

Speaking Notes: Chief Robert Louie

Penticton Signing Ceremony: June 30, 2015

Wai Pees Noxelle (Hello to all my relatives)

Wai Hust Skull Hult (Hello & Good Day)

In Cha ees quist Simo (My name is RL)

Kin-ilmexum, WFN (I am the Chief, WFN)

I would like to begin by saying “lim limpt” (thank you) to our Syilx (Okanagan) ancestors, who occupied, protected, and nurtured these lands, so that we could come together to celebrate this important event.

Chief Kruger, lim limpt for the invitation to come to Penticton for this momentous occasion. Chief Kruger, Mr. Albus, Chief Planes, Councillors, honoured guests, ladies and gentleman, It is a great honor for me to join you here, on Syilx (Okanagan) traditional territory, and to be a part of today’s ceremony. I am indeed happy because I know what today’s event signifies, for the over one thousand Penticton Indian Band members! Your community has joined the other 117 First Nation signatory communities to the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management, and you now have the opportunity to resume jurisdiction and decision-

making authority over your reserve lands, resources, and, most importantly, your future.

Today is especially important to me as I too am Syilx (Okanagan). Before the imposition of the federal Indian Act, the people of the Syilx (Okanagan) were a self-sufficient, self-governing, cohesive people. Our communities thrived as efficient hunters, fishermen, gatherers and tradesmen. Our economy was productive, organized, and prosperous because of the resource management practices we had developed in our culture.

When the Indian Act was thrust upon our communities, our traditional governments were destroyed and the systematic, gradual disintegration of the Syilx (Okanagan) people followed. The reserve system and expropriation of our lands splintered our people into remnants of our previous existence. Our inherent rights were denied to us, and the course of our futures decided by federal bureaucrats and bean-counters.

However the Syilx (Okanagan), and First Nations people across Canada, are survivors, and despite the many injustices suffered under the Indian Act, we have prevailed. The fighting spirit that has carried us through these challenging times is the same spirit

that created the Framework Agreement on First Nation Land Management. It is in fact the exact reason why it was developed.

The purpose of the Framework Agreement is to enable First Nations to resume control over our lands and resources for the use and benefit of our members. By replacing the land provisions of the Indian Act with First Nation made laws, these First Nations can conduct the day to day operation of their lands, without Government interference. First Nations become the decision makers over their lands!

Today, the Framework Agreement is most likely one of the most successful First Nation led initiatives in Canada's history!

Signatory First Nations to the Framework Agreement unanimously agree that the implementation of land governance jurisdiction is hugely successful! In fact, a recent 2013 KPMG study found that of all the operational FNs taking part in the study --- NOT a single First Nation wanted to abandon its self-government efforts and return to the Indian Act.

First Nations are finding that, under the Framework Agreement, land management activities are:

- Faster
- Strengthening FN values & vision
- Protecting FN legal interests
- Providing more flexibility, better lease terms for the FN, & better accountability of third-parties to the FN
- Providing better relationships with financial institutions & the ability to borrow for capital investments
- Facilitating more consistency with the FN Land Use Plan
- Increasing the level of interest & participation of Members, as well as awareness of Community issues
- Increasing both internal & external investment
- Increasing jobs on reserve, and decreasing dependence on social assistance.

The waiting list of communities interested in becoming signatories to the Framework Agreement is forever expanding...in fact a staggering one out of every four First Nations in Canada want to implement self-determination under the *Framework Agreement!*

To date, and guided by the Framework Agreement, the Lands Advisory Board and First Nations Land Management Resource Centre have helped 56 communities across Canada, regain land governance over their reserve lands and resources. We are

currently aiding 62 others that are in various stages of working towards ratifying their own land codes. This now includes your community!

The vast years of knowledge accumulated and shared among the signatories has made us the most experienced First Nations collectively in land governance.

Chief Kruger, in touring your community, a few things are brilliantly evident. Penticton Indian Band is proud, it is progressive and now, as a Framework Agreement signatory member, it is even further empowered...

My congratulations to you and your people on the great honour of receiving the 2015 Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) and Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Award. Your community's many development projects are remarkable, and they speak volumes to the proactive and dedicated nature of your people. It is impressive to see what the Penticton Indian Band has already achieved. To date, you have had to wade through the red tape and constraints of the Indian Act. It is truly exciting to think of what can be accomplished

once your inherent right to govern your lands has been returned to you!

Chief Kruger, we look forward to the opportunity to work closely with you and your community to help you reach your goal of ratifying your own Land Code, and to seeing you regain control of the governance of your lands and resources.

At this time I would like to introduce Chief Gordon Planes of T'Sou-ke one of our LAB BC Board members and our LAB Resource Centre BC Interior Technician, Angie Derrickson, who will be working closely with your Lands Staff. They are available to answer any of your questions after the ceremony.

Lim Limpt to all who have made the Framework Agreement a reality, Lim Limpt to you Mr. Albus and to your colleagues, Lim Limpt and "Way Hust" to all here today.

Way, Lim Limpt.