

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

September 25, 2024

Coast Salish Oppose Actions by B.C. Métis Federation: FNLC Stands in Solidarity

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), s̓k̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) stands in solidarity with the Coast Salish peoples and fully supports their Statement of Solidarity in Opposition to the B.C. Métis Federation (BCMF).

The Statement, endorsed by 45 Coast Salish Nations, bands, and communities, is an unprecedented show of unity in defence of Coast Salish laws, ancestors, names, and histories.

We join the Coast Salish in denouncing the claim recently filed on behalf of BCMF by their legal counsel Olthuis van Ert, and the ahistorical and deeply offensive assertions made in it. The claim represents a threat to any First Nation in what is now known as British Columbia whose territory BCMF erroneously asserts is home to the “Pacific Northwest Métis” and their so-called “communities”.

Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President, stated, “B.C.-based Métis organizations, including B.C. Métis Federation, have shown time and again that they’re more than willing to ignore facts and place self-interest over respecting and upholding the inherent, constitutional, and human rights, and inherent laws, legal systems, systems of governance, and jurisdictions of their First Nations hosts. The unprecedented Coast Salish unity expressed through the Statement of Solidarity is further proof that First Nations in B.C. have had enough of this disrespect, and that we stand united in opposing it.”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, remarked, “First Nations in B.C. are faced with myriad challenges that desperately require our time and attention. We know the truth, and the fact that we must expend limited resources to push back against B.C.-based Métis organizations’ false assertions and history is beyond insulting. We fully support and stand with the Coast Salish in their unprecedented show of unity in opposition to the actions of the B.C. Métis Federation.”

“When the Northern Gateway Pipeline was still in the news, the B.C. Métis Federation opposed that pipeline citing the need to ensure respect for First Nations territories and ensure communications in relation to decisions that effect our lands,” stated Hugh Braker of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. He added, “Now here we are 12 years later, and B.C. Métis Federation’s AGM is sponsored almost exclusively by extractive industry, they’ve signed on to Trans Mountain, and they’ve launched litigation in which they claim to represent a Métis people Indigenous to B.C. We stand united in opposition to B.C. Métis Federation’s claim, and fully support the Coast Salish and their Statement of Solidarity.”

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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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**COAST SALISH STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY
IN OPPOSITION TO THE BC MÉTIS FEDERATION
SEPTEMBER 24, 2024**

We, the Coast Salish peoples, have lived in, stewarded, and governed our respective lands, waters, resources, and territories for thousands of years.

We are the proper title and rights holders within our territories. We hold inherent, constitutional, and human rights, and inherent laws, legal systems, systems of governance, and jurisdictions, which we have applied and exercised throughout the entirety of our territories prior to contact, and which continue to exist and be applied and exercised throughout the entirety of our territories today.

We know who we are, and where we come from. We have maintained and protected our distinct identity and cultural practices in the face of rapid and pervasive colonization.

We have recently been made aware of a claim filed on behalf of the BC Métis Federation (BCMF) and certain named individuals in the BC Supreme Court (Claim). Among other things, the Claim asserts that what is now known as British Columbia (BC) is home to the “Pacific Northwest Métis”, who are said to be descendants of the offspring of French-Canadians and BC First Nations women. In the Claim, one of the named individuals identifies herself and her ancestors as “Pacific Northwest Métis” because she is a descendant of a “Cowichan woman” and “French-Canadian fur trader” who “...settled in and helped establish the Métis community in Fort Langley, British Columbia.”

We know there is no truth to this characterization.

No historic Métis communities of any kind exist within our territories. No distinct Métis people, language, or culture emerged from the union of Coast Salish women and settler men. These assertions have no basis in history or reality, are deeply offensive, and directly violate and undermine our respective laws, legal systems, systems of governance, and jurisdictions.

The Claim’s attempt to appropriate our ancestors, names, and histories is unacceptable and will not go unchallenged. We know our lineages and recognize that some women from our Coast Salish communities, *our relatives and ancestors*, had children with French-Canadian fur traders and other settlers in our lands. To us, this is recent history. Their descendants are not now, and never were, Pacific Northwest Métis. Their descendants do not now, and never did, form distinct Pacific Northwest Métis communities in our territories.

In accordance with our laws, the descendants of these Coast Salish women have remained members and citizens of our respective Nations, bands, and communities, or are individuals who have Coast Salish ancestry. The impacts of colonialism have resulted in some individuals with Coast Salish ancestry having no present connection to us; however, that does not make those individuals Métis, and we alone determine belonging in our respective Nations, bands, and communities.

Many Métis have settled in and now call our territories home. We welcome those Métis who treat us and our territories with respect and acknowledge the reality that, as a people and as individuals, they hold no land, water, or air-based inherent and constitutionally protected rights or related jurisdiction in our territories, that they are our guests, and that their Homeland and rights lie east of what is now known as BC. But we will not stand silently as BCMF, or any other Métis organization or individual, attempts to co-opt our ancestors, names, and histories and undermine our rights and authority.

We will defend our territories with all our strength and all resources available to us.

We stand united in our opposition to the Claim and BCMF. We ask all First Nations, Métis, Inuit, British Columbians, and Canadians to support us in opposing the Claim and denouncing BCMF's repeated disrespectful and provocative actions.

SIGNED IN SOLIDARITY:

Stó:lo Tribal Council

By: Tribal Chief Tyrone McNeil

On behalf of:

Shxw'ōwhámél First Nation

Chawathil First Nation

Seabird Island Band

Cheam First Nation

Scowlitz First Nation

Soowahlie First Nation

Kwaw'Kwaw'Apilt First Nation

Kwantlen First Nation



S'ólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance

By: Chief Angie Bailey

STSA Political Representative



On behalf of:

Aitchelitz First Nation

Skowkale First Nation

Squiala First Nation

Skwah First Nation

Skawahlook First Nation

Tzeachten First Nation

Yakwekwioose First Nation

Sumas First Nation

Shxwhà:y Village

Yale First Nation

Musqueam Indian Band

By: Chief Wayne Sparrow



Tsleil-Waututh Nation

By: Chief Jennifer Thomas



Squamish Nation

By: Khelsilem, Council Chairperson



Tsawwassen First Nation

By: Chief Laura Cassidy



Sts'ailes

By: Councillor Kelsey Charlie



Cowichan Tribes

By: Chief Cindy Daniels



Halalt First Nation

By: Chief James Thomas



Stz'uminus First Nation

By: Chief John Elliott



Lyackson First Nation

By: Chief Shana Thomas



Penelakut Tribe

By: Chief Pam Jack



Semiahmoo First Nation

By: Chief Harley Chappell



Katzie First Nation

By: Acting Chief David Kenworthy



Leq'á:mel First Nation

By: Chief Alice Thompson



Kwikwetlem First Nation

By: Chief Ronald Giesbrecht



shíshálh Nation

By: the hiwus (Chief) Lenora Joe



Matsqui First Nation

By: Chief Alice McKay



Tla'amin Nation*By: Hegus (Chief) John Hackett***K'ómoks First Nation***By: Chief Ken Price***Tsartlip First Nation***By: Chief Don Tom***Snaw-Naw-As***By: Chief Brent Edwards***Tsawout First Nation***By: Chief Abraham Pelkey***Snuneymuxw First Nation***By: Chief Mike Wyse***Songhees Nation***By: Chief Ronald Sam***Esquimalt Nation***By: Chief Jerome Thomas***Klahoose First Nation***By: Chief Steven Brown***Union Bar First Nation***By: Councillor Kevin Garner***Qayqayt First Nation***By: Chief Rhonda Larrabee*