

First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

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On 30th Anniversary of Treaty Negotiations in BC; First Nations Summit leaders call for renewed commitment from governments

(xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səfilwətaʔ/sefilwutlh (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) - The signing of the BC Treaty Commission Agreement, 30 years ago today, offered great hope that we could expeditiously achieve the reconciliation of Indigenous and Crown titles, sovereignties and jurisdictions.

We hold up our hands to nations that have achieved and implemented successful treaty agreements, including Tla'amin, Tsawwassen, and the Maa-Nulth Nations (Yuuluʔiʔath, Huu-ay-aht, Uchucklesaht, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Chek'tles7et'h', and Toquaht). On the 30th anniversary of the commitment to start treaty negotiations in BC, we note that only three treaty agreements have been concluded with seven Indigenous Nations.

In 2019, significant policy changes occurred, including the forgiveness of all treaty negotiation loan debt and the co-development of the *Recognition and Reconciliation of Rights Policy for Treaty Negotiations in British Columbia* (RRR Policy). The RRR Policy adopts the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a foundation for the BC treaty negotiations framework and provides for the recognition and continuation of unextinguished Indigenous titles and rights, including the right of self-determination, as the starting point for negotiations. The RRR policy rejects 'one size fits all' mandates, in favour of mandates that are specific to the needs and interests of Indigenous Nations. By addressing Crown denial and inflexible mandates, the RRR Policy, like the BC Treaty Commission Agreement did 30 years ago, offers hope for fair, honourable and expeditious reconciliation of Indigenous and Crown titles and rights.

However, capacity and mandate challenges continue to plague the expeditious conclusion of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.

"While treaty negotiations have resulted in some very important success stories, we hoped there would have been many more treaty agreements in place by now. Unfortunately, some 30 years after the start, many First Nations remain frustrated by the lack of government resources and mandates which contribute heavily to slowing down the pace of the negotiation process. Treaty loan forgiveness and the implementation of the RRR policy should help to resolve these issues, however, we need Canada and BC to increase their human resources in their negotiations departments in a manner that reflects their commitment to successful and timely negotiations," said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS political executive.

"We remain committed to the BC treaty negotiation process and to working with Canada, BC and the BCTC to provide opportunities for successful outcomes for all First Nations working to conclude treaty agreements as a means to reconcile Indigenous and Crown titles and the Crown's assertion of sovereignty with our pre-existing sovereignty. We strongly urge Canada and BC to address their capacity and mandate challenges, in part, through meaningful implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which is now a foundation for the BC treaty negotiations

framework, and through meaningful implementation of new tools, such as the *RRR Policy*” added Robert Phillips of the FNS political Executive.

“An entire generation has passed since the treaty negotiations process began BC 30 years ago. It is urgent that all parties take deliberate and immediate actions to overcome the remaining barriers that lie before us so that all First Nations in BC that wish to, can achieve reconciliation through the meaningful implementation of their Aboriginal title and rights through comprehensive treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements. We are here to stay, and we need to collectively work together to generate the proper relationships moving forward. First Nations want to govern and make decisions that impact our communities, but we also wish to create healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities, which will benefit all British Columbians,” concluded FNS political executive, Hugh Braker.

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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 an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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