



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
June 19, 2003

STATEMENTS BY THE FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT ON THE ABORIGINAL FISHING STRATEGY

The First Nations Summit is deeply concerned with the possible impacts stemming from the June 17, 2003 Provincial Court decision in the fisheries case *R v Anderson et al.*

The fishery resource sector has historically been the basis for some of the most contentious disputes between First Nation communities and the commercial fishing industry. In this historic dispute First Nations people have been effectively marginalized in access to the resources. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) played a significant role in this in cases such as *Sparrow, Marshall & Delgamuukw*. With these decisions the Supreme Court of Canada started a process to create a more level playing field and in response the Department of Fisheries and Oceans developed the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy (AFS) and related pilot sales program.

While not perfect, the AFS provides some access to the fishery resource for First Nations people. As with commercial and sport fishing, the *Fishery Act* provides direction for the Minister to allow other fisheries such as those contemplated in the pilot sales program. The pilot sales program is not extensive, and is limited to a small number of First Nations communities providing a much needed resource opportunity.

It would be wrong now for DFO to abandon the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy. Instead the federal government should move ahead diligently with negotiating the fisheries component at each of the negotiation tables in the BC treaty process. We believe this will create a greater degree of certainty for all those who rely on fisheries resources for food or livelihood purposes.

Given this, the First Nations Summit believes DFO should immediately appeal the June 17, 2003 sentencing decision of Judge Saunderson in the *R. v Anderson et al.* fishing case.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in the treaty negotiation process in British Columbia. Background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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