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NEWS RELEASE

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LEADERSHIP COUNCIL WELCOMES DECLARATION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE EMERGENCY ISSUED BY AFN

(Wəlastəkwiyyik (Maliseet) Territory, Fredericton, NB – July 24, 2019) – The First Nations Leadership Council (FNL) welcomes the declaration of a Global Climate Emergency, approved yesterday by unanimous resolution [Resolution #06/2019] from the Chiefs-in-Assembly at the 40th AGA of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). The Declaration builds on the leadership already being shown by First Nations across Canada who are on the front lines of the climate emergency, including those in BC.

The Global Climate Emergency Declaration recognizes that the climate crisis is a state of emergency for First Nations' lands, waters, animals and peoples; commits our efforts to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius; calls on all governments and international communities to safeguard the inherent and constitutionally Treaty and protected Rights of First Nations and to respect Indigenous knowledge and other constructive arrangements between First Nations and the Crown.

The Declaration also calls on the AFN to develop a First Nations-led climate strategy and to host a National Gathering to advance our collective response.

"This Declaration is another important step in the work of First Nations to take responsibility for shaping a future where our children and grandchildren continue to have healthy relationships with our lands, territories and natural resources. We have heard loud and clear that anything less than immediate and serious action will lead to conditions that may threaten our very existence" stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

"Yesterday's Climate Emergency Declaration is significant in promoting food security for BC First Nations" said Robert Phillips of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. "BC First Nations have witnessed the impacts of climate change firsthand, with warming coastal and inland waters and dramatically shifting weather patterns causing valuable glaciers to melt at an alarming rate, increased risk of wildfires in the summer and flooding in the fall and winter. This has had a detrimental impact to BC First Nations traditional foods' security. Wild salmon, moose and other sources of food are in a serious decline, in part due to climate change. We must work together today to mitigate the devastating impacts of climate change to preserve our traditional food sources for future generations."

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, stated “Addressing the climate emergency must be an absolute priority for leadership. Any plan to address the climate crisis must prioritize Indigenous rights, stop the further expansion of greenhouse gas emitting projects and infrastructure and support the development of renewable energy and alternative energy economies. It is not enough to focus on adaptation and mitigation – emission reduction must be prioritized and actioned immediately by every level of government.”

The FNLC has already begun this important work. The AFN’s Declaration is consistent with the FNLC’s efforts to develop a BC First Nations Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and to host all-Chiefs’ meetings at the BC regional level in the coming months. This alignment between the national- and provincial-levels is encouraging and essential to tackling this crisis. The FNLC calls on the Province of BC and the Government of Canada to commit to supporting these initiatives.

For further comment please contact:

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