

PRESS RELEASE

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Shuswap Nation Tribal Council

DEPUTY MINISTER OF INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS TO PROVINCE: LACK OF CONSULTATION

With the recent release of a letter written by Michael Wernick, federal deputy minister for Indian and Northern affairs to provincial deputy minister of Aboriginal relations and reconciliation, Bob de Faye, it has become increasingly apparent that the federal government does not approve of British Columbia's answer to the Aboriginal title issue: the Recognition and Reconciliation Act.

"While the government of Canada fully respects British Columbia's ability to take whatever legislative and litigation steps that it sees fit, the federal government has played and wishes to continue playing a key role in resolving Aboriginal issues of critical importance to all concerned," wrote Mr. Wernick. "Being briefed in the short term future on these matters and the apparent significant shifts in longstanding approaches ... will be critical in ensuring that this remains the case."

The province of BC has neglected to engage in meaningful consultation with the federal government which leaves little hope for the First Nations of BC to receive fair treatment in the development and implementation of this proposed legislation.

"A hundred years ago we, the Secwepemc, agreed to approach the government of Canada on a nation-to-nation basis, and continue to seek equally beneficial avenues for meaningful discussion and agreements," states Chief Wayne Christian of Splantsin.

"Next year will mark a hundred years since our ancestors requested Canada negotiate and consult with us on a nation-to-nation basis. The world is coming to our homelands for the Olympics and we encourage Canada to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People making a positive impression on our visitors."

The proposed legislation is outside the scope of the Province's power under the Canadian Constitution however well-meaning it may be. Not only does the Province not have jurisdiction over such matters, but it is attempting to violate the division of powers in our country by neglecting to consult with the federal government.

The federal government is absent from the development of this legislation; without which true reconciliation and recognition cannot take place.

The Shuswap Nation Tribal Council continues to oppose the development of the Recognition and Reconciliation Act until true consultation takes place with both the federal government and all Indigenous nations of BC.

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