

Thursday, January 18th, 2023

Wayne Sparrow
Musqueam Indian Band

Khelsilem, Chairperson
Squamish Nation

Chief Jen Thomas
Tsleil-Waututh Nation

Re: Letter Dated January 17th Regarding the BC Metis Federation Coastal Water Protectors' Conference

Via Email: jforsyth@twnation.ca

Dear Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Leadership,

I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated January 17th. I respond to clarify misunderstandings as described in the letter. I also write seeking a new relationship between Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, Tsleil-Waututh Nation and the BC Metis Federation.

BC Metis Federation has been planning this Coastal Water Protectors conference on January 20th for months. We have an estimated 90 delegates attending in 2 days. The letter appears to express two (2) main concerns. First the letter suggests that BC Metis Federation's Coastal Water Protector Conference is mimicking protection of Metis Coastal Territory and second that our Metis community did not seek protocol arrangement prior.

Protocol Arrangements (Issue #1)

Please accept the following description of our efforts to support Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation protocol arrangements. BC Metis Federation always respects First Nations protocols and I want to clarify that our team completed the following steps in advance of this conference:

1. BC Metis Federation sent a website submission to Tsleil-Waututh Nation and was contacted by William George-Thomas, the Cultural Program Manager, who jointly handles Community Development. Mr. George-Thomas's email thread is inserted below and consisted of five emails, in addition to two telephone calls, beginning December 12th.
 - a. William George-Thomas had arranged for an elder for a traditional greeting, the elder's name is Margaret George. BC Metis Federation has had two telephone conversations with Mrs. George and she and her son (Norman George, aka Bear George) are attending and looking forward to the conference. We have assisted Mrs. George's arrangement for her and Norman with Tracy Ragazzi (CWP).
2. The BC Metis Federation staff had one telephone conversation and one email correspondence with Musqueam Nation inviting them to not only attend but to be a speaker and/or have an info booth set up.
3. Our BC Metis Federation team was contacted by Mrs. Shadae Johnson of Musqueam Nation, expressing great interest and desire to participate in our conference as a Musqueam artisan. We were at capacity with vendors but moved things to provide additional accommodation for Mrs. Johnson.
4. Squamish Nation has a similar website submission form and our BC Metis Federation team applied but never received a response.

Li taan paasii. Li taan ki vyayn.

From our past. For our future.

5. BC Metis Federation has 10 Indigenous artisan vendors for the conference, of those 10 we have approved 6 that are First Nations from across the province.

6. BC Metis Federation Coastal Conference agenda itself acknowledges First Nation territory. The agenda also showcases that the event is not about land rights or title, it is only about conservation and the selected speakers were identified to inspire Metis attendees to make positive environmental changes in their personal lives.

The following provides 2 BC Metis Federation emails correspondences as examples how our team reached out to Musqueam Indian Band and Tsleil-Waututh Nation seeking protocol arrangements:

From: **Zia Yazdani** <z.yazdani@bcmetis.com>
Date: Wed, Jan 10, 2024 at 11:46 AM
Subject: Invitation to Participate as Keynote Speaker or Presenter at 2024 Coastal Conference
To: <reception@musqueam.bc.ca>
Cc: Angel Fisher <a.fisher@bcmetis.com>

To Whom It May Concern,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Zia Yazdani, and I am the Manager of the Coastal Conservation Department at BC Métis Federation. I am reaching out to invite Musqueam First Nation to participate as a keynote speaker or presenter at [our upcoming 2024 Coastal Conference](#), which will be held on January 20th, 2024, at the Pinnacle Hotel at the Pier in North Vancouver.

Our event aims to gather experts, community members, and BC residents to discuss crucial topics related to coastal conservation and sustainability. We believe that Musqueam First Nations perspective on indigenous involvement in conservation would greatly enrich our conference.

Key details of the event:

- Date: January 20th, 2024
- Time: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- Presentation Time: 15 - 20 minutes
- Venue: Pinnacle Hotel at the Pier, North Vancouver

We are committed to providing a professional and engaging platform for all participants. We will ensure that all necessary equipment is available for your presentation, if you have one. We are pleased to offer a monetary honorarium for your participation. Additionally, meals and snacks will be provided throughout the day.

Due to the urgency of our planning, we kindly request your response by Friday, January 12th, at 5:00 PM. We understand that this is short notice, and we appreciate your prompt consideration of our invitation.

Should you require any further information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or the director of the program, Angel Fisher, at a.fisher@bcmetis.com.

Thank you for considering our invitation. We hope to have Musqueam First Nation represented at our event.

Best regards,

From: **William George Thomas** <wgthomas@twnation.ca>
Date: Tue, Dec 12, 2023 at 11:21 AM
Subject: Conservation Conference Opening and Cultural Request
To: a.fisher@bcmetis.com <a.fisher@bcmetis.com>

Hello Angel,

My name is William George-Thomas, Cultural Manager here at Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

We have received your formal request for your event on January 20th, just a clarification

1. I have extended this invitation to one of our Elder's to seek their availability
2. You asked for a keynote speaker and/or drummer, this would be a separate request,
 - a. Drummer can be arranged!
 - b. Keynote speaker, what would the general topic be for the TWN rep?

All my best,

hay čx^w qə
William George-Thomas | Hunas,
Cultural Program Manager | Community Development
Tsleil-Waututh | səliiwətaʔt

Mimicking Metis Coastal Territory (Issue #2)

There continues to be an incorrect public narrative that BC Metis Federation's work is an expression of efforts to claim land and territory from First Nations. This is not true, and the Coastal Conference has been created to support environmental and water protection behaviours of our Metis community. The Coastal Conference is an environmental education forum with guest speakers from other NGOs and environmental groups about their best practices and guidelines. BC Metis Federation is not claiming water jurisdiction, but our members and community has mandated our leadership to support environmental activities. I have attached the final agenda for your review.

Closing

BC Metis Federation represents about 6000 members with the largest concentration in the lower mainland with significant membership in North Vancouver, Vancouver, Burnaby, Langley, and Surrey. Our Metis members continue to try to understand their Indigenous place in BC and I hope that we create a new relationship based on mutual understandings in the future, not add conflict by any accidental public statements that instill a sense of anti Metis actions.

Li taan paasii. Li taan ki vyayn.

From our past. For our future.

Our Metis community has faced considerable attacks by some First Nation leadership groups in BC over the past 6 months and I urge us to find common ground where Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nation leadership and BC Metis Federation can create open dialogue to problem solve misunderstandings and allow our Metis community to be represented in all socio-economic issues that affect our Metis members where they live today. No different than any other non Indigenous resident in BC.

BC Metis Federation must proceed with our Coastal Conference. Therefore, I hope we can meet as proposed in your letter on a timely basis. BC Metis Federation leadership welcomes an opportunity to meet and try to work through issues and concerns.

I am respectfully asking for your patience and relationship building support going forward. I assure all First Nations leadership that BC Metis Federation is not trying to undermine First Nation's jurisdiction, rights or title. In fact, I reinforce that BC Metis Federation applauds and supports ongoing change as part of the reconciliation work before all of us.

Please remember what your First Nations communities faced prior to the incredible recognition today. We as Metis continue to feel invisible and pushed aside throughout BC. We recognize Metis Section 35 rights are not the same as First Nations rights and title in BC, but the fact is we also live here and are trying to support our Metis members with cultural and language revitalization, challenging socio-economic conditions, children and family issues, and so much more.

I hope that we can find a way to work together to understand our communities better.

Thank you,



Keith Henry
President
BC Metis Federation

cc BC Metis Federation Leaders, First Nations Leadership Council
Honourable Diane Lebovitch, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

Encl. BC Metis Federation Coastal Conference Agenda