

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

NEWS RELEASE

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## FNLC Condemns Recreational Fishing Lobby's Racist Campaign Against First Nations and their Fishing Rights

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) Recreational participants in the Salmon Allocation Policy (SAP) review process have cultivated a dangerous and offensive online campaign through social media, websites and forums that spreads misinformation about First Nations' positions in the review process and what it may mean for non-Indigenous Canadians.

The SAP has been ongoing for several years in an effort to ensure that First Nations rights with respect to salmon allocation are being upheld by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Catalyzed by the *Ahousaht et al. Decision*, the SAP review process has been inclusive of non-Indigenous recreational and commercial representatives. The review process is governed by a Terms of Reference that specifically requires accuracy and transparency in the communications to constituents. Despite this clear directive, the campaign has cultivated an environment in which anti-Indigenous racism is thriving, creating the very real risk of physical and psychological damage for First Nations people.

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee stated, "When campaigns of hate against First Nations are not actively and publicly opposed by our public servants at the highest level, racism becomes further entrenched in the minds of Canadians and in our institutions. It threatens the safety, wellbeing and livelihoods of First Nations people while legitimizing and contributing to racial division. We expect that DFO Minister Thompson deeply respects her obligations to fulfill First Nations fishing rights under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, UNDA and case law. Now is the time to demonstrate reconciliation in action and stand up to those who wish to sow further division in Canada."

As the convener of this process and Crown entity, DFO is actively accountable for ensuring adherence to the Terms of Reference, application of the UN Declaration and reconciliation principles and respectful, Nation-to-Nation engagement. The FNLC calls on DFO Minister Thompson to immediately issue a statement that denounces, debunks and condemns these hateful actions that recreational fishing participants have taken. In the meantime, the risk of West Coast fish wars grows. Additionally, the Minister must not consider external submissions from recreational fishers, who may have been influenced by the recreational representatives' hate propaganda.



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First Nations Summit Political Executive, Robert Phillips elaborated, “We are in a delicate time in Canada when it comes to reconciliation and now is not the time to regress in First Nations-settler relationships and Nation-to-Nation relationships. First Nations have been blowing the whistle throughout the SAP review process, alerting DFO to racist sentiments from recreational fishing representatives, which DFO has failed to combat. Our government partners must go to bat now for First Nations- they can no longer be silent bystanders while the risk of violence against First Nations people grows. The SAP review process can still be salvaged so long as DFO takes its responsibilities seriously.”

UBCIC President Grand Chief Stewart Phillip concluded, “As our First Nations have always maintained- we are not greedy people. We want to share; we just need our rights to be upheld so that we are actually in the position to do so. First Nations prosperity and rights implementation do not come at a cost to non-Indigenous Canadians. The assertion that First Nations rights are taking away from the general public is a dangerous and false narrative that is fanning the flame of discrimination in B.C. and across Canada. We won’t stand for it and expect that the Crown will not stand for it either.”

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*The First Nations Leadership Council is composed of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. For more information, please visit [www.fnlc.ca](http://www.fnlc.ca).*

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