



FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 7, 2014

Treaty Negotiations still provide a path to reconciliation: First Nations Summit comments on BCTC 2014 Annual Report

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – First Nations Summit (FNS) leaders were in Victoria today for the release of the 2014 BC Treaty Commission (BCTC) Annual Report.

In the report, the BCTC recognizes the importance of the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision in the *Tsilhqot'in* case as a confirmation of the foundation for treaty negotiations in BC: that First Nations have title and rights to lands in British Columbia and that negotiations, rather than litigation, will be a faster path towards reconciliation.

“The Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) strongly confirms what First Nations in BC have known since time immemorial, BC First Nations have, and will continue to have, title and rights throughout the unceded lands of BC”, said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS political executive. “As we have always believed and as the SCC recognized in the *Tsilhqot'in* decision, the most efficient means for BC First Nations and governments to achieve reconciliation and certainty will be through the negotiation and fulsome implementation of fair, just and honourable treaty agreements”.

The BCTC report also recognizes that the resolution of overlaps and shared territories between First Nations remains one of the largest issues to resolve for First Nations seeking treaty agreements.

“The FNS supports the BCTC's recommendation of increasing the focus on the resolution of overlaps and shared territory issues which continues to be a critical focal point”, said FNS political executive member Robert Phillips.

“However, in order to achieve successful resolution of shared territory and overlap disputes, commitment is required by both governments and First Nations alike. The federal and provincial governments must be supportive and provide the necessary financial resourcing for First Nations to properly engage with each other to resolve these issues. Neighboring First Nations must also be committed to sitting down with each other under an agreed to dispute resolution mechanism. As the SCC said *the courts are ill equipped to effect a resolution of competing interests. That must be reserved for a treaty negotiation process*”, concluded Phillips.

The FNS will continue to engage with BC and Canada to underscore that First Nations should not have to compromise the financial viability of their peoples and communities by being forced to take loans to participate in treaty negotiations to redress historical injustices created by the Crown and to stress that good faith negotiations and the effective and honourable implementation of treaty agreements remains the most effective path forward to resolving the outstanding land question in BC.

-30-

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

For Further Information contact:

Colin Braker, Communications Director, FNS, 604-926-9903