

First Nations Summit

STATEMENT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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First Nations Summit fully welcomes Federal Budget 2019 confirmation of treaty loan forgiveness

Coast Salish Territory, Vancouver, British Columbia – The First Nations Summit leadership fully welcomes today's announcement in Federal Budget 2019 concerning Canada's commitment to completely forgive loans for past and present comprehensive claims negotiations.

Budget 2019 in part states;

"To support Indigenous communities' ability to invest in their own priorities, and to demonstrate the Government's commitment to recognizing Indigenous rights, Budget 2019 proposes funding of \$1.4 billion over seven years starting in 2018–19, to forgive all outstanding comprehensive claim negotiation loans and to reimburse Indigenous governments that have already repaid these loans. Forgiving and reimbursing loans will allow more than 200 Indigenous communities to reinvest in their priorities like governance, infrastructure and economic development that will increase health and well-being for all community members."

The First Nations Summit has always maintained that First Nations should not have to borrow money from the very governments who wrongfully took all Indigenous lands in BC in the colonial era ...without any notice, consent or agreement.

Treaty negotiation debt has left First Nations at a significant financial and economic disadvantage. This debt has also had detrimental economic, social and political impacts on First Nations that have been working to resolve the outstanding land question in BC through treaty negotiations for decades.

Loans have been a large burden for First Nations that have concluded negotiations, have been an obstacle for those currently in negotiations and has been a huge barrier for First Nations wishing to enter into negotiations. We are very pleased that this significant economic burden for First Nations has finally been totally removed. This is a critical element in the advancement of reconciliation, especially for First Nations in British Columbia.

As one of the three Principals to treaty negotiations in BC, the First Nations Summit Executive will arrange for meetings with appropriate federal Ministers as soon as possible to discuss immediate implementation of today's budget commitments.

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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 information on the First Nations Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

