



STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
Aug. 13, 2020

Ministry of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation
Office of the Wet'suwet'en
Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada

Joint statement on progress of the Wet'suwet'en MOU

VICTORIA – Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, B.C. Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Scott Fraser and Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett have issued the following statement:

“Today, we reaffirm our commitment to work together under the memorandum of understanding (MOU) we signed earlier this year to implement Wet'suwet'en rights and title in the Yintah. We are engaged in important dialogue on matters of Wet'suwet'en rights and title that have remained unresolved since the Delgamuukw-Gisday-wa decision more than 20 years ago. This is complex and important work, and it will take time. Doing this work in the midst of the COVID pandemic created additional challenges but we are having important conversations that continue to move us forward.

“At this point, we are still engaged in negotiations on the agreement initially targeted for completion in mid-August, and we continue to work in good faith in an agreed-upon accelerated process. We will take the time necessary to get this right, and to do it in a good way.

“Our aim is to reach a negotiators' understanding by mid-October 2020 on an affirmation agreement for Wet'suwet'en rights and title that will also set the stage for further implementation negotiations. The draft agreement will then require approval and ratification by Wet'suwet'en clan members and the provincial and federal governments, which we will seek to conclude before the end of the year. During this time, internal engagement within Wet'suwet'en will continue, as will external community engagement with other interested parties on the negotiations and draft agreement.

“The internal work toward reunification within Wet'suwet'en Nation is a very important element of the MOU, and that work is ongoing. Wet'suwet'en Hereditary leadership remains committed to ongoing engagement with clan members and elected councils to further strengthen families, communities and build a strong and united Nation.

“We are also launching today a jointly developed external community engagement process that will help ensure our success in implementing Wet'suwet'en rights and title. As a first step, today we will send out invitations to potential participants from local governments, industry, business and recreation groups to join a regional engagement group, and to suggest

participants for a core advisory council. As our work progresses, we will also be consulting with neighbouring Nations.

“We are pleased that the Lake Kathlyn School property transfer was completed last month to create a We’suwet’en seat of government for the entire Yintah. Purchased by the Wet’suwet’en through \$1.2 million in funding from the Province of B.C., Wet’suwet’en is working with the school district and daycare operator to ensure a smooth transition next year.

“Our commitment to continue our negotiations to implement Wet’suwet’en rights and title is strong. We know it is critical that together we keep moving ahead with this work, which will benefit all people who live in the Yintah.”

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