



Native Canadians have the right to hunt in many wilderness areas

BBC NEWS

Native Canadians win hunting case

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BBC News, Vancouver

A Supreme Court ruling in Canada has given a group of native Indians the right to hunt at night despite it being illegal under Canadian law.

In a split decision, the judges said rights given to Indians in treaties can overrule current Canadian laws.

Native groups are calling it an important victory but critics say the ruling ignores important concerns over public safety.

Hunting in the dark is illegal because it is widely felt to be very dangerous.

Ten years ago, two hunters from the Tsartlip Indian band on Vancouver Island were hunting at night with rifles and electric torches.

But their only catch turned out to be a decoy deer set up in the woods by wildlife officials.

The two hunters were arrested.

But the pair argued that hunting at night is a traditional practice for their tribe, that a treaty signed back in 1852 specifically mentions it and that grants them the right to carry on doing it.

The case bounced through various courts for a decade but now, the final word from the Supreme Court of Canada is that in this case, aboriginal treaty rights do outweigh the current law and its safety concerns.

Native rights groups called the decision another step forward for aboriginal Canadians.

But the court itself was split over the issue, with several of the judges saying public safety should outweigh all other concerns, even in sensitive aboriginal rights cases.

Regardless, the decision suggests that native groups across Canada can now challenge current laws that conflict with their long-held traditions.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/americas/6205349.stm>

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