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IN MEMORIAM

Chief Joseph (Joe) William Mathias
November 12, 1943 — March 10, 2000

FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT PRESS RELEASE | March 10, 2000

CHIEF JOE MATHIAS

North Vancouver - The sudden passing of Chief Joe Mathias was mourned today by fellow members of the First Nations Summit.

"Chief Joe Mathias was a guiding light whose perseverance and dedication to the pursuit of social justice and economic well-being of First Nations people has inspired the lives of many," said Grand Chief Edward John speaking on behalf of the First Nations Summit Task Group.

"The powerful spirit and legacy of Chief Joe Mathias will live on in the hopes and dreams of all of us," said fellow Task Group member Robert Louie.

"His vision and eloquence on treaty and aboriginal issues will be forever in our minds and in our hearts," Grand Chief Edward John said. "We owe it to him and future generations to help make his vision a reality."

Chief Joe Mathias, a hereditary Chief of the Squamish Nation, was known for his longstanding involvement in support of the rights of First Nations in British Columbia and Canada.

"The Squamish Nation and aboriginal people throughout British Columbia and Canada have lost a great leader today," Robert Louie said.

He was first elected to the First Nations Summit Task Group in 1991 and continued to serve in that capacity until his passing. The Task Group is authorized to represent the First Nations Summit on specific issues relating to treaties and interim measures on fisheries, health and education.

In his role as a member of the Constitutional Working Group of the Assembly of First Nations from 1983 to 1987, he participated in three First Ministers Conferences on aboriginal issues and numerous federal provincial meetings.

In 1985, Mathias was appointed to a federal task force reviewing Ottawa's Comprehensive Land Claims Policy. The Coolican Report, which flowed from the task force's work, recommended solutions to improve the claims negotiation process and enhance the settlement of land and sea claims.

In 1990 and 1991, he served as a member of the tripartite British Columbia Claims Task Force. This task force recommended a new relationship between First Nations and the federal and provincial governments. The task force resulted in the creation of the independent BC Treaty Commission to facilitate treaty negotiations.

In 1992, Chief Mathias was appointed a national co-chair of the Assembly of First Nations Constitutional Working Group. The group is comprised of representatives from four aboriginal groups and the federal, provincial, territorial governments.

The First Nations Summit extends their sincerest sympathies to the family of Chief Mathias and the people of the Squamish First Nation at the time of this profoundly saddening loss.



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