



THE Northwest delegation was invited to the State Guest House in Beijing by Mr. Chen Haosu, President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. With the minister were the most senior level representatives of some of the top state owned enterprises in the country. Above is chair of Ridley Island Terminal Dan Veniez, John Helin, chief councillor of the Lax Kw'alaams Band, Minister Haosu, and Jerry Lawson, councillor of the Lax Kw'alaams Band.

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## First Nations look to China for business opportunities

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A FEDERAL CROWN corporation based in the northwest and northwestern native groups are taking a lead role in pursuing Chinese business opportunities.

Officials from Ridley Island Terminals and from Tsimshian and Gitxsan organizations were in China last week promoting the area.

"We talked about the benefits of the region and our strong desire to build long term economic partnerships with the Chinese to develop our regional economy," said Elmer Derrick, a Gitxsan land claims negotiator and Ridley Island Terminal board member who lives in Terrace.

"And we stressed the value of dealing directly with aboriginal representatives to facilitate transactions within our communities and the region as a whole.

"My message is that our community, and the northwest as a whole, is an attractive place to invest and we're open for business. That's a major theme of all aboriginal leaders on this mission. There's a general impression that we're somehow not eager to do deals. We're here to dispel that notion," Derrick added.

The delegation included officials from the Lax Kw'alaams band on the north coast, which owns Coast Tsimshian Resources, the company that now has Tree Farm Licence No. 1 which used to belong to Skeena Cellulose.

"Our core business is forestry and fisheries. We have been meeting with potential clients and promoted the cost, quality, branding and marketing advantages of doing business in the northwest. We have access to the resources China needs and we want them to know that our communities are open for business," said Chief Councillor John Helin of the Lax Kw'alaams Band.

Also on the trip was Dan Veniez, the chair of Ridley Island, who said the northwest is part of an important transportation corridor for the import and export of goods.

“Canada must remain aggressive and vigilant in nurturing relationships around the world. China must be at the very top of that list,” he said.

There may be a global financial crisis but the port facilities at Prince Rupert are as crucial as ever, Veniez added.

“We’re telling the unique and exciting story of the competitive cost and service advantages of the northwest corridor, the Port of Prince Rupert and Ridley Terminals. People are listening with great interest,” Veniez said.

He said the northwest is resource-rich and that there are plenty of opportunities for Chinese investments with First Nations participation.

The trade mission was organized by the Native Investment Trade Association, under the chairmanship of Calvin Helin.

The mission to China last week included delegations from British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, Labrador and Nova Scotia.