



# UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

## News Release

January 30, 2026

### Federal Court of Appeal Upholds Discovery Islands Fish Farm Decision: A Victory for Wild Salmon, Indigenous Rights, and the Precautionary Principle

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – January 30, 2026) The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) welcomes the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal to dismiss the appeal brought by Mowi Canada West Inc. and other salmon farming companies challenging the federal Minister of Fisheries' decision to decline renewal of aquaculture licenses in the Discovery Islands.

This decision follows the June 7, 2024 ruling of the Federal Court which also upheld the Minister's decision. Together, these rulings confirm that the Minister acted reasonably, met the duty to consult, and was justified in applying a highly precautionary approach in an area critical to wild salmon and to the rights and livelihoods of First Nations.

For UBCIC, this outcome reflects years of consistent advocacy by First Nations leadership to protect wild salmon, uphold our inherent and constitutionally protected title and rights, and transition away from open net-pen aquaculture.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated, "This decision is a profound affirmation that the protection of wild salmon, Indigenous rights, and the precautionary principle must come before corporate interests. The courts have now twice confirmed that the Minister was right to reject the advice that would have kept these farms in place. This is exactly what First Nations have been saying for decades, that open net-pen fish farms pose unacceptable risks to migrating wild salmon and to our inherent responsibilities to protect them."

UBCIC Chiefs have passed numerous resolutions opposing open net-pen aquaculture and calling for a transition to safer alternatives, including land-based closed containment, as well as supporting intervention in the Discovery Islands litigation as part of a First Nations coalition.

Chief Marilyn Slett, Secretary-Treasurer of the UBCIC, stated "the courts have recognized that when there is scientific uncertainty and serious risk to wild salmon, caution must prevail. This is the

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essence of the precautionary principle. It is also consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which affirms our authority to protect our lands, waters, and resources. This ruling strengthens the legal foundation for the ongoing transition away from open net-pen fish farms across the coast.”

Wild salmon from across British Columbia, including the Fraser River watershed, migrate through the Discovery Islands. UBCIC has long maintained that fish farms in this corridor create far-reaching impacts on the Title and Rights of many First Nations well beyond the immediate area.

Chief Dalton Silver, UBCIC political lead on fisheries, stated “This case has never been just about the Discovery Islands. It is about the migratory routes of wild salmon that connect our Nations from the coast to the interior. The Court’s decision recognizes that protecting this corridor is essential to the survival of wild salmon and to the cultures, food systems, and laws of our peoples. This is a critical step forward in the fish farm transition process.”

UBCIC is calling on Fisheries and Oceans Canada to now apply the same precautionary approach confirmed by the courts to the rest of the coast as the federal government proceeds with its coast-wide open net-pen transition planning.

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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)

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