



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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BCAFN SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY

Resolution 02/2020

Vancouver Island Conference Centre, 101 Gordon St., Nanaimo, BC
March 4 & 5, 2020

SUBJECT: CALL TO ACTION ON HISTORIC LOW SALMON RETURNS

MOVED BY: JOHN MACKO, PROXY, 'NAMGIS FIRST NATION

SECONDED BY: KUKPI7 RON IGNACE, SKETCHESN

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. Wild Pacific salmon are integral to the culture, economy, and livelihood of First Nations throughout BC;
- B. the steady decline of healthy and abundant wild salmon stocks has reached a crisis point, with 2019 yielding the lowest wild salmon returns in Canada's history;
- C. the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC committed to implement, affirms:

Article 26: Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired;

Article 29: Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources;

- D. the Wild Salmon Initiative has called for the identification of the primary migration bottlenecks experienced by salmon, and investigation into the relative contributions of pollution, low water, high temperature, starvation, or other impediments;

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

- E. the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is appropriately positioned and resourced to undertake the identification of bottlenecks and use the information to provide strategic relief to wild salmon;
- F. an appropriate mobilization of First Nations' knowledge and rights is essential to effectively undertaking this work, and a dedicated position is essential to guide and inform the DFO's approach to wild salmon recovery;
- G. the Wild Salmon Initiative has proposed creating the position of Director of Wild Salmon, Pacific Region, a role which could steer the DFO and coordinate research to identify the cause(s) of or factors contributing to salmon run collapses in partnership with First Nations and municipal, provincial, and federal levels of governments;
- H. First Nations people have specialized knowledge that would be an asset to the role as Director of Wild Salmon, Pacific Region. We are aware of the issues and are very knowledgeable of the salmon depletion concerns;
- I. BCAFN Resolutions 2015-04(a), 2016-01, 2016-16, 2016-17, 2016-18, 2017-10 (d) (e), 2017-16 and 2018-13 confirm BCAFN's commitment to work in solidarity with like-minded organizations, BC First Nations with respect to fisheries and aquaculture issues and to work with First Nations to conserve wild salmon stocks and advocate for and support the recovery and restoration of wild salmon stocks; and
- J. intervention by the DFO and other parties is time-sensitive and urgent due to the limited window for salmon recovery and study permitted by spawning seasons.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly demands that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) make immediate intervention to investigate the historically low wild salmon returns in Canada in 2019, in alignment with DFO's mandate to prioritize rebuilding fish populations and in recognition of the importance of sustaining and protecting wild salmon; and
2. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly calls on the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to create a Director of Wild Salmon, Pacific Region, who is a qualified First Nations individual, chosen in partnership with First Nations, who could steer the DFO and coordinate research to identify the cause(s) of or factors contributing to wild salmon run collapses in partnership with First Nations, marine biologists and municipal, provincial, and federal levels of governments.

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