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## **Ktunaxa Nation Statement on Sinixt Hunting Case *R. v. Desautel***

***Cranbrook/?a-kisk'aq#i?it*** – The Ktunaxa Nation today acknowledged the B.C. Provincial Court decision, released March 27, 2017, finding that Richard Desautel of the Lakes Tribe of the Colville Confederated Tribes (“CCT”) in Washington State has an Aboriginal right to hunt elk in the traditional territory of the Lakes Tribe near Castlegar, B.C. The Lakes Tribe is also referred to as the Sinixt. The Court decision found that the Lakes Tribe traditionally hunted in a territory that included the Castlegar area, and continues to have a right to hunt for elk in that area.

“We acknowledge and respect the long fight by Mr. Desautel and other Lakes Tribe members to have their rights recognized,” said Kathryn Teneese, Chair of the Ktunaxa Nation Council (“KNC”). “The Ktunaxa Nation has always been committed to working cooperatively with other Nations who share an interest in the Arrow Lakes region, and remains ready to do so.”

Ktunaxa ?amak?is, or Ktunaxa territory, includes southeastern B.C. and encompasses the Arrow Lakes region. The Ktunaxa have a deep and long relationship to the area. The Ktunaxa Creation Story tells how a mythical battle involved animal spirit ancestors chasing Yawu?nik, a great sea monster, through the water ways of Ktunaxa ?amak?is. An arrow was shot into the rocks near Arrow Lakes during the battle. Ktunaxa people have continued to use the area since those ancient times for hunting, fishing and other traditional practices. Jason Louie, Chief of yaqan nukiy, a Ktunaxa community near Creston, often speaks of his Grandmother’s time spent in the Arrow Lakes area and how she emphasized the importance of the area in Ktunaxa history and culture.

The Arrow Lakes band included a significant number of Ktunaxa people. The band was declared “extinct” by the Federal government in 1956, and the band’s reserve at Oatscott transferred to the Province of B.C. The KNC and B.C. have negotiated a number of agreements related to Ktunaxa title and rights to Ktunaxa ?amak?is, including a Strategic Engagement Agreement (“SEA”) signed in 2013 and renewed in 2016. The area covered by the SEA includes the Arrow Lakes.

The Court decision found that Mr. Desautel, as a Lakes Tribe member, has an Aboriginal right to hunt elk near Castlegar. The Ktunaxa Nation was not part of the case, and the decision does not address or affect Ktunaxa rights in the Arrow Lakes.

*?akisq'nuuk*

*?aqam*

*Lower Kootenay*

*Tobacco Plains*

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