

September 03, 2016

Premier Christy Clark  
Premier of British Columbia  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC  
V8V 1X4  
*Delivered by hand September 03, 2016*

Dear Premier Clark,

**RE: Cleansing our Waters – Fish Farms in Musgamagw Dzawada’enuxw Territories**

We, the Musgamagw Dzawada’enuxw, have travelled with much support from other nations, organizations, and concerned individuals to hand deliver this letter to your government reiterating our concerns with finfish aquaculture “fish farms”, and our demand for their removal from our traditional territories.

We have never ceded our traditional territories to the provincial or federal governments of Canada and we view the destruction of wild fish by the fish farming industry as part of the long history of genocide forced on our people by the governments of Canada. Wild salmon are essential to our well-being and the well-being of our world. Since time immemorial we have protected our lands & waters for future generations.

One third of the BC salmon farming industry is using our territory without our permission and despite our clear and consistent opposition for 30 years. We can no longer tolerate being ignored by the government of BC and Canada on this issue.

The Norwegian and Japanese Atlantic salmon farming industry currently operating in our territory consists of Marine Harvest and Cermaq/Mitsubishi. Recently, Cermaq/Mitsubishi were granted an increase of triple of the biomass of farm salmon in the Sir Edmund Bay site, despite our clear opposition. This is a major salmon migration route, but it is apparent in decision making that local knowledge and science is superseded by other factors. There are many recommendations from the 2009 Cohen Commission, one of which concluded that a moratorium be placed on the expansion of aquaculture industry and the limitation of existing licences to a renewal period of one year pending a comprehensive scientific analysis of the impact salmon farms have on wild salmon stocks. Thereafter, if salmon farms are determined to pose more than a minimal risk of serious harm to wild salmon stocks, those farms should cease operations.

There is no evidence anywhere in the world that the fish farming industry can operate without killing wild salmon.<sup>1</sup> Scientific research done in our territory reports up to 40% of the young salmon leaving our territory last spring were killed by sea lice from salmon farms.<sup>2</sup> The Federal

Court ruled diseased salmon should not be transferred into ocean pens, but there is no clear and transparent evidence this practice has stopped at all.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has the unqualified endorsement of Canada and sets out minimum standards for ensuring the exercise, protection and advancement of these rights.<sup>3</sup> We have the right to look after our food resources & our ecosystem health. The salmon farming industry is infringing on our way of life, by breaking the natural circle of life that have sustained First Nation people since time immemorial. To quote, Article 26 "Indigenous people have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired." and Article 25 "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard."

We put the federal and provincial government of Canada and the salmon farming corporations on notice that we the Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw are the ultimate authority in our traditional lands and waters.

On August 15, 2016, with complete support of our nation, three Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw traditional leaders boarded the Cermaq/Mitsubishi salmon farm in the Burdwood Islands and served an eviction notice to all salmon farms in our territory. On August 18, 2016 a cleansing ceremony was a follow-up action as part of the process to remove salmon farms from Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw territory. On August 21, 2016 a larger contingent of Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw with support from neighboring nations boarded the Marine Harvest salmon farm at Midsummer Island to continue this process. On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, we began our journey down island to garner support and deliver this message.

We have lived within these lands for thousands of years. We have never ceded our territories. In asserting our jurisdiction, we demand that the fish farms be removed from our territories immediately. In doing this we are exercising our indigenous authority to protect our lands and waters, by upholding our responsibility to future generations in this regard.

The province of BC can assist us in achieving our vision for our territories by rescinding the license of occupations that they approved for these companies within our traditional territories.

Our people have spoken; fish farms must be removed from our territories.



Chief Okwilagame

Willie Moon

*On behalf of the Traditional Leadership of the Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw  
General Delivery, Kingcome Inlet, B.C. V0N 2B0*

CC:

British Columbia First Nations

British Columbia Members of Legislative Assembly

British Columbia Members of Parliament

Union of BC Indian Chiefs

First Nations Summit

British Columbia Assembly of First Nations

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fmap.ca/ramweb/papers-total/Ford Myers 2008.pdf](http://www.fmap.ca/ramweb/papers-total/Ford_Myers_2008.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nrcresearchpress.com/doi/abs/10.1139/cjfas-2016-0122#.V7S5da65K7Q>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf)