

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

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## News Release

January 11, 2022

### **UBCIC Mourns Passing of Gitxsan Simgiigyet-Hereditary Chief Delgamuukw and Honours his Monumental Role in the *Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa* Decision**

(X<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>wə</sup>yəm (Musqueam), Skw<sup>x</sup>wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – January 11, 2022) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) sends our heartfelt prayers and condolences to the family, clan, friends, and colleagues of Gitxsan Simgiigyet-Hereditary Chief Delgamuukw, also known as Earl Muldon, who passed away on January 3, 2022. Delgamuukw was a legendary and passionate advocate, leader, and humanitarian whose name will always be synonymous with the landmark Supreme Court of Canada *Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa* decision, which confirmed that Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan Title and Rights have not been extinguished by any colonial government.

Last month [UBCIC marked](#) the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic court proceedings that established the framework for Aboriginal Title to be proven in court. As one of three Chief Hereditary Chiefs to hold the Delgamuukw name during the 1997 court case, Delgamuukw went on to play an instrumental role as a named plaintiff. He became a powerful driving force behind the precedent-setting decision that led to the recognition of oral history as a part of Canada's court system.

"Delgamuukw leaves behind an extraordinary legacy that was shaped by his wisdom and teachings, his artistic and social contributions to the Gitxsan Nation, and his indomitable commitment to protect and uphold Indigenous Title and Rights in British Columbia," stated Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of UBCIC. "On behalf of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, I would like to offer our sincere and heartfelt condolences for the loss of our beloved Delgamuukw. As a consequence of his monumental contribution to our ongoing struggle to once again exercise full and complete authority and jurisdiction over our homelands, his name will continue to reverberate throughout all time! We owe Delgamuukw an eternal debt of gratitude! He was a trailblazer"

“UBCIC remembers Delgamuukw not only as an icon of Indigenous rights, but a world-renowned artist and traditional master carver in the Northwest Coast tradition,” stated Chief Don Tom, Vice-President of UBCIC. “He created beautiful masterpieces that celebrated and immortalized Gitksan culture and tradition, and he shared his passion and artistry with the community, instructing at the Ksan (Kitanmaaz) school from 1969-84. In recognition of his artistic contributions Delgamuukw was awarded the BC Lifetime Achievement Award for Aboriginal Art in 2009 and the prestigious Order of Canada in 2010. A respected artist and teacher, he leaves behind a body of work that will continue to inspire and challenge us to keep alive the traditions and teachings that make our cultures and lives so beautiful and resilient.”

“A father figure to many, Delgamuukw uplifted and supported Indigenous communities and countless people throughout his lifetime. UBCIC’s thoughts and prayers are with Delgamuukw’s wife Shirley, their children, and anyone that was touched by his generous heart and warm spirit,” concluded Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer. “The loss of Delgamuukw is heavy as he gave so much and helped so many. He has inspired and will continue to inspire generations of Indigenous peoples from across Canada to build upon the incredible work he helped achieve through the *Delgamuukw-Gisday’wa* decision. Delgamuukw’s memory and work is inextricable from the fabric of Canadian history, and he will be forever remembered, loved, and celebrated as a strong and compassionate Indigenous advocate, humanitarian, leader, artist, and teacher.”

*Family, loved ones, and community paid their respects to the late Hereditary Chief at a virtual service that was held for Delgamuukw on Friday, January 7, 2022.*

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*UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.*

For more information please visit [www.ubcic.bc.ca](http://www.ubcic.bc.ca)

