

For Immediate Release:
BC Wildlife Federation

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Disagreement over Yale Final Agreement

The 37,000 members of the BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF) do not share our politician's enthusiasm with the recent signing of the Yale Final Agreement. "We have the same issues with the numbers of Fraser River sockeye allocated to the Yale as in the Tsawwassen Final Agreement." states BCWF President Mel Arnold.

Combining the food and commercial allocations the Yale First Nation are to receive over 2% of the annual Fraser River sockeye plus some allocations of other salmon species.

"There are ninety six other First Nations on the Fraser River, most larger in band numbers, potentially demanding similar or likely larger percentages.

It is to be noted that another small Band at Tsawwassen also received close to 2% of the Fraser Sockeye in their Treaty.

Then we also have the Bands in the Strait of Georgia, Johnstone Strait, Juan de Fuca Strait and the West Coast of Vancouver Island who also have or are promised a share of the Fraser Sockeye. Historically the commercial and public fisheries have benefitted all Canadians but as these treaties roll out it is clear the only benefit will be to First Nations. And it is clear from the math that not all First Nations will in fact benefit but will lose their current share in the end."

Over the years the BCWF has met with Government officials both in BC and Ottawa and on many occasions raised the question of the "arithmetic" regarding these numbers in final agreements with First Nations. "It is incredulous that our government leaders don't get it. Maybe they just don't care. At the time of the signing of the Tsawwassen Final Agreement only five provincial MLAs had requested briefing notes. We suspect the vast majority of current MLAs are equally ignorant of what is in the Yale Final Agreement."

"How British Columbians can accept the blatant discrimination of voters in the Yale First Nation Government is equally baffling. Non-natives living on Yale settlement lands will be taxed but disallowed a vote in the local government. Eighty seven percent of voting British Columbians told Premier Campbell in the infamous 2002 'binding' referendum that aboriginal self-government should have the characteristics of local government, with powers delegated from Canada and British Columbia'. Once again we see Campbell and his government rejecting the wishes of the citizens of B.C."

The BCWF supports the principle of forming treaties with the First Nations of British Columbia. It does not support the denial of public consultation. "Each First Nation person of voting age gets his say on whether to accept or reject an agreement," said BCWF President Mel Arnold, "when you consider how the cumulative impact of these will affect the future of all British Columbians why should we, as taxpaying citizens accept less than our First Nations people expect?"

For further information please contact Patti MacAhonic, Executive Director of the BCWF at 604-291-9990 extension 230 or at patti@bcwf.bc.ca.

The BCWF is a province-wide voluntary conservation organization representing over 37,000 British Columbian members whose aims are to protect, enhance and promote the wise use of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

The B.C. Wildlife Federation was incorporated under the B.C. Societies Act in 1951 and it became a registered charity in 1969. The Federation is British Columbia's largest and oldest conservation organization.

BCWF ALERT

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