in gaining recognition of our Secwepemc Title rights. We will vigorously protect our right to live on our lands; our right to gather foods and medicines from our lands, and our right to look after our land.

We invited Chief Stewart Phillip to our event, because of his continued support of the assertion of our Title and Rights. Stewart has been a strong supporter since we began our actions. We really appreciate Stewart's support, especially since he is one of the few DIA elected Chiefs who support our strong position. We thank former Chief Art Manuel of Neskonlith and Chief Mike Retasket of Bonaparte and Chief Robert Shintah for their support as well.

On Saturday, August 28, a story appeared in the Kamloops Daily News and on radio media which condemned Chief Stewart Phillip for his anticipated attendance at our event. The four or five Chiefs from the Southern Secwepemc took it upon themselves to take this issue to the media before talking to Stewart directly. We also understand that 1 Chief was not aware of the press release until after it went to the media. Another Chief said his council did not approve the media release, and 1 Chief denied saying what he was quoted in the newspaper. We also understand that this press release was not a result of a SNTC resolution.

We are shocked by the dishonourable behaviour of these individuals. Stewart was invited by the traditional Elders and people to attend our event. The Chiefs cannot exercise total control over the people. Secwepemc Title and Rights belong to the people and not by the Department of Indian Affairs band administrations.

We, as the Traditional Elders and land users, are carrying out our responsibilities set out by the Creator through the teachings of Coyote through the Okanagan/Shuswap Declaration and the teachings of our Elders. We take this responsibility very seriously and will always take a hard line stand until we deem we have reached a peaceful resolution to the destruction of our lands and the non-recognition of our Secwepemc Title and Rights.

We understand the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council and Northern Secwepemc Te Qelmuw have implemented positions on our Secwepemc Title and Rights without the direction or guidance of the people. Both positions lead to extinguishment of our Title and Rights and ultimately to the extinction of our people as true Secwepemc. When we no longer have access to our traditional territories and when they have been destroyed, we can no longer practice our way of life which makes us Secwepemc. We will become extinct as a Nation.

Therefore, we have no alternative but to strongly assert our Secwepemc Title and Rights by occupying our lands without the permission of the bc, federal, or any other settler governments. We totally oppose their 100% assumed control and ownership of our lands.

On Sunday, August 29, 2004, we were issued a Trespass Notice by BC Land and Water under their illegal Land Act. We were instructed to remove our structure by 8:00 p.m. that evening which we refused to do. We anticipate consequences from the issue of the Trespass notice. We do not recognize the Trespass Notice and remain at our structure. We will not be "Trespassers" on our own land. No Secwepemc can ever accept us as "Trespassers" on our land.

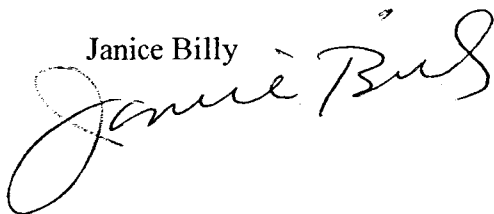
Our position is that the bc air, land, and water and any other provincial third party must produce a legal property deed for any land they encroach upon within our traditional Secwepemc territory.

This Trespass Notice and any other illegal government actions will be filed under the name of the Traditional Secwepemc and not under any jurisdiction of the government of Canada through the Department of Indian Affairs.

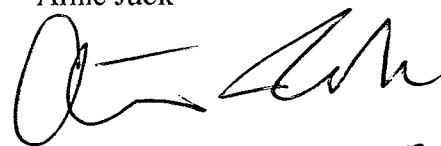
As fellow Secwepemc, we look forward to your support on these urgent issues which affect us and all of our future generations. True Secwepemc Unity will be achieved when we all think with one mind and that is of truly upholding our sacred responsibilities.

Kukstec – kuc

Janice Billy



Arnie Jack



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