



**ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
PRESS RELEASE/COMMUNiqué  
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**AFN National Chief Welcomes Supreme Court Ruling Upholding Fishing Rights of Nuu-chah-nulth Nation**

(Ottawa, ON) – National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo joins the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation in celebrating the long-awaited victory today from the Supreme Court of Canada which reaffirmed their commercial fishing rights. This final decision now means that all levels of government have no more legal recourse and must now partake in good faith negotiations with the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation to accommodate their aboriginal and treaty rights to fish.

“My nation, the Nuu-chah-nulth, has just won a prolonged legal battle and while we welcome the decision it’s unfortunate that it took 11 years of legal wrangling and cost jobs and livelihoods. The government should be working with First Nations based on the recognition of our rights in the first place,” said National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, the lead plaintiff in this case on behalf of his home nation. “Canada should not be fighting these rights. Canada should be working with us to implement them. We have said many times, sustainable economic development is one key to unleashing the full potential of First Nations citizens and communities in a way that benefits the country as a whole.”

This decision comes at a critical time when First Nations are creating the solutions to unlock their full economic potential by tapping into their inherent First Nation traditional economies. First Nations are seeking to build their economies in Canada’s economic pillar from coast to coast to coast that includes a place for First Nation commercial fisheries.

National Chief Atleo added: “This decision is a big step forward in supporting First Nation governance over fishery resources in all First Nation traditional territories. AFN calls on the Federal Government to fully implement Supreme Court decisions. Fundamental change is needed in our relationship. First Nations have been clear from the offset - negotiation is the preferred more effective and efficient path forward as opposed to the courts.”

The Supreme Court of Canada rejected Canada’s request for leave to appeal the Ahousaht case, sent it back to the BC Court of Appeal to be reconsidered in light of the higher court’s more recent decision in *Lax Kw’alaams vs. Canada*. They argued that the 2009 decision of the trial judge and the original 2011 decision of the Court of Appeal in Ahousaht had properly followed the tests set out by the Supreme Court in *Lax Kw’alaams*, *Van der Peet*, and other leading decisions. That 2013 decision represents the third time the BC Courts have recognized Nuu-chah-nulth Aboriginal fishing rights. It also comes nearly after 4 years of difficult negotiations between the First Nations involved in the case and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The Assembly of First Nations is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada. Follow AFN on Twitter @AFN\_Comms, @AFN\_Updates.

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