

**For Immediate Release
March 17, 2016**

Ktunaxa Nation Pleased with Supreme Court of Canada Ruling

Cranbrook/ʔa·kiskaq#iʔit – The Supreme Court of Canada announced today that it will hear the Ktunaxa Nation’s appeal to set aside the August 6, 2015 B.C. Court of Appeal decision that found B.C.’s approval of a Master Development Agreement for the resort in an area known as Qat’muk did not violate the Ktunaxa’s Charter right to freedom of religion, saw no problem with B.C.’s failure to even consider that right, and determined that B.C.’s consultation with the Ktunaxa regarding their constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights was reasonable.

“We are pleased with today’s ruling from the Supreme Court,” said Kathryn Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation Council Chair. “Our right to freedom of religion should not be held in less regard than that of other Canadians. We are confident that the Supreme Court of Canada will agree that Ktunaxa beliefs and practices are vital to who we are and must be taken into account by statutory decision makers. This fight is not just for the Ktunaxa, but every Canadian who values the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as an integral part of this society.”

“Articles 11 and 25 of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples address the rights of Indigenous people worldwide to practise, revitalize and maintain their distinctive spiritual relationships with their traditionally owned or occupied territories,” continued Teneese. “It is my hope the Supreme Court of Canada is cognisant of the impact this case may have on Indigenous people not just in Canada, but worldwide.”

The application for leave to appeal was granted with costs. No hearing date has been set.

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Qat’muk is where the Grizzly Bear Spirit was born, goes to heal itself, and returns to the spirit world. For Ktunaxa, Grizzly Bear Spirit is a unique and indispensable source of collective as well as individual guidance, strength, and protection, and a necessary part of many Ktunaxa spiritual practices and beliefs. Qat’muk’s spiritual importance is deeply connected to its biological significance for living grizzly bears now and in the future.

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Takisánuuk

Taq'am

Lower Kootenay

Tobacco Plains