



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Rd.
Prince George, BC
V2K 5S3

Ph: 778-945-9910
Fx: 778-945-9916



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

401 - 312 Main Street
Vancouver, BC
V6A 2T2

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

News Release

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Standing With Gitxaala and Ehattesaht Nations in Upholding the Process of Legislative Reconciliation under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sḵw̓xwú7mesh (Squamish) and səilwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) stand together with Gitxaala Nation and Ehattesaht First Nation as the hearing of the Nations' appeals in relation to the Province's *Mineral Tenure Act* regime begins in the BC Court of Appeal today.

The FNLC and BCCLA are participating as joint intervenors in these appeals because the issues before the Court of Appeal are critically important to the fulfillment of the Province's commitments in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (*Declaration Act*) to align its laws with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (*Declaration*).

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, "The provincial *Mineral Tenure Act* is not consistent with the Declaration, and the *Declaration Act* requires the Province to work with First Nations to take all necessary measures to ensure the *Mineral Tenure Act* is amended to address that inconsistency."

"The courts have an important role to play in providing guidance in the process of legislative reconciliation that is required under the *Declaration Act* and to hold the Province accountable on the commitments it has made to make its laws consistent with the Declaration," Robert Phillips from the First Nations Summit political executive continued.

"The FNLC and BCCLA look forward to participating in the appeals to support Gitxaala and Ehattesaht in the challenges they face with mineral staking in their Territories, and to help advance the important work that is needed to align the *Mineral Tenure Act* with the Declaration," added Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

Veronica Martisius, Litigation Staff Counsel for the BCCLA, shared, "Reconciliation is up to us all. To breathe life into the Interpretation Act's clear mandate regarding the *Declaration Act*, the courts must recognize their role and responsibility in advancing reconciliation and actualizing the Declaration in BC."

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).

The BC Civil Liberties Association is the oldest and most active civil liberties and human rights group in Canada with a mandate to promote, defend, sustain, and extend civil liberties and human rights in British Columbia and Canada.

For further information, contact:

Robert Phillips, FNS Political Executive
Annette Schroeter, BCAFN Communications Officer
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President
Veronica Martisius, BCCLA Staff Counsel

778-875-4463
778-281-1655
250-490-5314
media@bccla.org