



T'aaq-wiihak

Implementing Nuu-chah-nulth Fishing Rights

MEDIA RELEASE

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5 NATIONS SUPPORT MI'KMAQ RIGHTS-BASED FISHERIES

(Vancouver Island, BC) The Ahousaht, Ehattesaht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, Hesquiaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations support the self-regulated fishery of the Sipekne'katik First Nation, prompted by continued inaction on the part of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

In a September 2020 press release, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs announced that “[September 17, 2020] marks 21 years since the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed the Mi'kmaq's Constitutional right to hunt, fish, and gather in the pursuit of a Moderate Livelihood in R v. Marshall. Despite our rights being affirmed by the highest courts in the country, exercising these rights continues to bring frustrations, conflict, and hardships to our people.”

Despite having the court affirmed right to hunt, fish, and gather in the pursuit of a moderate livelihood, the Mi'kmaq are being continually denied the opportunity to exercise their rights. This has caused First Nations within the Mi'kmaq to develop their own fisheries management plans, and they've now begun to enact them. Asserting their Constitutional rights has been met with violence, intimidation, and escalating tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishers, something being seemingly ignored by the government.

Colin Sproul, of the Bay of Fundy Inshore Fishermen's Association, told the CBC that “[i]n the absence of law and order good people can be forced to take the law into their own hands and the responsibility for that falls squarely on Minister Jordan and her predecessors who have not enforced the rules.”

“We support what goes on back there because we are dealing with the same attitudes and same approach by the government. It's just not acceptable. The government, because of their racist policies, seems to find it easy to stand by and watch non-Indigenous people violate the law, violate the Canadian constitution, and it's okay for them to do that. They say it's too dangerous for them to go out on the water... but what is it like for the Mi'kmaq?” says Wickanninish, Cliff Atleo, lead negotiator for the Ahousaht First Nation.



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About T'aaq-wiihak

T'aaq-wiihak refers to fishing with permission of the Ha'wiih (hereditary chiefs). In 2009, the BC Supreme Court recognized the Aboriginal rights of five Nuu-chah-nulth Nations (Ahousaht, Ehattesaht/Chinehkint, Hesquiaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht) to catch and sell all species harvested within their territories. For more information, please visit www.taaqwiihakfisheries.ca.

For further information, please contact:

Lauren Dean – Communications Specialist, Ha'oom Fisheries Society

P: 250-703-3213

E: lauren@haoom.ca

Photos:

1. A T'aaq-wiihak fisher with his grandson lands Chinook salmon in Tofino. Photo credit: Melody Charlie
2. Wickaninnish, Cliff Atleo, plays the drum while singing the Nuu-chah-nulth song on the court steps in Vancouver, April 2018. Photo credit: Melody Charlie

