

Premier Gordon Campbell
Squamish and Lil'Wat First Nations Cultural Centre Announcement
June 21, 2003

Check Against Delivery

Thank you first of all to the Squamish and Lil'Wat First Nations for inviting us to your traditional territory for this event today. The Squamish and Lil'Wat Cultural Centre is a not just a means for generating economic activity and opportunities for the people of the Squamish and Lil'Wat First Nations.

It's a way for us all to learn of their culture and their heritage. It will include a conference centre, a crafts market, a high-tech theatre, a restaurant, a gallery and guided tours.

There will be 50 construction jobs created by the development of the cultural centre. When it opens, it will provide 15 year-round jobs, and during the summer months there will be 31 full and part-time staff to share the heritage and culture of the Squamish and the Lil'Wat First Nations with literally thousands of people from all part of the world.

It will showcase the strength and the diversity of the Squamish and Lil'Wat cultures. It will remind people of our past, and it will also build a foundation for a stronger and more vital future.

This is being achieved through partnership – because the leadership of the Squamish and Lil'Wat First Nations reached out in partnership with both the federal and provincial governments as we strive to create a better future for all the people that we serve.

The provincial contribution of \$3 million towards the cultural centre is from our Economic Measures Fund. To date there have been 113 projects supported by the Economic Measures Fun to open up new opportunities in tourism, oil and gas exploration, shellfish aquaculture, forestry and the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Bid.

Other initiatives to truly improve the lives of our First Nations communities include direct dialogues between our First Nations and our provincial and federal governments. We have had three so far as a government in British Columbia, and we intend to continue to build on them.

Last week our Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services announced the FirstVoices.com Internet-based computer program designed to preserve aboriginal languages, furthering our understanding of the strength and the richness of our First Nations communities across our province.

More than 50 agreements with First Nations on resource development have been concluded, 10 specifically aimed at building forestry opportunities in First Nations communities.

An MOU with aboriginal leaders has made sure that we are putting the strengths of our aboriginal communities to work in protecting aboriginal children throughout British Columbia.

Of course, through the leadership of the Squamish and First Nations people, the development of the 2010 Olympic Bid will be something that I believe First Nations communities across our province and our country will have special pride in.

The First Nations are represented not just on the board of directors of the 2010 Bid, but also on working groups and in fact have their own secretariat in the 2010 Bid. Today, we are just 10 days away from knowing whether we will be successful with that bid.

Because of the leadership that we have had from our First Nations Chiefs, as well as the hundreds of volunteers that we have had in this bid, we will be building a stronger partnership as we move forward for our young First Nations people and for our province.

Last November we signed a special agreement with the Squamish and Lil'Wat Bands to provide for Olympic Legacies. It includes: 300 acres of fee simple lands to improve economic development in their shared territories; \$2.3 million for skills and training legacies; and \$500,000 for a naming and recognition project.

If our bid is successful on July 2nd the First Nations will have not only strong membership as a stakeholder group but they will help own, manage and operate our nordic centre, the sliding centre and the athletes centre.

There will be a \$110-million endowment fund to operate the nordic and sliding Centres and new speed skating oval; \$6.5 million for First Nations housing; and \$3 million for an aboriginal youth sports legacy and endowment fund. One of our shared goals will be to see young First Nations athletes standing at the top of the Olympic podium receiving their gold medal in the sport or activity of their choosing.

On July 2, I will be in Prague with Chief Jacob of the Squamish First Nation, Chief Ernie Campbell of the Musqueam, and Maureen Thomas of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. All of us will be there to carry the message that our Olympics and Paralympics in 2010 will be a celebration of our diversity and of our First Nations strength. It will be a Squamish and Lil'Wat bid that will succeed, a British Columbia bid, a Vancouver bid and of course a Canadian bid.

The Squamish Lil'Wat First Nations Cultural Centre, which we are about to unveil, is a growing and building symbol of the cooperation and partnership that we intend to build in the years ahead.

Again, I want to thank the leadership of the Squamish and Lil'Wat Nations. I want to thank the federal government for their participation, cooperation and leadership as we move forward.

I want to thank all of you for being here today because this is a turning point for all of us. This is an opportunity for us to work together and build a brighter future for all of the people we serve.