

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

News Release

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The First Nations Leadership Council mourns the passing of Ronald “Bud” Sparrow, Indigenous rights defendant



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(Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is mourning the loss of Ronald Sparrow of Musqueam First Nation and sends condolences to family and community members. As a commercial fisherman, he took the lead in the struggle for Indigenous fishing rights and the dismantling of the increasingly restrictive regulatory DFO framework favouring commercial fisheries in British Columbia. Mr. Sparrow won a landmark ruling (*R v Sparrow*) thirty years ago (1990) in the Supreme Court of Canada. The highest court in the land recognized existing Indigenous rights to fish for food and ceremonial purposes ahead of other user groups. Since then this ruling has reverberated throughout the judicial system as First Nations continue to battle for and obtain recognition for Indigenous rights, treaty rights and title.

“We are grateful and guided by Ron Sparrow’s important legacy that forged a legal pathway in the fight for our rights. As a commercial fisherman himself, he was determined to have Aboriginal fishing rights recognized, affirmed and protected for himself, his culture and his people,” stated Regional Chief Terry Teegee. “The importance of this court ruling cannot be overstated as it eventually grew into a more substantial and much-litigated duty to consult.”

“We send our deepest condolences to the Sparrow Family and to the Musqueam First Nation”, said Robert Phillips of the FNS political executive. “Ron will be remembered for his deep principles and his determination and perseverance in fighting to have his aboriginal right to fish recognized and affirmed. The Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Sparrow* is known as one of the pillar court decisions for First Nations across Canada and has been an integral component to numerous important court decisions over the past 30 years, and undoubtedly into the future.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated “Ron Sparrow fought for what he believed in – what was just and right. He unapologetically exercised and defended his Title and Rights, setting a precedent for not only First Nations in BC, but Indigenous peoples around the globe to assert their inherent and unextinguishable rights. We honour Ron Sparrow’s legacy and his dedication to Indigenous fishing and conservation.”

Ronald Sparrow passed away late on September 14, 2020 at his home. Due to COVID-19 restrictions services will be restricted to family members. There will be a celebration of life once it is safe to do so.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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