

First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

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Cheryl Casimer, Robert Phillips and Lydia Hwitsum First Nations Summit Political Executive

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver –Cheryl Casimer, Robert Phillips and Lydia Hwitsum have been elected to the First Nations Summit (FNS) Political Executive by leaders representing First Nations currently engaged in the treaty negotiations process in BC who are gathered in Vancouver for the June 2019 First Nations Summit Chiefs Assembly.

Cheryl Casimer will be serving her third term as a member of the FNS political executive. She is a citizen of the Ktunaxa Nation and currently resides in the community of ?aqam (St. Mary's Band) which is located in the southeastern corner of BC. Ms. Casimer is a former Chief and Councillor of ?aqam First Nation and a former Co-Chair of the First Nations Summit. Ms. Casimer is a longstanding advocate for First Nations issues and perspectives and is committed to building better bridges of understanding between neighboring cultures.

Robert Phillips will be serving his third term as a member of the FNS political executive. Phillips is a member of the Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw (Shuswap) of the Canim Lake First Nation. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University College of the Fraser Valley. Phillips previously served three terms as a Commissioner of the BC Treaty Commission. He also previously served as Chief Negotiator and prior to that as Self-Government Director at the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council from 1998-2007.

Lydia Hwitsum is the principal for Hwitsum Consulting and former board chair of the First Nations Health Authority. She has more than 20 years of experience in leadership positions in Indigenous governance in British Columbia and throughout Canada. A citizen of the Cowichan Nation, Hwitsum served as the elected chief of the Cowichan Tribes for eight years, and as an elected member of the BC First Nations Summit Political Executive from 2002 to 2004. She has been a member of the board of directors of the BC Assembly of First Nations and was the BC representative for the Assembly of First Nations National Women's Council.

Chief Leah George-Wilson of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Ray Harris of the Chemainus First Nation were also acclaimed as Co-Chairs of the First Nations Summit. This will be Ms. George-Wilson's seventh term and Mr. Harris' fifth term as Co-chair. The Co-Chairs are responsible for chairing First Nations Summit meetings as well as the Summit's administration and day-to-day operations.

The First Nations Summit Chiefs gave words of praise for outgoing political executive member Grand Chief Edward John, who did not stand for re-election following 30 years on the FNS and First Nations Congress executives. Grand Chief John, a hereditary Grand Chief of the Tl'azt'en Nation, has represented and advocated for First Nations/Indigenous interests on the provincial, national and international stage for more than 40 years. The First Nations Summit will be honouring Grand Chief John at the October First Nations Summit meeting.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. The Summit is also a NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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