

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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NEWS RELEASE

February 21, 2010

Union of BC Indian Chiefs Supports Okanagan Indian Band in Browns Creek Faceoff

(Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver, February 21, 2010) Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs stated today "The UBCIC is deeply concerned about the escalating tensions between the Okanagan Indian Band and Tolko Industries. In particular, Tolko's insistence that come tomorrow morning, they will attempt to move equipment and crews into the Browns Creek watershed."

On Saturday, February 20, 2010, the Okanagan Indian Band held an emergency General Band Meeting. After being briefed on the latest developments, Elders and band members unanimously passed a motion to establish check-points on Westside Road for the purposes of monitoring and regulating traffic flows through their community. All Tolko employees, contract logging crews and equipment have been banned from passage over and through Westside Road. Finally, the Elders and members of the Okanagan Indian Band authorized the immediate establishment of a blockade in the Brown's Creek Watershed.

Grand Chief Phillip stated "The UBCIC fully supports the Okanagan Indian Band's decision to protect their community's water supply, their archaeological heritage and history and to pursue all available steps to ensure that their Title and Rights are recognized, respected and protected. The UBCIC calls on all First Nations throughout BC to rally support for the courageous stand taken by Chief Fabian Alexis, Elders and members of the Okanagan Indian Band."

The watershed is part of ongoing litigation whereas on January 29, 2010 the BC Supreme Court issued a decision regarding archaeology proposals submitted by Okanagan Nation Alliance, Okanagan Indian Band and Tolko Industries. Madam Justice Brown accepted Tolko's archaeology proposal. Madam Justice Brown's pronouncement follows her previous decision of January 11, 2010 that Tolko could log eight (8) cutblocks in the Browns Creek Watershed, provided that archaeological sites were protected.

"The Courts failed to deal with the proprietary nature of Aboriginal Title to the lands and resources within the territory," said Grand Chief Phillip. "With this decision, third party interests are protected at the expense of the community's drinking water, archaeological history and their constitutionally protected rights. Consequently, the UBCIC will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Okanagan Indian Band to ensure their community's water, history and rights are defended."

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