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November 10, 2016

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**Statement from BCAFN Regional Chief Shane Gottfriedson**

*International Inter-Tribal Trade Symposium, November 11-12, 2016, Kamloops, BC*

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As Regional Chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations I represent the 203 First Nations in BC. Many BC Chiefs, and Chiefs from across the Canada are rightly concerned about the impacts of international trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Both they and I are concerned about the potential negative impacts on our Inherent Rights, Title, and Treaty Rights, especially when nearly half of BC First Nations are engaged in treaty-making, and when, as we've seen in other free-trade agreements like NAFTA, there is a real risk of our self-determination and sovereignty being usurped by an agreement we were not consulted on throughout the negotiation process.

That being said, as the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) national economic development portfolio holder, I am always looking for innovative ways to help break the chains of poverty for First Nations people and begin the process of wealth generation and wealth management in and around our territories. In this regard, opening up First Nations enterprises to the global community piques my interest, and I know many Chiefs that would be interested in expanding their operations on an international scale.

I recognize the need to be proactive in developing relationships with our inter-tribal and international partners. To this end, I continue to support the work the First Nations Energy and Mining Council continue to undertake with regards to the BC First Nations—China Strategy and action plan developed in 2011. While strategies like these are important, we must do more to enhance the inter-tribal linkages inherent to our people and to our extensive shared history of mutually beneficial trade relationships.

I would like to acknowledge and support AFN National Chief Bellegarde's recommendation that Canada should establish a First Nations Trade Commission Service and a Trade Investment Fund for First Nations. These proposed entities embody important initiatives that Canada should take seriously, especially in light of Trudeau's mandate letters which explicitly state that 'no relationship is more important to Canada than that with Indigenous peoples.'

As "international legal obligations" clauses are likely to bind self-governing First Nations to the international obligations of Canada—First Nations leaders deserve to be included in the implementation process, as such inclusion is warranted by the UNDRIP.

First Nations are open for business—we've been trading for millennia, and we understand the value of trade in creating robust economic opportunities for our people. However, our 'openness'

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is predicated on the recognition by our potential trading partners on our inherent rights. Trade must not only be 'free,' it must be fair, and it must be mutually beneficial.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement, please accept my apologies for not being able to attend in person. I look forward to better understanding and continuing to advocate for First Nations involvement in Canada's plans for expanding international trade agreements, and for developing robust inter-tribal trade relations.

Let us not forget what we're fighting for: We want our people to have a better quality of life. We must join together in the spirit of economic reconciliation and put a new memory in the minds of our children.

All my relations,



Regional Chief Shane Gottfriedson

