



STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
February 7, 2019

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Office of the Wet'suwet'en

Statement on reconciliation process between Province and Office of the Wet'suwet'en

VICTORIA – The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, Premier John Horgan and Scott Fraser, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, have issued the following statement to mark the start of a new reconciliation process:

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en and Province of British Columbia have committed to explore a path forward together, government-to-government, that seeks to build trust over time and meaningfully advance reconciliation. This process has emerged from decades of denial of Wet'suwet'en rights and title. Both parties believe that the time has come to engage in meaningful nation-to-nation discussions with the goal of B.C. affirming Wet'suwet'en rights and title.

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en and Province are undertaking a process focused on Wet'suwet'en title, rights, laws and traditional governance throughout the Wet'suwet'en Yintah, or territory.

Our discussions will be guided by Wet'suwet'en law, the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and Canadian jurisprudence, including the Supreme Court of Canada's Delgamuukw Gisday' Wa decision. We stress that our commitment to lasting reconciliation is not connected to any specific project. These discussions are not transactional, but a real commitment to reconciliation.

To support this work, the Province has appointed Murray Rankin as B.C.'s representative to help guide and design the process between the Province and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en. Mr. Rankin, a lawyer and mediator, has an understanding of the Supreme Court's historic Delgamuukw Gisday' Wa decision and an abiding commitment to better understand the history and current reality of the Wet'suwet'en people.

As a key step in creating this new foundation for reconciliation, the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs will host a bahtlats (potlatch or feast) in March 2019 to share information and initiate discussion with the Wet'suwet'en Clans and House groups. The goal is to involve all in this dialogue. The bahtlats is an established governance and decision-making process under Wet'suwet'en hereditary leadership protocols. This work builds on discussions that have been ongoing since the Premier and minister visited the territory last August. A public announcement will follow after the official commencement of our discussions.

We all recognize that the path forward will involve challenges. It will take a willingness to innovate and take bold steps together. This engagement is a historic opportunity to advance

Wet'suwet'en self-determination and self-governance, and for the Province and Wet'suwet'en Nation to establish a deeper relationship based on respect and recognition of rights.”

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