



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

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First Nations Summit Mourns Loss of Prominent First Nations Leader – Dr. Frank Calder

Coast Salish Territory/West Vancouver – The First Nations Summit is deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Frank Calder of the Nisga'a Nation this past Saturday.

Dr. Calder made some of the most significant contributions to the recognition and reconciliation of Aboriginal title and rights in Canada and abroad, and was a staunch advocate of building relationships based on mutual respect, appreciation of lands and resources, and justice.

“All First Nations in Canada are grateful for the contributions of Frank Calder,” said Grand Chief Edward John, First Nations Summit Task Group Member. “He raised our political consciousness and courage, and will be remembered for leading the way towards the equitable resolution of the Land Question in British Columbia. He will be missed.”

Dr. Calder is best known for his role in demanding a just settlement of Aboriginal title in British Columbia. The 1973 Supreme Court of Canada decision – *Calder v. Attorney General of BC* – established that Aboriginal title continues to exist, which is the basis for modern land claims negotiations in Canada. This decision – coming after more than 130 years of denial by governments – led Canada to create a land claims policy, through which the Nisga'a Final Agreement was negotiated. This decision has also had a tremendous impact internationally in Aboriginal land claims in New Zealand, Australia, and other countries.

At a First Nations Summit Chiefs meeting in December 2001, Dr. Calder rallied everyone's spirit when he declared "you're younger than I am and you could become just as much a fighter as I am!" He then encouraged the Chiefs to stay focused on the common goal of settling land claims with governments. He said at the time, "they have a settlement to make, to us!" Dr. Calder was a fighter to the end.

Among Dr. Calder's other achievements: the first status Indian admitted to the University of British Columbia; the first to be elected to the Provincial Legislature, where he served for 26 years; the first elected to Canadian Parliament, and first appointed a Minister of the Crown; the founder of the Nisga'a Tribal Council, which was the first established in the province; named Chief of Chiefs of the Nisga'a Nation; named to Canada's First Nations Hall of Fame; recipient of a National Aboriginal Lifetime Achievement Award. Dr. Calder was also named to the Order of Canada, and earned a Doctorate of Divinity, Doctorate of Laws, and Licentiate in Theology.

- 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.

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