



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

An Open Letter to The Honourable Garde Gardom, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia

**First Nations Summit disappointed over insulting remarks made
during the new Provincial Cabinet's swearing in ceremonies**

For Immediate Release:

March 1, 2000

North Vancouver — The First Nations Summit today released the attached letter to the Honourable Garde Gardom, Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

The Summit has asked Lieutenant-Governor Gardom to immediately apologize for his remarks, which did little more than illustrate to the First Nations of BC that the Crown, through its representative, continues to deny the very existence of aboriginal rights and aboriginal title in the Province of British Columbia.

In light of the efforts underway in the Province of British Columbia to reconcile the BC Land Question through the BC treaty negotiations process, the Summit is shocked and disturbed that such patronizing and insulting attitude would be personified by the Lieutenant-Governor of BC.

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For further information:

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March 1, 2000

The Honourable Garde Gardom
Lieutenant-Governor of B.C.
Government House
1401 Rockland Avenue
Victoria, BC V8S 1V9

Dear Sir:

This letter is about your address to and subsequent conduct at the swearing in of the new provincial cabinet at Government House on February 29, 2000. Since your address was of a public nature, this is an open letter.

As representatives of the First Nations we were invited to the ceremony by the office of the Premier. Given the significance of the land question and the treaty negotiation process in this province, we accepted and attended.

The Crown, and now the office representing the Queen and the Crown, has had a long standing relationship, with our people - the indigenous people - who were and are, the First Nations of this land. As you well know, the history of the relationship between our people and the Crown has been marred with intolerance, the suppression of our peoples' rights, denial of rights to our land, the outlawing of our potlatches, and racism. Even today, notwithstanding the recognition and affirmation of aboriginal rights (including aboriginal title) and treaty rights in the constitution, the Crown continues to deny the very existence of aboriginal rights and aboriginal title. So the significance of the office of the Lieutenant-Governor, representing as it does the Crown, is not lost on us. Hence, we send you this letter.

Your reference to Captain Vancouver, albeit a recognition and glorification, of the arrival of early English explorers to this coast is a complete and continuing denial by the Crown of our peoples' place on this land. We take very strong exception to the office of the Lieutenant-Governor using its privileges, to act in this capacity.

After your address, when we attempted to raise our concerns and objections with you, you stated that, to you, your references were not insulting, turned your back and walked away from us. With all due respect, this conduct is certainly not becoming of the office of Lieutenant-Governor. We did not attend the swearing in ceremonies in Victoria to be patronized nor insulted.

We believe that you should immediately apologize to the First Nations people of this province for both your statements and the conduct you exhibited at the swearing in ceremonies on February 29, 2000.

Sincerely,
FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

Original signed by:

Chief Joe Mathias

Original signed by:

Grand Chief Edward John

Cc: Prime Minister Jean Chretien
Premier Ujjal Dosanjh