



STZ'UMINUS FIRST NATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Stz'uminus First Nation is deeply concerned with recent decisions of the Province of British Columbia regarding the granting of a variety of tenures on lands and foreshores that are culturally and historically significant to the Stz'uminus people. While the Province preaches consultation, its practices send a much different message.

Dunsmuir Island, located in Ladysmith Harbour, has long played an important role in the traditions of Stz'uminus and contains a 5000 year old burial site. In 1877 Dunsmuir Island was taken by the Federal government's Joint Reserve Commission and over time has since come into the possession of a developer.

Stz'uminus continues to have a strong interest in the island, including its foreshore as an important source of shellfish and other resources. However, the Province, despite stern objections from Stz'uminus, has granted permission to the landowner to construct a wharf on the island over foreshore the Province previously protected exclusively for Stz'uminus' economic development in the aquaculture sector. This recent decision will severely restrict Stz'uminus' economic viability of the foreshore, reduce the available foreshore for shellfish production and introduce pollutants into a sensitive eco-system.

When it comes to the rights of First Nations versus those of landowners and developers, the Province has clearly indicated where it stands. In the case of Dunsmuir Island, Stz'uminus rights and economic interests have been consistently ignored. As a result, Stz'uminus' only recourse is to demand immediate and meaningful compensation for the loss of its traditional territory and the economic benefits that will be severely restricted by the approved development. Anything less will undermine the fragile relationship that already exists between the Province and First Nations in B.C. and will underscore the fact that the Province cannot be trusted to put into practice those ideals of cooperation and consultation that it continues to preach.

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