



BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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### **BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS APPLAUDS BC SUPREME COURT DECISION IN *AHOUSAHT***

**(Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC – April 19, 2018)** – Today, Nuu-chah-nulth Fishing Rights were confirmed in the BC Supreme Court in the *Ahousaht et al v. Canada*. The Court found that the Government of Canada was not justified in infringing on the Aboriginal rights of the five plaintiff First Nations. The Judge ruled that Canada must change its policies and give effect to this aboriginal right with a deadline of one year.

“The BC Assembly of First Nations stands united with the five Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations, the Hesquiaht, Ahousaht, Ehattesaht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht and Tla-o-qui-aht in their legal battle to protect and implement their fishing rights. We call on the Federal Government to take immediate action in implementing the courts findings,” stated BC Regional Chief Terry Teegee.

In particular, the BCAFN calls on the government to immediately enter into discussions with BC First Nations on the following decisions of the Judge:

- (1) The Judge found that the salmon allocation framework cannot be justified and must be changed.
- (2) The Judge found that the Department of Fisheries (DFO) policy of giving recreational fishermen priority to Chinook (Spring) salmon cannot be justified and must be changed to give effect to the aboriginal priority.
- (3) The Judge found that the Department of Fisheries (DFO) policy of giving recreational fishermen priority to Coho salmon cannot be justified and must be changed to give effect to the aboriginal priority.
- (4) The Judge found that the plaintiff First Nations have the right to fish for halibut and other ground fish and sell their catch. DFO had been trying to restrict that right.
- (5) The Judge found that the aboriginal commercial fishing right must be a viable one.

“Today’s decision is a step in the right direction towards meaningful reconciliation and we must see foundational changes in DFO policies and regulations which truly reflects this court decision, as well as the many other fishing related decisions, that support our rights to fish,” concluded Regional Chief Teegee. Regional Chief Teegee who also co-chairs, alongside Regional Chief Roger Augustine (AFN New Brunswick/PEI), the AFN National Fisheries Commission, will be advocating for these fisheries changes during the upcoming AFN Special Chief’s Assembly being held in Gatineau on May 1 and 2.

#### **For further information, contact:**

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