



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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First Nations Summit expects any Metro Vancouver Board court action to fail

(Coast Salish Traditional Territory/Vancouver, BC) -- The First Nations Summit is perplexed and appalled by media reports of the Metro Vancouver Board's plans to seek a court ruling regarding the constitutional validity of a recent agreement whereby the Province of BC returned a portion of Musqueam traditional territory back to the Musqueam First Nation.

"The lands negotiated within the Musqueam Reconciliation, Settlement and Benefits Agreement are within ancient traditional territory of Musqueam people. There is no valid reason why these lands should not be returned to the Musqueam people under this agreement especially considering the lands in question are part of a settlement arising out of a court case in which the court found in favour of the Musqueam. Municipalities clearly should not be able to intervene in these settlements", said Chief Judith Sayers of the First Nations Summit political executive.

"In fact, this agreement only reflects a fraction of the compensation due to the Musqueam people. The Musqueam must still be fully and properly compensated, through treaty agreements or other agreeable negotiations, for those lands within their traditional territory which cannot or will not be returned by the Crown".

"We are tired of these old arguments, in this case by Metro Vancouver, who says they should be formally compensated for lands returned to First Nations within settlement agreements. First Nations are the ones who must be compensated for their respective traditional territories which have been alienated by the Crown. To date, Canada and BC continue to refuse to discuss formal compensation for traditional lands taken by the Crown within treaty negotiations", added Grand Chief Edward John, also a member of the First Nations Summit political executive.

In their legal case, the Musqueam First Nation, through appeal, sought to block the transfer of lands (known as the UBC Golf Course lands) from the Crown to the University of British Columbia because the Crown had not fulfilled its legal obligation to consult and accommodate the Musqueam First Nation. The case resulted in a unanimous BC Court of Appeal decision to allow the Musqueam to appeal a lower court ruling as the consultation and accommodation process the Musqueam was subjected to by government was defective.

The First Nations Summit was an intervener in the case in support of the Musqueam First Nation.

The First Nations Summit remains hopeful that the Musqueam agreement is a reflection that the province is willing to come to fair and equitable agreements with all BC First Nations on outstanding issues.

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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.

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