

UNBC Crown Land Transfer
Premier Gordon Campbell
July 20, 2006
Check against delivery

Let me start by thanking all of you for coming out today and being with us for this announcement. It is a real pleasure to be here on the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh, and I want to say how much I appreciate the work that Chief Dominic Frederick has been doing with us in full partnership with the Province of British Columbia. It's been, I think, exemplary.

And it's great to be here with the new president of the University of Northern B.C. Don Cozzetto came here on July 1. Don, I'm going to make an announcement today that most presidents in British Columbia wish that they would have accomplished. You've done it in just three weeks. That kind of performance is incredible. And let me tell you this: Prince George expects nothing less than that kind of performance as well.

It's great to be here with the new president, and it's great to be here with Mayor Kinsley, as well, who's been really a strong voice for UNBC and for Prince George. And of course, it's an honour to be here with my colleagues.

I've been fortunate as Premier to work with a caucus that's been just exceptional throughout the North. And certainly, the Prince George caucus has been truly a joy to work with. They never forget that, first, they're MLAs: for Prince George-Omineca, John Rustad; for Prince George North, Pat Bell; and for Prince George-Mount Robson, Shirley Bond. Remembering that they are MLAs is very important in terms of building a strong government and a strong approach to the future. It has been their vision and their commitment that has allowed us to carry forward some pretty exceptional projects in the North.

I love coming to UNBC. A long time ago I can remember visiting as the campus was being built, and it's kind of exciting to come up and see the new sports centre being built, to know there is a new medical school as part of the North's future and UNBC's future. This is a community that has a vision of what you want to be and where you want to go. It's pretty powerful when you have a community that has the kind of leadership that we've seen in Prince George, from the Lheidli T'enneh, from your mayor, from the president of UNBC. Then to match that leadership with three MLAs who are never going to forget where they come from.

There's a kind of energy and spirit and commitment that really has, turned this city into what has been recognized across the county as Canada's No. 2 boomtown, and that's something you should all be proud of.

And I don't think anyone that's here would fail to see how important UNBC has been in terms of defining what the future of Prince George and the future of

northern British Columbia can be. What an amazing record of growth you've had at UNBC. In 1994, the first graduating class had six people, and in 2006, it's 738. In 1994 there were 1,400 students; this fall, 3,561.

UNBC is now the home of a northern medical program and part of an expanded faculty of medicine for the University of British Columbia. It is the home away from home for 13 percent of your student population who are from First Nations. Building this population is a critically important part of closing the gap in opportunity, education and health care as we move into a New Relationship with First Nations across the province. You boast degrees and certificates and diplomas in First Nations studies. You've got a new teaching and learning centre that's nearing completion.

This is a university with a strong and a vital future. As we look at that future, it's important to give you the resources that are required to be sure that you can continue to build on the momentum that UNBC has created. So, I'm very pleased to be here with you today to announce that the province will be transferring 248 hectares of Crown land to UNBC to act as an important reserve for future learning, for future research and for the future of UNBC.

This area is 248 hectares. It is UNBC reserve lands. It helps secure your future, secure opportunities, and secure an important asset for the University of Northern British Columbia, but also it is important for all of British Columbia, for the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and for the City of Prince George. I'm very proud to be here and be able to tell you that and make this announcement today.

The grant nearly doubles the size of the UNBC campus. The university will now be able to use the additional land for research and teaching purposes. It'll also maintain and protect the important Greenway Trail System, which will be used in concert with the new Nordic sports centre.

If I can just make a little aside here, Robin Draper is here. Ladies and gentlemen, Robin Draper was the driving force behind the Greenway Trail System that you have here — there were hundreds of volunteers working on that project, but this was the man that led it. Robin, thank you very much. It is Robin's birthday today. Robin, I didn't have time to bake the cake, but I sure hope you like the lands.

It is important to note that this land transfer is part of a partnership between the Province of British Columbia, the City of Prince George, UNBC and the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. It would not have been possible without that partnership working together, and it's a partnership that embodies the new relationship that we have been striving for in British Columbia. It advances education and finds common ground, a critical part of the New Relationship. This collaboration should be held as a great example of what we can achieve when we work together, when we have shared goals and when we stay focused on the objectives that lie ahead of us.

We often have to think outside of the normal pathways — as they say, outside the box — for solutions to continue improving education in British Columbia. Last Monday, Murray Coell and I announced a new project for advanced education. You should know that the seeds of that announcement came from the kind of approach that was taken by UNBC to meet the educational needs of people across the North.

Campus 2020: Thinking Ahead is about collaboration. It's about students. It's about recognizing the changing needs of students, the fact that students want to learn outside the classroom as much as inside the classroom or the lecture hall, the fact that research is something that touches all of our lives in each community in British Columbia, the fact that new technologies allow us to connect people and their individual learning demands to the curriculum that we offer throughout the province. UNBC has been such a strong and driving force behind education in the North, and I know that everyone who works at the College of New Caledonia would say the same thing. Working together and finding common initiatives is a way that we can improve advanced education for all of the people of British Columbia.

But I want to say and take my hat off to Chief Frederick for the work that he and the leaders of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation have performed here. It is always difficult to be a leader, to stand outside and say: what can we do that will benefit the people that we serve?

And, Chief Frederick, I can say to you that like Colin Kinsley, you've been a great leader for the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and in Prince George. I want to thank you for the contribution that you and your First Nation have made to this announcement today. It's been great.

In closing, let me say that this is a great day for the University of Northern British Columbia. But I also want everyone here today to understand this: it's a great day for British Columbia. UNBC is a critical part of our advanced education infrastructure. It's a critical part of what we do as we educate First Nations students. It's a critical part of what we do as we expand opportunities for people across the North. It's a very important education node for the future of our province.

Because of your leadership, because of your vision, because of your commitment, because of hundreds of volunteers, because of community effort, community drive, we're able to say today we've built a strong, strong foundation for an even stronger future for the University of Northern British Columbia.

And I want to thank you for coming and being part of this today.