



STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
April 30, 2020

Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs
Ministry of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation
Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada

Joint statement on Memorandum of Understanding on Wet'suwet'en rights and title

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

"We welcome the confirmation that the Wet'suwet'en clans have completed their review of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) we reached together on Feb. 29, 2020, to affirm and implement Wet'suwet'en title and rights, and have given their support to sign it. We look forward to advancing this important work to implement Wet'suwet'en rights and title as three equal governments.

"We have the health and well-being of our communities, families and friends at the forefront of all of our minds in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic across the country has created extraordinary circumstances throughout Canada.

"Given the recommendations from the provincial health officer and the First Nations Health Authority to continue physical distancing measures and avoid non-essential travel, we are working out the details for the next steps, including signing the MOU and sharing it publicly.

"The Wet'suwet'en have invited Minister Fraser and Minister Bennett to sign the MOU on May 14, 2020. This time allows all three governments to organize a virtual meeting to sign. It comes just after the 33rd anniversary of the start of the Delgamuukw/Gisday'wa case in Smithers in which the late Gisday'wa opened the trial.

"The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, the Province of B.C. and Canada remain committed to implementing the rights and title of the Wet'suwet'en people through the MOU.

"There is a great deal of work ahead of us in the negotiation process agreed to in the MOU, to lay out how we will implement rights and title and how our three governments will work together into the future. As negotiations proceed on the affirmation and implementation of Wet'suwet'en rights and title, we will move forward with transparency and openness, and will be further engaging with Wet'suwet'en house groups, neighbouring Nations, local governments, stakeholders and the public.

"This is an important step forward in rebuilding our government-to-government-to-government relationship based on the affirmation of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership."

Contacts:

Sandra Harris
Communications Director
on behalf of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs
250 877-9674

Chief Hagwilnegh (Ron Mitchell)
Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs
250 877-0526

Sarah Plank
B.C. Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
250 208-9621

Emilly Williams
Press Secretary
Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Office of the Honourable Carolyn Bennett,
819 997-0002

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada Media Relations
RCAANC.media.CIRNAC@canada.ca
819 934-2302

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: <http://news.gov.bc.ca/connect>