

Nuxalk House of Smayusta



Our Position on Fish Farms

17 February 2003

"First of all; we acknowledge and recognize Tatau, the Creator through Manakays, the Great Spirit for all that is provided for us since the beginning of time and still is today."

The Nuxalkmc will always care for their wild salmon: the significance of sharing the Nuxalk salmon; the stewardship of the Nuxalk salmon; and the recognition and respect placed on Nuxalk salmon. The salmon within our traditional territories were placed here since the beginning of time by "Tatau," the Creator, as a gift to our People for our sustenance. Our treatment of the Nuxalk salmon is embedded within the cycle of life of the Nuxalkmc and within the laws of our People.

Our position on fish farms is defined by the cultural significance of the Nuxalk salmon to our heritage and its importance to the survival and continued existence of the Nuxalkmc. We, the Nuxalkmc, are opposed to fish farms: we do not want them in our traditional territories. We do not want fish farm products or its feed supply transported through our territories. We do not condone fish farms. We understand the dangers of fish farms to the wild salmon and the environment on which they depend.

All species of salmon are born in Nuxalk streams and rivers and many migrate through Kitasoo First Nation waters. The Kitasoo must recognize and respect this, as traditional neighbours. The Kitasoo must ensure the safety of our wild salmon. We protect salmon spawning grounds and salmon habitat to ensure their healthy returns. The Kitasoo must protect the wild salmon as well.

Kitasoo Chief Archie Robinson states: "Our ancestors shared the resources." The Nuxalkmc respond: "Protect the wild salmon; never put them at risk or expose them to any threat. Fish farms pose major threats to all our wild stocks of salmon." The fish farms are an international and commercialized salmon business that is driven by profit margins.

Farmed Atlantic salmon are not part of our Indigenous Title and Rights and we have never used farmed salmon in our potlatches and ceremonies. "Tatau," the Creator, gave us the wild salmon as a gift to take care of so that we can exist as a People. Wild salmon is an integral part of our Indigenous Title and Rights and is necessary for our traditions. Indigenous laws and spiritual beliefs are enshrined in wild salmon; we cannot change our own laws for monetary gain. The

fish farms are not a sharing enterprise: only a few people profit from them.

The Atlantic salmon product of the fish farms will become the “mad cow” disease of marine foods in the future. The Canadian and British Columbia authorities have mismanaged the salmon and marine resources for too long. They must clean up and sort out the mess they created and not use the decline of the wild salmon stocks and the related mismanagement of commercial fisheries as an excuse to accept fish farms as the business of the future.

What is wrong with what we have? Our Nuxalkmc ancestors left us ample salmon resources to share. Fish farms are not a way of sharing but are profit driven. We will stop any shipment of fish farm products transported through Nuxalk Territory. This warning is clear and is not to be compromised by any party. We recommend that all those who are against fish farms write a letter of support for the Nuxalk or send a statement to the media expressing their views. Many efforts and attempts have been made to break our support base. We must stand strong.

By accepting and supporting fish farms, the Oweekeno Kitasoo Nuxalk Tribal Council compromises the health and well-being of all those who live in Nuxalk Territory. Why have the Kitasoo been allowed to violate the 1995 moratorium on fish farms in the northern waters of British Columbia by installing fish farms owned by Marine Harvest? This act broke traditional and sovereign protocol because the Kitasoo did not consider the impact or consequences on the Nuxalk salmon food fisheries and our People. Assumptions that the Nuxalk approved the fish farms and the transporting of its products through our territories have broken our trust.

Installing fish farms without consulting the Nuxalk or obtaining their approval is not acceptable. The arrogant and greedy behaviour of Marine Harvest (a subsidiary of the Dutch-based multi-national corporation Nutreco), the Kitasoo, and the British Columbia government is insulting to the Nuxalk. The Marine Harvest (Nutreco) fish farms were installed before receiving approval from the authorities of British Columbia and Canada, during the period prior to 2002 when the moratorium on fish farm expansion was still in place. Nutreco's fish farms at Jackson Pass are an example. A public inquiry must look into this corruption and those who are imposing fish farm threats in our communities must be held accountable.

Nutreco claims that almost half of its 16 fish farms “involved First Nations.” Such misleading lies are used by the corporation as selling tactics for promoting fish farms to other First Nations. We resent this because it gives the false impression that First Nations support fish farms. There is a fight brewing involving on the one hand "Indigenous Rights as a First Nation," and on the other "commercial rights" (in collaboration or joint venture with a First Nation). We demand a return to the moratorium on fish farm expansion on the northern British Columbia coastal and inland waters.

Our Indigenous Title and Rights must not be included in the same context as the commercial or business venture of a First Nation. Such collaborative acts require the extinguishing of Indigenous Title and Rights, regrettably with the compliance and consent of some First Nation leaders. Certain compliant First Nations are given “pretend powers” to use Indigenous Title and Rights as collateral. This is using Indigenous Title and Rights as a bargaining chip for economic and joint venture projects. It attempts to give credence to the process, confusing the transactions while obtaining First Nations' consent for relinquishing their Title and Rights.

Already the commercial fisheries have destroyed our eulachon run; now it's the wild salmon that are at risk. The Nuxalk sovereign position is based on the Nuxalk Indigenous Title and Rights Question and does not rely on legal actions or treaty negotiations. Our position does not require us to consult with fish farm companies or the British Columbia government. The Nutreco fish

farms and the Omega fish farm hatchery at Ocean Falls (owned by the Norwegian corporation Pan Fish) are major threats to the wild salmon stocks, the Nuxalk food fishery, the environment, and the conventional commercial fishery. We do not want the fish farm industry in our territories.

Ocean Falls is in the gray area of traditional protocol between the families of the Nuxalk and Heiltsuk Nations. Therefore this makes it off limits to any treaty negotiations. The Omega (Pan Fish) fish farm hatchery is the nucleus of the danger that fish farms place on northern British Columbia coastal and inland waters. This danger that must be stopped while it is still only a threat, before the man-made disaster of industrial fish farms creates a domino effect, destroying our British Columbia wild salmon stocks and the marine environment.

The Nuxalkmc believe that First Nations who are involved or in partnership with fish farm companies in British Columbia have done so without the well informed and educated consent of their citizens. This is corruption for profit.

For the future of our children, grandchildren and those yet to be born . . .

Way!

Hereditary Chief Qwatsinas . . .

17 February 2003

Q'umk'uts' (Bella Coola)