

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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FNLN Rejects MNBC's claim of Aboriginal Rights in British Columbia

(X̱w̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), Sḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish) and səliiw̱ətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLN) rejects the Métis Nation of British Columbia's (MNBC) claim of Aboriginal Rights throughout BC, including harvesting rights, and the claim they are an Indigenous governing body in the province with equal access to resources. First Nations Chiefs rejected the Métis assertion of rights outlined in the *Métis Nation British Columbia Report: A Tale of Two Nations: Highlighting the Inequities of the Treatment of the Métis in BC*, through Chiefs' resolutions at the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs assemblies.

The FNLN has been in [correspondence](#) with Premier John Horgan and the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation on this matter, underscoring the legal requirement for a **distinctions-based approach** to the Province's relations with Indigenous peoples in BC as First Nations pre-existed contact in BC and each of our Nations have inherent rights, including laws, jurisdiction and legal orders, that continue to exist and that are distinct and separate from the rights of others. All of the land in what is now known as BC is comprised of unceded and traditional territories of First Nations.

First Nations in BC have inherent rights, which we have exercised since long prior to settler contact and which continue to exist. First Nations throughout BC hold stories of origin, place names and laws of the land as proper title and rights holders throughout our respective territories. MNBC's unfounded assertions and campaign to gain constitutionally protected Métis Aboriginal rights in BC disrespects traditional protocols of Indigenous governments and does not withstand legal scrutiny in Canadian law.

"MNBC's aggressive claims and assertions on First Nations territories in BC are unfounded and are built on a foundation of the settler doctrines of *terra nullius* and *Doctrine of Discovery*, European concepts that have long been discredited," stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "We will vigorously work to block and disprove any further Aboriginal rights claims made by this organization."

"Our leadership has fought tirelessly for decades in Canadian courts to protect and advance our inherent and constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights and title on behalf of our Nations," points out Robert Phillips, Political Executive Member of the First Nations Summit. "It is alarming that MNBC believes it is owed a duty of consultation within BC in spite of not clearing this legal hurdle. Further, in our view, MNBC does not meet the definition of an Indigenous governing body under ***the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act***, as it does not act on behalf of Indigenous peoples that hold recognized and affirmed section 35 rights that can be exercised in BC."



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“The Métis people have a distinct history in Western Canada, especially in Manitoba. We respect and support the Métis peoples’ claims in the Prairie region, where they were offered land scrip and other rights that may not have been honoured by the Crown. It is not correct to say in BC that the Métis were pre-existing Indigenous peoples living alongside First Nations peoples and present on First Nations territories at the time of contact or when colonial governments were established in BC,” stated Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President. “This is a political fiction and does not meet the legal or human rights test for Aboriginal rights, title and the existence of a Nation. It is important to stop perpetuating false information about this as it causes confusion, but it also disrespects First Nations peoples’ of this province, including our protocols for visitors on our territories.”

MNBC has repeatedly proclaimed itself as “largest individual Indigenous nation” in BC, which is factually inaccurate and an offensive claim to First Nations here since time immemorial. The exercise of self-determination and self-government on lands that are not their own, and are well outside of the Métis Homeland, cannot be substantiated and is an incursion that cannot be supported.

First Nations remain committed to working alongside Métis people on issues of shared concern, such as elimination of racism and discrimination. These collaborations must be founded on the recognition of our distinct histories and realities as First Nations and Métis people in what is now BC.

Links:

[BCAFN Resolution 12/2021](#), [UBCIC Resolution 2021-25](#), [FNS Resolution 0221.14](#)
Re: Rejection of Métis assertion of rights outlined in the Métis Nation British Columbia Report: A Tale of Two Nations: Highlighting the Inequities of the Treatment of the Métis in BC [Assertions of Métis rights in Secwépemc Territory letter](#)

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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