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NUU-CHAH-NULTH NATIONS JUBILANT OVER SUPREME COURT DECISION

VANCOUVER – Nuu-chah-nulth Nations celebrated a major legal victory today when the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear Canada’s appeal in the *Ahousaht et al. vs. Canada* court case. The country’s highest court issued its ruling early this morning, effectively ending more than a decade of legal proceedings between Canada and the five nations (Ahousaht, Ehattesaht/Chinekint, Hesquiaht, Mowachaht/ Muchalaht, and Tla-o-qui-aht) with a final affirmation of the Nations’ aboriginal economic fishing rights.

“The decision by the SCC affirms what Nuu-chah-nulth have always asserted and the BC courts have affirmed. Nuu-chah-nulth Nations are fishing people, dependent on our sea resources for our food and our economies. Canada must work with our nations to design fisheries that meet our community needs, using our preferred means to fish, and in our preferred fishing areas,” said Deb Foxcroft, President of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council.

The case, which spanned the last decade, began in June of 2003 when Nuu chah-nulth Nations filed a Writ of Summons against Canada and British Columbia.

Today’s decision from the Supreme Court of Canada represents the second time Canada’s highest court has refused to hear Canada’s appeal in the case. It means that the declaration of the Nations’ aboriginal right, first made by the BC Supreme Court in 2009 and twice affirmed by the BC Court of Appeal, is final and constitutionally protected.

The decision comes after four years of unproductive negotiations between the Nations and the Fisheries and Oceans Canada, in which the Nations have been frustrated by Canada’s refusal to meaningfully engage and accommodate their aboriginal right.

“Now is the time for Canada to negotiate in a meaningful way. Together we can create fisheries that will benefit our coastal communities and all Canadians. The highest court in the land has spoken. Will the Canadian government get serious about negotiating with Nuu-chah-nulth Nations as the Courts have directed?” Foxcroft said.

Media inquiries: Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council President Deb Foxcroft, 250-720-5336.

For more information on the trial, visit <http://uuathluk.ca/wordpress/litigation/fishingrights>.