

**BRITISH COLUMBIA FIRST NATIONS**  
**STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION ON AQUACULTURE**  
**September 2009**

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**WHEREAS:**

- A. B.C. First Nations have title and rights to our lands, waters and resources, and these rights include the right to be self-determining and to manage our lands, waters, and resources according to our sovereign, inherent and collective responsibilities, laws and jurisdictions;
- B. We are committed to governing our lands, waters and resources with respect, and in accordance with the values, teachings and laws passed on to us by our ancestors;
- C. We acknowledge the interdependence we have with one another and respectfully honour our commitment to work with one another where we share lands, waters and resources to maintain and develop resource development strategies and cooperative relationships built upon respect, transparency, openness, accountability and mutual trust;
- D. We have the right to protect, manage and derive social, cultural and economic benefits from the wealth of our lands, waters and resources;

**AND WHEREAS:**

- A. We respect that each First Nation has the right to determine their level of involvement and perspectives on the aquaculture industry based on each community's aspirations, priorities and needs;
- B. We acknowledge that the impacts of the aquaculture industry to ecosystems and to fisheries and aquatic resources are not well understood and in particular that the geographic scope of the potential impacts continue to be studied and analysed. Indeed, we understand that there is a strong possibility that impacts of this industry may extend beyond the proximity of the aquaculture farm sites into neighbouring marine and freshwater ecosystems.
- C. As a result of the *Morton* case, management of the aquaculture industry will require significant reform in order to balance the constitutional management responsibilities of both the federal and provincial governments. Although it is unclear whether the federal government will assume a more active, functional role in the management of the industry or whether it will delegate responsibility to the provincial government, what is clear is that B.C. First Nations need to be actively involved in any legislative, policy and or decision-making process to reform the aquaculture industry in B.C.;
- D. The honour of the Crown requires both the federal and provincial governments to minimize any infringement on our title and rights, and in cases where the government infringes upon a right we are entitled to accommodation and compensation;
- E. B.C. First Nations have a right to be fully informed and involved in any legislative, policy and or decision-making process pertaining to reform of the aquaculture industry as any changes have the potential to adversely impact on First Nations title and rights. We request immediate action on

behalf of both the federal and provincial governments to work with First Nations to ensure our title and rights are respected in the areas of, but not limited to:

- A. The siting of aquaculture operations within B.C.;
- B. The day-to-day management, including the development and implementation of legislation and policy pertaining to aquaculture operations and the industry in general;
- C. The development and use of science in the day-to-day management of aquaculture operations;
- D. The monitoring and compliance of the industry to ensure ecosystem health;

**AND WHEREAS:**

- A. First Nations leadership in B.C. have sanctioned both the Aquaculture Working Group with a mandate to engage British Columbia in matters directly related to First Nations rights related to Aquaculture, and the First Nations Fisheries Council with a mandate to implement the B.C. First Nations Fisheries Action Plan and to protect rights and title, build capacity, and to help facilitate discussions related to First Nations role in management of fisheries;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. We recognize and respect each other's autonomy and support each other in exercising our respective title, rights and jurisdiction. This recognition and respect applies to each First Nation in terms of their involvement and stance on the aquaculture industry.
2. We demand respect for our title and rights, including the right to resource management rights, when farm siting is being determined within our territories. At a minimum we expect that a process of meaningful consultation and accommodation will occur when such sites are being proposed.
3. We demand involvement within the management and decision-making process if farms are proposed within our territories. This involvement is required in order to protect environmentally, socially, and culturally significant areas, to safeguard our traditional food sources, to secure the long-term health of wild salmon, and to protect our right to manage our territories.
4. We demand input into the day-to-day management of the aquaculture industry, as these decisions directly or indirectly impact on our communities, our title and rights, as well as our ways of life. Due to the nature of First Nations title and rights, and the complex environment of the B.C. Coast, we demand that Canada and British Columbia incorporate a local or area management approach with respect to aquaculture that is responsive to local environmental factors and considerations and which engages First Nations in a meaningful management role.
5. We demand engagement in the science that guides decision-making. We want the open sharing of scientific information, to be engaged in the development of acceptance of science tools, and to be engaged in the collection and analysis of data. We expect decisions to be made based on the best scientific information available. We further expect that our local and traditional knowledge will be respected, and incorporated into the science that informs aquaculture decision-making.
6. We recognize the need to be involved in the monitoring and compliance of this dynamic industry to ensure that our title and rights are respected and our resources are safeguarded for future generations.

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The First Nations Fisheries Council and the Leadership Council's Aquaculture Working Group will carry the messages as outlined in this statement of solidarity and cooperation to the Federal and Provincial governments, advocating for the engagement of First Nations at the Nation and community scale in aquaculture management and decision-making.
2. We the undersigned commit to working according to this Statement of Solidarity on Aquaculture to ensure that any actions taken in respect of the aquaculture industry are respectful of our lands, waters and resources, are consistent with our common cultural belief systems, and improve our overall quality of life.
3. As B.C. First Nations, we affirm our commitment, our unity, and our moral, spiritual, traditional, and political accountability to work together in a Nation-to-Nation and community-driven process to secure the long term health of our communities, territories and resources.

Signed by First Nations Leaders on September....