

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

January 19, 2024

FNLN Denounces BC Métis Federation's Coastal Water Protectors' Conference and Related TMX Project Accommodation

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), s̓kwx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLN) is alarmed that the BC Métis Federation's (BCMF) Coastal Water Protectors are holding a Coastal Conference on January 20th in North Vancouver. The conference purports to be "...a gathering dedicated to the protection and preservation of our invaluable aquatic ecosystems."

FNLN echoes the request, as set out in correspondence to BCMF from xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, s̓kwx̓wú7mesh, and səliłwətał – the exclusive title and rights holders within the shared territories in which the conference is set to take place – that BCMF cancel their conference effective immediately.

Despite BCMF not being a rights-holder, or representative of Indigenous nations having title and rights, in what is now known as British Columbia, Trans Mountain erroneously and inappropriately signed a Mutual Benefits Agreement with BCMF in 2014 relating to the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMX). BCMF has since been a vocal supporter of Trans Mountain and TMX.

The Coastal Water Protectors is an initiative of BCMF's so-called "Coastal Conservation Department". The initiative consists of two current and ongoing projects – the Co-Developing Community Response project, and the Aquatic Habitat Restoration Fund (Projects) – which are both accommodation measures administered by the Canadian Coast Guard and Fisheries and Oceans Canada for TMX.

The Projects directly and improperly involve BCMF and the Coastal Water Protectors in, among other things, co-developing and establishing a meaningful role for BCMF and the Coastal Water Protectors in marine incident management and aquatic habitat restoration activities in freshwater and marine ecosystems in the Fraser River Watershed and inland watersheds along the TMX corridor, all of which are located in the territories of First Nations.

Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President, stated, "The Coastal Water Protectors' existence is due in large part to funding received from the federal government for BCMF's support for the Trans Mountain Expansion Project – support BCMF has been vocal in giving. BCMF has no right or authority to make decisions with respect to any First Nation's territory in BC, including how to manage and steward those lands and waters, and it is deeply insulting that BCMF and the Coastal Water Protectors purport to do so. It is doubly insulting that this behaviour is directly funded and supported by the federal government."

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, remarked, "The fact that the BC Métis Federation is receiving funding from the federal government for coastal conservation in BC is ridiculous and rejected by First Nations in BC. We yet again call upon the federal government to immediately remove the BC Métis Federation from the Co-Developing Community Response project, and the Aquatic Habitat Restoration Fund, and call upon them, Trans Mountain, and all levels of government and project proponents to



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF
FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Rd.
Prince George, BC
V2K 5S3

Ph: 778-945-9910
Fx: 778-945-9916



FIRST
NATIONS
SUMMIT

1200-100 Park Royal South
West Vancouver, BC
V7T 1A2

Ph: 604-926-9903
Fx: 604-926-9923
Toll Free: 866-990-9939



UNION OF
BRITISH COLUMBIA
INDIAN CHIEFS

401 – 312 Main Street
Vancouver, BC
V6A 2T2

Ph: 604-684-0231
Fx: 604-684-5726

cease involving or engaging with BCMF, the Métis Nation of British Columbia, or other Indigenous groups or collectives who are visitors to First Nations' territories in BC, on matters relating to or affecting our inherent, constitutional, and human rights and title in our respective territories.”

“Without any legal authority or basis, and contrary to First Nations' title, laws, and legal orders, BC Métis Federation and the Coastal Water Protectors purport to be stewards and defenders of land and resources in First Nations' territories, while at the same time also improperly benefiting directly from the exploitation of those very same territories”, stated Hugh Braker of the First Nations Summit Political Executive. He added, “We urge on those scheduled to attend and speak at Coastal Water Protectors' 2024 Coastal Conference to understand who and what it is that you're supporting, know that First Nations in BC are united in their opposition to the assertion of Métis rights in First Nations' territories in BC that is implicitly foundational to the conference, and to boycott the conference if it is not cancelled.”

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

For further information, contact:

Hugh Braker, FNS, Phone:	604-812-2632
Regional Chief Terry Teegee, BCAFN Phone:	250-962-1603
Chief Don Tom, UBCIC, Phone:	604-290-6083