

**Aboriginal Aquaculture Association**

**Campbell River, June 27, 2007**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**BC must defend First Nations right to pursue opportunities in sustainable aquaculture development**

**CAMPBELL RIVER** Delegates at the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association Sustainable Aquaculture workshop sent a strong message to the government that it must defend First Nation right to pursue sustainable aquaculture development in B.C. They stated their support for the continuation and expansion of sustainable aquaculture development in B.C.

They reviewed the recommendations contained in the recently tabled report of the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture. “The Committee recommendations have gone too far and will result in the shut down of the aquaculture industry in B.C. which will have a devastating effect on our communities“, states Chief Alfred Hunt of the Komoyve First Nation, a descendent of a signatory to the Douglas Treaty. “Aquaculture provides local, meaningful employment for many coastal First Nation communities”.

If the Recommendations from the Committee were adopted, it would undermine First Nations’ rights, title and self determination regarding the use of their respective marine resources and areas.

Building on the successful models of several First Nation’s currently involved in the industry and on the work that the Association has done in the development of the Aboriginal Certification of Environmental Sustainability (ACES) program, the delegates have put forward their own set of recommendations addressing the issues outlined in the report.

The ACES program in its developmental stage is a management system that would include farm-specific Codes of Practise, environmental compliance protocols, operational standards and a regional management framework for assessing performance and assigning Certification levels (branding, labelling, and incentives). It is a First Nation driven initiative that will ensure that aquaculture is carried out in a manner that respects First Nation culture, values and ensures protection of First Nation aquatic resources. It is a positive approach to all issues; social, environmental and economic.

Adoption by government of the ACES program would lead to a fair and transparent application and approval process and an area specific monitoring system that would enable industry expansion and increased participation by First Nations.

“First Nations want to take a pro-active role with the development of viable resources within their respective Traditional Territories” said Richard Hardy of Pentlatch Seafood Inc. a company of the Comox First Nation.

Richard Harry Executive Director of the AAA says “The Provincial government must give serious consideration to the inclusion of the ACES program as part of their new aquaculture management plan for B.C.”

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