



MEDIA RELEASE

Ktunaxa Nation

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For Immediate Release

Ktunaxa Nation Chiefs Sign Declaration Reaffirming Shuswap Kinbasket Descendants as Ktunaxa Citizens

Windermere, B.C., May 25, 2005 – Ktunaxa Nation Chiefs signed a declaration today reaffirming that Shuswap Kinbasket people are full citizens of the Ktunaxa Nation with all the privileges and responsibilities afforded to Nation citizens of Ktunaxa ancestry.

The Chiefs' decision to officially reaffirm the Shuswap Kinbasket people's citizenship was made as a result of the Chiefs receiving notice from Shuswap Band leadership that they will remove the Shuswap Band from the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council Society (K/KTC) effective September 14, 2005.

"The Chiefs want to be clear that the decision by Shuswap leadership to leave the Ktunaxa/Kinbasket Tribal Council Society is a political decision and one made without consultation with Shuswap Band members," said Chief Mary Jimmy, 'akisq̓nuk (Columbia Lake) Band.

"Our Ktunaxa ancestors welcomed the Shuswap Kinbasket people into the Ktunaxa Nation," said Chief Mary Mahseelah, 'akinkum̓asnuq̓i'it (Tobacco Plains) Band. "We will not turn our back on Shuswap Kinbasket descendants or on members of the Shuswap Band who are proud to be part of the Ktunaxa Nation and want to remain so."

In the mid-1800s a small group of Shuswap (Secwepemc) people led by Paul Ignatius Kinbasket (whose traditional Secwepemc name is unknown) journeyed east from Shuswap territory into Ktunaxa traditional territory looking for a permanent home. Ktunaxa leadership allowed the Shuswap Kinbasket people to stay in Ktunaxa territory where they eventually settled in the Windermere area.

In 1884, Indian Reserve Commissioner Patrick O'Reilly met with Ktunaxa Chiefs to discuss reservation land boundaries within Ktunaxa territory. As told by Ktunaxa Elder Maryanne Michel in the May 1986 issue of the Ktuq̓q̓akyam News, "...when reserves was made, the suyapi (white man) want to drive the Shuswap back to their homeland. Kootenay (Ktunaxa) Chief Bighorn (Moyeas, leader of the ʔakis̓nuk Ktunaxa) must have told the suyapis, no give those people a piece of my land, we are used to them."

"Since that time, when the Shuswap Kinbasket people were allowed to stay and live in Ktunaxa traditional territory, they have been a part of the Ktunaxa Nation," said Chief Sophie Pierre, ʔa̓q̓am (St. Mary's) Band.

"Without the generosity of our Ktunaxa ancestors there would be no Shuswap Band in Ktunaxa territory today," said Chief Chris Luke Sr., Yaq̓an nuʔkiy (Lower Kootenay) Band. "We allowed them to stay on Ktunaxa land and gave them a place within our Nation."

"The land the Shuswap Band occupies is Ktunaxa traditional territory land. Shuswap Band leadership cannot speak unilaterally with respect to Ktunaxa traditional land or resources on that land," said Chief Mary Jimmy.

"Conversations with governments and third parties, or decisions made regarding the use of Ktunaxa traditional land and resources, must be made by the Ktunaxa Nation as a whole," concluded Chief Jimmy.

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