

FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT

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NEWS RELEASE

Negotiation and implementation of modern-day treaty agreements leading the way in reconciliation and Indigenous rights recognition

Coast Salish Territory/Vancouver – First Nations Summit (FNS) leaders were in Vancouver today for the release of the 2018 BC Treaty Commission (BCTC) Annual Report.

“While no new treaties were concluded in 2018, we are encouraged by innovations in negotiations which are in the process of being implemented by Canada and BC, as highlighted in this year’s BCTC Report. These innovations, including the use of Memoranda of Understanding rather than Agreements in Principle to expedite the transition from Stage 4 to 5, have introduced much needed flexibility into the treaty negotiations framework. We are optimistic that these and other innovations will help expedite the negotiation of treaty agreements in BC”, said Cheryl Casimer of the FNS Political Executive.

“Over the past 25 years, First Nations have borrowed more than \$567 million to fund their participation in treaty negotiations. After years of discussions amongst the Principals and the BCTC, we are extremely pleased that, going forward, the federal government has replaced treaty negotiation loan advances with non-repayable contribution funding for First Nations participating in treaty negotiations. While this was a very significant development during 2018 that will help level the playing field, the question of loan forgiveness remains outstanding. We urge the federal government to further level the playing field and relieve financial pressure on First Nations by forgiving all past and present negotiation loans”, added Robert Phillips of the FNS Political Executive.

This year’s BCTC report highlights Article 32(2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration), which requires States to obtain the free prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources.

“We commend the BCTC for its leadership in seeking a legal opinion on the meaning of free, prior and informed consent in the Declaration and analyzing its relationship to the BC treaty negotiations framework. We concur with the Commission’s conclusion that the BC treaty negotiations process, in addition to serving as the primary mechanism for Canada, BC and First Nations to achieve reconciliation, also provides a framework for operationalizing the standard of free, prior and informed consent. We look forward to the results of Canada’s and BC’s ongoing work to implement the Declaration and their respective rights recognition and implementation frameworks and the positive impact that this can have on treaty negotiations in BC, if done right”, concluded Grand Chief Edward John of the FNS Political Executive.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

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