



Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated on February 29 2020 with Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, Canada and British Columbia

May 8, 2020

Dear Wet'suwet'en Members:

First and foremost, at this point of our collective history we find ourselves continuing along the path that our ancestors have set.

It has always been the intent of our leadership that our members receive direct access to the enclosed MOU. The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs collectively agreed that it would be released jointly with BC and Canada. We learned it was leaked to the media on May 6th by unknown parties. And, in light of the recent Joint press release by the Elected Chiefs' it was given to elected Chiefs of those Bands within our Yintah on May 7th.

When the MOU was initialled, and it affirmed in the MOU the recognition of Wet'suwet'en rights and title, it was seen as upholding the vision of our predecessors. The Diní'ze and Tsaké'ze wish to share this document with you directly before releasing to the general public.

At the beginning of our February meetings, there appeared to be much confusion about their purpose, which resulted in several Wet'suwet'en members coming in to those closed meetings. The concerns that were expressed at that time are consistent with the concerns of the Diní'ze and Tsaké'ze.

Our leaders did not sway from our previous Hereditary Chiefs' positions, our ancestors, our grandparents and parents and aunts and uncles took in the long battle from 1984 to 1997 in *Delgamuukw\Gisday'wa v. The Queen*. In that case, Gisday'wa opened with the following statement:

"My name is Gisday'wa. I am a Wet'suwet'en Chief and a plaintiff in this case. My House owns territory in the Morice and Owen Lake area. Each Wet'suwet'en plaintiff's House owns similar territories. Together they own and govern the territory. As an example, the land on which this courthouse stands is owned by the Wet'suwet'en Chief Gyologyet, is Kyas Yax, also known as Chief Woos' House"

We focused a key part of our discussions on that recognition. After very intense discussions we came to a Memorandum of Understanding by which Canada and British Columbia would **immediately** recognize Wet'suwet'en Aboriginal rights and title throughout the Yintah. This is a major breakthrough in Crown-Indigenous Relations in Canada. The first two clauses of the MOU state:

Canada and BC recognize that Wet'suwet'en Rights and Title are held by Wet'suwet'en houses under their system of governance.

Canada and BC recognize Wet'suwet'en aboriginal rights and title throughout the Yintah.

Since the time of contact, through all means to protect our territories and people, the Wet'suwet'en Diní'ze and Tsaké'ze consistently ensure that there was nothing given up by the Wet'suwet'en in the MOU.



As stated in meetings with clans and community, this MOU is unique, as normally when the Crown enters discussions with indigenous groups, indigenous rights are predetermined outcomes in the treaty process without recognizing the inherent rights. That is not what has occurred here. In this case, your Wet'suwet'en rights as you have fought for have never been sold, given away or forfeited, and they are now recognized.

The MOU will not affect the rights of Indian Act Bands or other land rights within the Yintah as it exists since the imposed Indian Act. Clear agreements moving forward are dependent on the Nation. Strengthening our Nation is paramount to the wellbeing of our People. Much discussion will follow.

Most importantly to remember that the form of Wet'suwet'en governance is an internal Wet'suwet'en matter and both Canada and BC recognize that.

The Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs invited the elected officials from Witset, Hagwilget, Burns Lake, Skin Tyee and Nee Tahi Buhn to hear their issues and concerns related to the MOU. The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs heard the concerns for 5 and a half hours and fully discussed issues raised by the Band Council chiefs. The hereditary chiefs have carefully considered the issues raised by the Band Council chiefs and will respond to those matters directly.

We are preparing a summary of meetings which, the hereditary chiefs were mandated to move forward with signing the MOU. The signing of the MOU does not restrict or define Wet'suwet'en rights in any way, and must be built by the nation.

We understand that with the current pandemic, timing will need to be considered by all parties.

We do not wish you to just participate but to be a part of all future discussions to ensure that you are seen and heard and that you see yourselves in what is being built in accordance with our Inuk Nu'at'en. We all must be one as the Affirmation Agreement gets built.

We can arrange for you to send questions on the MOU to the following email:
communications@wetsuweten.com

We thank you for your patience and understanding.

Snay Kahl Yah,

Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs

Attached:

Initialed MOU

FAQ sheet



Signed virtually by Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs

Chief Hagwilnegh – Ron Mitchell – Laksilyu

Chief T'sek'ot – Ron Austin - Laksilyu

Chief Lay-oh – James Namox – Gil_seyhu

Chief Knedebeas – Warner William – Gil_seyhu

Chief Woos – Frank Alec - Gitdumden

Chief Madeek – Jeff Brown – Gitdumden

Chief Gisday'wa – Fred Tom - Gitdumden

Chief Kloum Khun – Alphonse Gagnon – Laksamshu

Chief Smogelgem – Warner Naziel - Laksamshu

Chief Na'Moks – John Ridsdale – Tsayu