



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT



The BC
Aboriginal Fisheries
Commission

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
July 30, 2003

FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT AND BCAFC CONCERNED WITH NEWLY CREATED TREATY RELATED FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL FISHERIES TASK GROUP

(Vancouver) – The First Nations Summit and the BC Aboriginal Fisheries Commission (BCAFC) are voicing concern over a newly announced federal and provincial government two-man treaty related fisheries task group.

“We believe the establishment of a bilateral federal-provincial task group is fundamentally inconsistent with the tripartite nature of the BC treaty negotiation process and the objective of establishing a new relationship among the parties”, said Grand Chief Edward John, a member of the First Nations Summit political executive.

“Fisheries have historically been a problematic negotiation issue in the BC treaty process due to the marginalization of First Nations interests and concerns. We do not see how the spirit of cooperation between the government and First Nations can be achieved in the absence of our involvement in all stages of development of the post-treaty fisheries management process. We can only hope this task group will be constructive and make recommendations to alleviate this historical problem leading to more efficient fisheries negotiations”, added Chief John.

“First Nations believe the task group’s Terms of Reference should be expanded to specifically direct them to examine the entire Pacific fishery and develop a forward-looking approach in the context of both treaty negotiations and the implementation of court decisions. We also encourage the task group to learn from national and international experiences including; the East Coast (Marshall decision), Washington/Oregon (Boldt decision), and New Zealand (Maori situation)”, concluded Chief John.

“We feel this is a very timely process as there are many fisheries related barriers being faced by several First Nations negotiating treaties. We hope the task group

will be able to address historical problems such as First Nations fair and equitable access and allocation to the resource based on our Aboriginal Rights", stated Arnie Narcisse, Chair of the BC Aboriginal Fisheries Commission.

"The task group must also recognize that the conservation ethic must have priority over the economic component in any recommendations stemming from a review of the Pacific fishery", added Mr. Narcisse.

The task group, comprised of federal appointee Donald McRae and provincial appointee Dr. Peter Pearse, will provide advice to the two governments on how to achieve a forward-looking approach to the fisheries component of treaties. Issues they will be asked to look at include management challenges, how to achieve certainty for all resource users, and how to enhance the economic performance of fisheries, including ensuring reliable income for everyone who relies on the fisheries. It is expected this will assist in expediting fisheries related treaty negotiations. A report from the task group is expected by December 2003.

-30-

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

For Further Information:

Colin Braker
First Nations Summit
Office: 604.990.9939/Cell: 604.328-4094

Craig Morrison
BCAFC
Ph. 604-913-9060

