

First Nations Summit

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 14, 2026

Treaty Negotiations Remain the Best Path to Resolving the Land Question in British Columbia: Stronger Processes for Resolving Shared Territory Issues required

(xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, BC - Leaders and advocates are renewing calls for governments to strengthen and accelerate the British Columbia treaty negotiations process, describing it as the most effective and durable path to resolving the province's longstanding land question.

Unlike most of Canada, the majority of British Columbia was never covered by historic treaties. As a result, unresolved questions regarding First Nations title, governance, jurisdiction, and land ownership continue to create uncertainty for First Nations, governments, industry, and communities across the province.

"We remain of the view that the treaty negotiation process provides a practical and principled path forward," said Chief Shana Thomas of the FNS political executive. "It allows First Nations and governments to sit down together, recognize rights and title, and create modern agreements that support reconciliation, economic certainty, and long-term stability. We are confident that many of the issues currently at the forefront in the media, including concerns with DRIPA and private property issues, can be alleviated through comprehensive treaty negotiations."

The made-in-BC treaty negotiations process was established more than thirty years ago to address these issues through negotiated agreements rather than prolonged litigation and conflict. The First Nations Summit maintains that while a strong framework is in place, the process lacks sufficient tools, resources, and structured support to help First Nations resolve shared territory and overlap issues between neighboring First Nations.

As negotiations on treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements continue across the province, unresolved overlap and shared territory concerns between neighboring First Nations have increasingly emerged as a major challenge. It is absolutely essential to establish much needed mechanisms and processes for First Nations to work together to resolve these disputes both inside and outside of the treaty negotiations process.

"Overlap and shared territory issues are not barriers to reconciliation, but reflections of the complex histories, relationships, and governance systems that existed long before colonization," said Robert Phillips of the FNS Political Executive. "We must collectively do more to support First Nations in resolving these matters through Nation-to-Nation dialogue, mediation, and collaborative problem-solving that is fair, transparent, and culturally appropriate."

The First Nations Summit supports the creation of enhanced dispute resolution and facilitation processes within the BC treaty framework, including independent mediation services, dedicated funding for inter-Nation engagement, and clearer protocols for addressing shared territory interests while respecting Indigenous laws and governance traditions.

“Litigation is adversarial and expensive. Treaty negotiations create space for collaboration and nation-to-nation solutions. They are the highest form of reconciliation and provide the best opportunity to resolve historic issues in a way that benefits all British Columbians. Modern treaties bring clarity, stability, and recognition. They are not only instruments of reconciliation — they are much needed instruments for economic and social progress,” concluded Hugh Braker of the FNS political executive.

If the federal and provincial governments are truly committed to reconciliation, strengthening the BC treaty negotiations process should be viewed as a provincial and national priority.

-30-

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.

For Further Information contact:

Chief Shana Thomas, FNS Political Executive:	250-618-6905
Robert Phillips, FNS Political Executive:	604-868-0032
Hugh Braker, FNS Political Executive:	604-812-2632