



**Office Of The Hereditary Chiefs
Of The Gitksan And Wet'suwet'en People**

DELGAM UUKW APPEAL COURT CASE

June 25, 1993

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TABLE SET

VANCOUVER -- For the past 13 months the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs kept seats open at the negotiating table for the federal and provincial governments.

Now those seats might finally be filled.

That's because a special five-member panel of the B.C. Court of Appeal ruled today that the federal government's policy of extinguishment is against the law.

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en negotiating table was set with the precondition that anyone sitting at it rejected the idea of global extinguishment of First Nation's rights.

In a 1992 memorandum of understanding, the provincial government agreed there was no pre-confederation extinguishment of rights.

The federal government refused to sign the MOU and the document was also rejected at that time by the B.C. Court of Appeal.

But now, the five-member appeal court panel said, in a unanimous ruling, aboriginal rights were not extinguished before or after confederation and that they are protected by the Constitution.

The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs look forward to hosting the federal government at the negotiating table while continuing the quest for fair treatment in the courts by taking forward the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

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