

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The acceptance by the Government of British Columbia of the recommendations outlined in the report of the Special Committee on Sustainable Aquaculture would be a fatal blow to the growth of Aboriginal aquaculture development in the Province. Many coastal First Nation communities rely on the economic opportunities that are provided by salmon aquaculture. Hundreds of First Nation men and women are currently employed in the B.C aquaculture industry. With few opportunities in the forestry and fisheries sectors, aquaculture has been seen by many First Nations as a way to reverse the cycle of dependency.

Richard Harry, the Executive Director of the Aboriginal Aquaculture Association (AAA), states " It is precisely because there is an increased interest in aquaculture development by First Nations that the AAA was established". The AAA strives to assist First Nations that want to pursue opportunities in sustainable aquaculture development in a manner that supports First Nation communities, culture and values.

There are many positive instances of First Nation involvement in aquaculture development. For example, the community of Kitasoo has successfully partnered with industry resulting in increased employment and capacity building while maintaining control over their traditional territory while ensuring adherence to strict environmental monitoring requirements. "The First Nation leadership needs to support and respect the decision of those First Nations who look to aquaculture as an economic development option. We must draw on the positive examples, learn from them and move forward," states Harry. The AAA is taking the lead in the development of the Aboriginal Certification of Environmental Sustainability (ACES), a program that will ensure that traditional First Nations values are respected in the management of the aquaculture industry in British Columbia by combining traditional knowledge of the environment with the guidance of scientific and environmental experts.

The AAA believes that the B.C. Government, when deliberating the recently released report, must make decisions that balance the needs of all stakeholders and signal its support for the potential for growth in this key industry.

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