



The Annual Elders Gathering 2025 CULTURAL HOST IS Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw Siiyúxwa - The Squamish Nation Elders

Annual Elders Gathering Dates:

EVENT: August 26-27, 2025

(Group Leader Check-In Monday, August 25).

Location: Vancouver Convention Centre

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BCECCS GRATITUDE LIST

Support Fee from Sept. 01, 2023– August 31, 2024

Your support is much appreciated for the provincial elders office!

LEVELS OF SUPPORT

\$15,000 - Thunderbird

\$5,000 - Killer Whale

\$1,500 - Eagle

\$1,000 – Salmon

\$750 – Frog

\$500 – Sisiutl

\$250 - Hummingbird

Hummingbird Level—\$250

Thunderbird Level - \$10,000

1. CREA

- 1. Osoyoos Indian Band**
- 2. Leqamel First Nation**
- 3. Whispering Pines/Clinton Band**

Killer Whale Level - \$5,000

1.

Eagle Level - \$1,500

1.

SALMON LEVEL - \$1,000

1.

FROG LEVEL - \$750

1.

SISIUTL LEVEL - \$500

- 1. Aqam**
- 2. BC Assoc. Community Response Networks**
- 3. Lyackson First Nation**
- 4. Cheryl's Trading Post**

Disclaimer: Health articles, etc. are provided as a courtesy and neither the BC Elders Communication Center Society's Board. Members or anyone working on its behalf mean this information to be used to replace your doctor's and other professional's advice. You should contact your family physician or health care worker for all health care matters. Info is provided in the Elders Voice for your reference only. And opinions contained in this publication are not those of Donna Stirling.



Are you having legal issues?

Such as issues about:

- Roommates
- Loans or debts
- Strata property
- Sharing intimate images

Do you have a dispute with ICBC?

About:

- Accident benefits
- Responsibility for an accident

The Civil Resolution Tribunal can resolve many types of disputes.

- Make a claim using paper or online forms
- Ask for a fee waiver if you have low income
- You don't have to have a lawyer
- A CRT Navigator is available to help you through the process by phone or email

Call **1-844-322-2292**

or visit **civilresolutionbc.ca**

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FRIENDLY CALLS

The Friendly Calls program matches people over 18 years old with trained Red Cross personnel who connect with them regularly over the phone to check-in, provide emotional support, encourage healthy coping strategies, and suggest well-being resources and community connections to other existing services.

Make a connection,
one *call* at a *time*.



Call 1-833-979-9779 toll-free from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. local time on weekdays or visit redcross.ca/friendlycalls to sign up, refer someone who could benefit from Friendly Calls or to become a volunteer.

The Friendly Calls program is safe, accessible, free, and available nationwide.

F.A.Q.

Who can participate in the Friendly Calls program?

No matter where you live in Canada, the Friendly Calls program is open to anyone over the age of 18 who could benefit from greater connection, or may have limited social and family links, and can receive regular support over the phone for encouragement and the power of feeling heard.

What skills do Friendly Calls volunteers require?

It's easy to become a Friendly Calls volunteer — all they need to bring is kindness, compassion, and up to a few hours weekly. The Canadian Red Cross will provide training and ongoing support from experts to ensure they feel confident and prepared to make a positive impact in their community - one call at a time.

How long do Friendly Calls usually last?

The frequency and length of phone calls is tailored to suit a participant's individual needs. Generally, phone calls occur on a weekly basis and can last anywhere from 20 to 60 minutes.

What if the participant needs more than emotional support?

Red Cross personnel can provide additional support, including enhanced coping strategies and community connections to other existing services, including crisis lines providing urgent mental health support such as Crisis Services Canada or the Hope for Wellness Helpline for Indigenous peoples.

What languages are being offered?

Currently, phone calls are being conducted in English and French.

For more answers to frequently asked questions, please visit redcross.ca/friendlycalls.

It's more than just a phone call, it's about *connections* and *community*.

Indigenous Services routinely fails to spend millions approved for children's programs, document shows

Canada says cash was 'reprofiled' for future years, but NDP MP calls failure to use available funds 'shocking'

Brett Forester · CBC News · Feb 12, 2025

Indigenous Services Canada fails to spend tens of millions of dollars approved for use on two high-demand children's programs — money which then "lapses," or expires, under federal accounting rules, official data show.

Nunavut MP Lori Idlout, who learned of the annual funding lapses at Jordan's Principle and the Inuit Child First Initiative through an order paper question, called the revelation disturbing.

"When I read the order paper response, I was just completely shocked, knowing how huge the need is," said Idlout, the NDP's Indigenous Services critic.

"There are so many stories of First Nations and Inuit children and families being forced to be in poverty, being forced to wait for their services, because Indigenous Services Canada just doesn't seem to care."

In a statement, a spokesperson for the Liberal government said the lapsed cash for both programs didn't disappear but was transferred for use in future years.

"All Inuit CFI [Child First Initiative] and Jordan's Principle funding have always been fully exhausted and allocated for requests," wrote Jennifer Kozelj, press secretary for Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu.

"As both Jordan's Principle and Inuit CFI are request-based initiatives, any funding has been reprofiled and/or additional funding was received for the future."

In general, all unspent government funds expire, or lapse, at the end of the fiscal year, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office. That's because Parliament authorizes spending on a one-year basis for the most part, though departments can carry forward up to five per cent of their annual operating budget.

In 2019-20, Parliament authorized \$658.4 million for use on the two children's programs, says the order paper response. Of that, \$96.2 million was unspent by fiscal year's end. Next year, \$743.6 million was approved for use on the programs, of which \$161.5 million went unspent.

Indigenous Services Canada was authorized to spend \$757.7 million in 2021-22, with \$99.2 million going unspent. In 2022-23, lawmakers authorized the department to spend \$1.12 billion. By the end of the fiscal year, the response says \$81.2 million wasn't spent.

That means a combined amount of \$438.1 million went unspent over four years.

Kozelj said funding numbers can change for a few reasons, including unanticipated changes in demand, implementation and the impact of the pandemic, which led to fewer requests for educational and social supports.

Idlout, however, argued the government's consistent failure to spend available money amid persistent child poverty and substandard health-care services "means that reconciliation is just a buzzword for them."

"It just goes to show how much the federal government is failing Inuit and First Nations. We know how much the needs are," she said.

Changes coming

Both programs currently face uncertainty.

Canada was recently ordered to immediately address a backlog of 140,000 unprocessed Jordan's Principle applications, but is challenging the order in court. Idlout, meanwhile, is raising the alarm as funding for the Inuit Child First Initiative will expire completely, or sunset, in spring 2025 unless the government passes a spending bill.

The programs aim to ensure kids can access essential health, social and educational products and services without delay due to jurisdictional squabbling.

Jordan's Principle is named for Jordan River Anderson, a Norway House Cree Nation boy born with multiple disabilities in 1999. Jordan died at age five, having spent his entire life in hospital while Manitoba and Ottawa bickered over who would pay the costs of his home care.

For its part, Indigenous Services Canada has staunchly opposed allegations that it is mismanaging the program.

In a 2024 affidavit filed at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, deputy minister Valerie Gideon said the range of approved expenses has shifted considerably over the years, moving away from the original purpose toward economic supports, like groceries and rent.

She argued the backlog was due in part to users misclassifying their requests as urgent. Gideon listed a range of allegedly misclassified requests, including modelling headshots, a snowmobile, a lawn mower, glow sticks, televisions and a zip line kit.

The family of Jordan River Anderson has recently spoken out on the issue, demanding First Nations leadership address the alleged misuse of the program.

"We need some answers. We need a meeting," said Jordan's father Ernest Anderson in a Jan. 28 Facebook video. The Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy forecasts the program could see about 400,000 applications and more than \$3 billion in approved funding by 2029-30 at the current rates of increase.

The increased volume led Hajdu to announce operational changes "to make sure requests align with the long-term sustainability of Jordan's Principle" earlier this week.

The changes suggest the department will no longer fund items the department previously classified as economic supports, like home renovations and groceries, nor educational supports Canada says are under provincial or territorial jurisdiction.

Snuneymuxw looking to settle land claim along Nanaimo River for \$42 million

First Nation members will vote March 2-3 whether to ratify agreement

Jessica Durling—Feb 13, 2025 Nanaimo Bulletin

Members of the Snuneymuxw First Nation have the chance to vote on whether to accept a \$42-million offer from the federal government to settle the Crown's breach of contract in failing to protect land along the Nanaimo River.

As part of the Sarlequinn Treaty between Snuneymuxw and the Crown in 1854, village sites and cultivated fields were to be surveyed and protected for Snuneymuxw use. However, the the southern portion of the historical village of Teytexen, of about 23.6 hectares just south of the Nanaimo River IR 3 border, was given to settlers.

The land originally served as an important site for Snuneymuxw cultivation of potatoes, hay, camass, fishing and gathering.

The Snuneymuxw nation has been interested in a settlement for more than 20 years, with the first filed 'Teytexen Village Specific Claim' in 2001. In 2007, both Snuneymuxw and the federal government began negotiations, and in 2015, Canada offered to settle the claim for \$5 million.

"After many years of intensive negotiations, Snuneymuxw council fought hard to reach a settlement of \$42 million that we believe gives us fair value for these wrongs and the ability to move forward to invest in a better future for our membership," stated chief and council in an information package.

The valuation was the result of joint expert studies between 2020 and 2023 from the nation and the federal government to estimate the current market value of the lands, as well as factoring in the loss of use of the lands and resources. Included as well is compensation for other losses including grave sites, homes, travel routes and cultural areas, and compensation for anxiety and distress due to tensions with settlers.

If accepted by members of Snuneymuxw First Nation, the claim will result in a \$42-million transfer. In the information document, chief and council said that a 10-year financial plan would outline goals and objectives to use about half the sum to improve the quality of life for members and future generations, while the other half would be distributed, with \$10,000 going to each Snuneymuxw member. For minors, the funds will be held in a trust until they reach the age of 18.

The First Nation requires 25 per cent of eligible voters to participate in the vote, or the agreement will not be settled.

While the settlement doesn't provide land back, it sets out that Snuneymuxw may apply to have 23.6 hectares of land added to reserve, which the nation would be responsible for purchasing or acquiring at its own expense.

Online and mail-in balloting is already underway, and in-person voting will take place March 2-3.

Haida celebrate right to control their own destiny By The Canadian Press—Feb 18, 2025

With tears streaming down his face, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told a gathering of Haida Nation leaders and community members that he couldn't think of a better place to make one of his final trips as Canada's leader.

Federal and Haida leaders signed a historic agreement Monday recognizing Aboriginal title over the archipelago of Haida Gwaii off British Columbia's northern coast.

"Haida Gwaii belongs to you, the Haida people," Trudeau said, as the crowd cheered, clapped and rose to its feet. "This is only the beginning of a new chapter," he said, between the Haida Nation and the Canadian government.

Gaagwiis Jason Alsop, president of the Council of the Haida Nation, told the official ceremony that the agreement was the culmination of "well over 100 years of political mobilization by the Haida Nation."

He said it represents a move from an era of denial, occupation and resistance to one of peaceful coexistence and recognition that "this is Haida land."

The Big Tide Haida Title Lands Agreement affirms that the Haida have Aboriginal title over all of the islands' lands, beds of freshwater bodies, and foreshores to the low-tide mark.

It will transition the Crown-title land to the Haida people, granting them an inherent legal right to the land.

The transfer of the underlying title would affect how courts interpret issues involving disputes.

The community hall in Skidegate was packed full of Haida community members on Monday, including many children, youth and elders. Haida chiefs sitting with Trudeau at a head table wore elaborate regalia, while others at the ceremony wore woven cedar hats or vests emblazoned with bright red Haida designs.

Trudeau told the ceremony that Haida Gwaii is a special place for him, having first visited with his father and brothers in 1976.

"For me, everything has come full circle," he said.

"Haida Gwaii was one of my first trips as Liberal leader. I can't think of any place more appropriate for one of my very last," Trudeau said, with emotion in his voice and tears in his eyes.

He said the agreement was a “monumental step” in the fulfilment of his promise upon becoming prime minister to “stay true to the principles of truth and reconciliation” and restore Canada’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

The agreement enshrines the right of the Haida to control their own destiny and opens a new chapter in which the nation and the Canadian government are in partnership as true equals, Trudeau said.

“A new chapter (that) confirms an incontrovertible and long-known truth: Haida Gwaii belongs to you,” he said to thunderous applause.

After the signing ceremony and a community dinner, Alsop presented Trudeau with a copper pendant, a copper shield and a small carving in the shape of Haida Gwaii. He said two Haida leaders had previously broken a piece of copper on the steps of Parliament in Ottawa, symbolizing what they felt was disrespect and a break in the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples.

“I thought this would be important to recognize how far we’ve come from that time, 2014, 2015, to where we are today,” Alsop said.

Trudeau thanked Alsop and said wearing the copper pendant would help him “be a little more me than I’ve been able to be as prime minister.”

Trudeau was later gifted a traditional Haida headpiece, which was placed upon his head, as well as a scarf.

The prime minister said his government was only able to move forward on reconciliation “because Canadians decided it was time.”

Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree told Monday’s ceremony that it was a moment where history was being made.

In an earlier interview, he said the agreement kicks off a five-year transition period and will require legislation to iron out all the details about its application in practice.

It is the first time the federal government has recognized Aboriginal title through negotiations, Anandasangaree said.

About 15 per cent of Haida Gwaii is owned, managed or used by the federal government, including a national park and Haida heritage site.

A further two per cent are owned by other parties.

The agreement follows similar recognition by the B.C. government last year, and it resolves a four-decade-long fight that began with a logging blockade and became an intensely fought legal battle.

It comes more than two decades after the Council of the Haida Nation launched a legal challenge against Canada and the province, seeking a declaration of Aboriginal title.

The federal ministry said the three parties have been negotiating since 2021 to “incrementally negotiate” matters that would otherwise have to be litigated.

It said Canada provided \$59 million in funding to the Haida in an “advance capital transfer” to boost the nation’s “governance capacity building.”

Alsop has called the new law in B.C. a “step toward peaceful coexistence” with the province. In April he said that the nation planned on taking control of Haida Gwaii’s economy according to its values and traditions, taking a sustainable rather than exploitive approach to the land and the sea.

The provincial Opposition B.C. Conservative Party has criticized the agreement, saying it puts private landowners “at the mercy of Haida (and) future Haida Indigenous law.”

But the First Nations Leadership Council in B.C. has said the agreement does not affect private property rights. Anandasangaree dismissed the concerns about impacts on landowners as a “lot of noise.”

“One of the key elements of this agreement is that private title will not be impacted in any way,” he said. “Your ability to get a mortgage, or ability to get the property encumbered for construction for putting on a lien — all of those will continue.”

The federal Haida Nation Recognition Act was passed last year.
Story by Brenna Owen with files from Kyle Duggan in Ottawa.

Campbell River's Laichwiltach Community Health Centre is now open

The Laichwiltach Health Community Centre opened its doors on Feb. 18
Brendan Jure—Feb 18, 2025 Campbell River Mirror

"This is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Health, bringing together the Primary Care Network, Doctors of BC, and working with Audrey (Wilson) to bring about better access to care for Indigenous people. With this space, we are hoping to bring comfort to those in a culturally safe and trauma-informed area of care for them," said Merci Brown, health director of the Laichwiltach Community Health Centre.

Wilson, the executive director of the Laichwiltach Family Life Society, said the centre was three years in the making.

"It probably wasn't until May/June, I think, that we finally got the okay and the push to go through to actually get the renovations in this building. The Ministry of Health supported this idea way back earlier than that because they actually leased this building before we even started to do work in the building for quite a few months, and I am very grateful that they did that. They supported our vision, and they supported and knew the needs of the community," she said.

The centre will provide care five days a week, with scheduled and walk-in appointments. The Laichwiltach Community Health Centre will support patients with chronic care, mental health and substance abuse, complex care, and everyday health questions, concerns and diagnoses.

DTES support worker says recovery-oriented approach needs to replace harm reduction

By Kristen Robinson Global News—Posted February 18, 2025

A cultural support worker who found sobriety in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) believes the harm reduction model needs to be replaced with a new approach that will get people the help they need to overcome addiction.

Rivers Stonechild, who was raised in the DTES, said the mayor's plan to transform the troubled area by prioritizing accountability, recovery and public safety is a start.

Under the current system, Stonechild said drug users, many of whom have complex mental health issues, are stealing to support their substance use disorders and getting caught in a vicious cycle with no support.

"It's like a never-ending revolving door," said Stonechild. "You see people that are not in their right minds doing what they need to do to survive right, so it's frustrating, it's heartbreaking and some sort of change needs to occur."

Mental health issues need to be addressed with proper supports, he said, while a model such as "reduced use" or allowing drug use with the overall goal of sobering up – needs to take the place of harm reduction.

"I feel like it's a big moneymaker right, and I feel we need to kind of start to funnel that those funds into other social programs that'll help to create some sort of significant change for the people," Stonechild told Global News in an interview Monday.

Ken Sim has promised to break what he calls the “poverty industrial complex” in the DTES, where for too long he said, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent without delivering meaningful change.

“We’re going to ensure that the people who live here get the support they deserve in a place that’s built to help them succeed,” the mayor said Thursday as he and Police Chief Adam Palmer announced a new \$5 million plan to crack down on gangs and crime in the area.

“I think it would be well received,” said Stonechild. “I think there (are) probably a lot of people out there that are profiting off the poverty and the issues, the social problems that are happening within our community.”

Stonechild, who was born in Denver, Colorado in 1980 after his mother left southern Saskatchewan to find work, has a unique perspective.

While his mother struggled with substance use, Stonechild said his father was a bad alcoholic and he witnessed a lot of violence before his parents separated in 1983.

When his mother remarried, they decided to move to Vancouver, and settled in the DTES in 1988.

Stonechild’s first home was at the Empress Hotel, where years later, his uncle would die from fentanyl poisoning.

“I remember as a kid looking out the window and looking down the streets,” he recalled.

Growing up, Stonechild remembers eating cereal and other cheap meals with his mother at the Alexander Street building which currently houses the WISH Drop-In Centre Society.

Even as she recovered from heroin addiction, he said his mother kept them together.

“She did her best with the tools she had,” Stonechild said.

To cope with his early childhood trauma, Stonechild said he started drinking in his early teens.

Alcohol and drugs made him feel at ease, he said.

After battling alcoholism and then falling into addiction following the birth of his first son when he was 21, Stonechild said he eventually found sobriety and culture in the community.

“Having an idea of who I was and knowing where I came from, who my people were, that offered a really good cultural foundation,” Stonechild recounted. “I was able to have that connection of knowing that I was an Anishinaabe person from southeast Saskatchewan.”

In his work to improve people’s lives in supportive housing, Stonechild said he’s inspired by his residential school survivor parents – both of whom achieved recovery. His mother, Lulu Mae Ramirez, was sober when she died of cancer in 2021.

His father, Terence Stonechild, was a week shy of his two-year sobriety when he was murdered in south Minneapolis in 2003. “Without them going through those type of hardships, I don’t think I would be where I’m at and have the insight that I do now,” said Stonechild.

With programming in place at the time including youth workers, substance abuse management and the camaraderie of AA meetings, Stonechild said he was able to make meaningful change in his life. “But as time goes on and policies and procedures and stuff like that in the community change, I think that it needs to change again in order for our people in this community – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to be able to find some sort of recovery.”

Nine years into his recovery, Stonechild said the fentanyl crisis, which has personally impacted his family, also motivates him to give back. “I just want to be able to give hope to people that if I can do it, you can do it too,” Stonechild told Global News.

While watching his two sons, aged 12 and 24, grow up, Stonechild said he’s eager to learn more about Sim’s proposed policy shifts. “Maybe we could see some lasting change that could impact the community for the better.”

Tk’emlups, environmental consultant to share initial findings from site assessments

CFJC Today—Feb 19, 2025

TK’EMLUPS — Tk’emlups te Secwépemc members are invited to learn about site assessments on five portions of land and share their thoughts.

SLR Consulting is carrying out a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment of Tk’emlups te Secwépemc Indian Reserves 1 through 5 as part of the Land Code process.

In a post to social media Wednesday (Feb. 19), Tk’emlups says the session will give an overview of SLR’s initial findings and highlight areas of potential environmental concern. Members will also be able to take part in a Q&A.

Tk’emlups says two sessions will be held on March 12, 2025, at Moccasin Square Garden, although the exact times will be announced closer to the date.

Wet'suwet'en leader wants accountability from RCMP after judge finds Charter rights breached

Jackie McKay · CBC News · Posted: Feb 21, 2025

RCMP says it is reviewing the judge's decision

A Wet'suwet'en leader who will have her sentence reduced after a judge found RCMP breached her Charter rights during her arrest at a pipeline blockade says it doesn't feel like justice was served.

"I never believed that the colonial court system could provide justice for us," said Sleydo' (Molly Wickham), a wing chief of the Gidimt'en Clan of the Wet'suwet'en Nation.

Sleydo' said Justice Michael Tammen's decision to find there was an abuse of process during police raids was a step in the right direction.

Tammen found Sleydo', Shaylynn Sampson, a Gitxsan woman with Wet'suwet'en family ties and Corey Jocko, who is Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) from Akwesasne, guilty of criminal contempt of court last year for breaking an injunction against blocking work on the Coastal GasLink pipeline in November 2021.

The three brought forward an abuse of process application alleging RCMP used excessive force during their arrests and that the group was treated unfairly while in custody. It asked the judge to stay the criminal contempt of court charges or to reduce their sentences based on their treatment by police.

On Tuesday, Tammen decided some of the accused's Section 7 rights— life, liberty, and security of person — were breached during the police raid. As a result, he will reduce their sentences, when sentencing takes place in the coming months.

"Nobody even really knows the extent of the harassment, violence and intimidation that we have experienced, and this is just the tip of the iceberg of what we have talked about in court," said Sleydo'.

Sleydo said bringing forward the abuse of process application was important to try and bring accountability for the actions taken by the RCMP's Community-Industry Response Group (C-IRG), which led the enforcement of the injunction.

The RCMP said in a statement to CBC Indigenous that it acknowledges and respects the court's findings and is in the process of reviewing the decision.

Federal Public Safety Minister David McGuinty said his office respects the outcome of the court's decision and will be looking at Tammen's decision in terms of the best way to proceed, to take any corrective measures internally.

The B.C. Prosecution Service said it accepts the decision of the court and does not intend to file an appeal on the ruling.

Defence lawyer Frances Mahon said Tammen's decision that there had been an abuse of process was "a pretty rare finding to get from a court."

Tammen condemned comments made by several police officers on two different audio recordings comparing Sleydo' and Sampson to orcs for wearing red hand prints painted over their mouths — a symbol that represents missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

"My hope is that those RCMP officers will be ashamed of themselves and that there's going to be more education and discipline within the RCMP itself to ensure that this type of disrespect doesn't happen again, and particularly when people are in their custody after being arrested," said Mahon.

Amnesty International statement

Jocko said he doesn't feel like they have won or lost with sentencing still ahead.

"We don't know what's going to happen yet, so super mixed emotions right now for me, personally," said Jocko.

Amnesty International has announced that if the three are sentenced to jail or house arrest it will designate them as prisoners of conscience.

The court had to put people in an overflow courtroom because there wasn't enough space for everyone who came to hear Tammen's decision being read Tuesday.

"I feel like that is what the victory is to me, is the amount of community support that we have," said Sampson.

Sampson said the court proceedings felt like an "important fight to have" even though she said she never felt like the court system would bring them a just outcome.

B.C. Conservative MLA backs lawyer in residential school row with Law Society

The Canadian Press—Chuck Chiang and Marcy Nicholso—Published Feb 24, 2025

Lawyer James Heller unsuccessfully pushed for the society's training material to say there were "potentially" burial sites at a former Kamloops residential school

The B.C. Opposition critic for the Attorney General Ministry is questioning the "apparent mistreatment" of a lawyer who asked for the rewording of Law Society training material about residential schools.

Dallas Brodie of the B.C. Conservatives says on social media that she'll reach out to Attorney General Niki Sharma and the Law Society of British Columbia in the coming days about the situation facing lawyer James Heller.

Brodie's posts on Saturday shared a link to an article about Heller, who unsuccessfully pushed last year for the society's training material to say there were "potentially" burial sites at a former residential school in Kamloops, instead of using more definitive language.

Heller is suing the society over what he calls "false and defamatory" imputations of racism that he says the society republished, while Brodie says in her posts that there are "zero" confirmed child burial sites at the school.

B.C. Conservative Leader John Rustad said Monday that he asked Brodie to take the post down over concern that her views could be "misinterpreted" to refer to "the whole issue" of residential schools, as opposed to there not being any bodies "exhumed or found" at the Kamloops site.

Rustad said he attended Truth and Reconciliation hearings in Vancouver and knows that thousands of children did not return home from the schools, and those who died were not sent home for burial.

"They buried them on sites and ... just about every residential school in the country has a cemetery, has children who passed at a residential school who have been buried there, so that's just the facts."

Brodie's post on X hadn't been removed by late Monday morning.

The Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation said in 2021 that ground-penetrating radar provided "confirmation of the remains of 215 children" at the school site but last year said the radar found "confirmation of 215 anomalies."

Brodie and the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation have not responded to requests for comment, while Heller declined to speak on the record.

The Law Society of B.C. said it wouldn't provide comment on the case because the matter was before the courts.

In her social media post, Brodie says she was "compelled to act" as the attorney general critic.

"The number of confirmed child burials at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School site is zero," her post says. "Can we trust our legal system if lawyers are no longer free to insist upon the facts?"

Sharma said on Monday that "thousands of children were sent to residential schools to eradicate their First Nations culture, and many of those children never returned home."

"It's a shame that the Conservatives are focused on dividing people, rather than on bringing them together so we can build a stronger future here in B.C.," Sharma said in a statement. B.C. Indigenous Relations Minister Christine Boyle said on social media that Brodie's comments were "abhorrent behaviour" and there is "no place in B.C. for residential school denialism."

Brodie had previously drawn criticism for comments made when she was running as a candidate in Vancouver-Quilchena in last fall's B.C. election.

She said that when "people say they want to be First Nations," that comes with the responsibility to take care of people in the Downtown Eastside.

Canada's special interlocutor on unmarked graves and missing children said in a report last year that despite the "well-documented reality" of residential-school deaths, some Canadians have made a concerted effort to attack the truths of survivors, Indigenous families and communities.

The report by Kimberly Murray says the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc made an announcement "that up to 215 potential unmarked burials" took place at the Kamloops school site, resulting in global attention for the issue.

More than 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend residential schools in Canada, the last of which closed in 1996.

Musqueam First Nation, feds sign historic agreement to share revenue generated by Vancouver airport

CBC News · Posted: Feb 24, 2025

YVR sits on Sea Island in the Fraser River, traditional Musqueam territory

The federal government has announced an agreement to share revenue generated by Vancouver International Airport (YVR) ground lease revenues with the Musqueam First Nation.

The deal was signed at a ceremony held at the Musqueam Cultural Centre in Vancouver on Monday and is being heralded as the first major federal government infrastructure to have any form of Indigenous revenue sharing.

Musqueam Coun. Wendy John said the agreement is groundbreaking.

"When we look at the history of Musqueam, we've been here for over 8,000 years," said John.

"Think about it. [The government] has said for years that we don't even own the land. And now they're saying not only are we recognizing in an incremental way your rights and title, we're going to share, as we should have been all along, the revenue that's generated off your asset of owning that land."

John said the details and the value of the agreement are being kept confidential.

YVR sits on Sea Island in the Fraser River, traditional Musqueam territory.

The federal government controls the land and collects lease revenue from the Vancouver Airport Authority.

"This is a monumental step forward," said Gary Anandasangaree, minister of Crown-Indigenous relations and northern affairs. "The revenue sharing agreement represents a key milestone in our shared journey to reconciliation."

In 2017, YVR agreed to give one per cent of its annual gross revenue — the equivalent of \$5 million that year — to Musqueam, along with 10 annual \$10,000 scholarships.

House to be picked up, moved and donated to Island-based First Nation

by Ethan Morneau—February 24, 2025—CHEK NEWS

There's a big move for an even bigger cause happening in Campbell River this week as Habitat for Humanity Vancouver Island North (VIN) picks up and donates a house to a local First Nation, where a new family will get to call it home.

The two-bedroom house currently at 461 Hilchey Rd. in Campbell River has already been cut into two sections to make the multi-night move easier for crews.

The interior is about 1,200 square feet, according to Habitat VIN, and the move itself is happening over two nights, on Monday and again on Wednesday (Feb. 24 and 26).

This upcoming feat means the house will avoid demolition. As a result, an estimated 15 tons (13.61 metric tonnes) of waste will be diverted from the local landfill, the group says.

"We are extremely pleased to work with the Homalco First Nation to donate this viable home, rather than having it end up in the landfill," said Jeff West, the non-profit's executive director, in an email to CHEK News Monday.

Signs show Belton Bros. Structure Movers will be handling the move.

The First Nation will then refurbish the house over the coming months — something Habitat VIN says is more cost-effective than building from scratch.

On its website, Campbell River-based Homalco says its community is growing but struggling to find housing that is safe and meets its needs.

The Nation "has a small land base and limited houses available, but responding to this growing need is top priority. We have a strong desire for housing that is safe, well cared for, and available for members who want to live in Homalco."

West adds in his statement that "the need for housing touches all communities, and solutions lie in creative approaches and meaningful partnerships."

A history of housewarmings

"Interesting fact, our understanding is that the house was originally moved to the property in the 1970s, so this will be move (number two) for it," noted West.

Habitat VIN, established in 2004, serves the northern section of the Island, from roughly Bowser to Port Hardy. It prides itself on offering affordable homeownership and has provided safe homes for 57 families and counting, reads its website.

Families actually have to put in about 500 volunteer hours to get the keys to a new Habitat house, which comes with a mortgage geared to their income.

“The affordable mortgage payments go into a revolving fund that allows Habitat for Humanity to build more homes and provide more people with affordable homeownership opportunities,” the group says on its web-site.

The property on Hilchey Road is a Habitat VIN build site with plans to develop it into a 20-unit complex, according to the group. Next door, 11 townhouse-style houses, built by Habitat crews, have been occupied for several years now.

West says what’s in the works requires an “ambitious fundraising plan,” and people are encouraged to donate by visiting habitatdonate.com. Shopping at the local ReStore (1725 Willow St.) or donating to the store will also help fund such projects.

Much-needed housing

In fall 2023, Habitat VIN transformed the same house into a haunted house to scare up funds for affordable housing. The two-night Halloween event was a success, with more than \$2,300 collected from the 450 or so attendees.

At the time, Habitat staff told CHEK News that housing costs were out of reach for many local families. Community engagement manager Chrystal Arnet said donating the house to the Homolco community would help “meet some of their needs.”

In January of this year, the Canadian Real Estate Association said the benchmark price of a single-family home in Campbell River was \$691,900 in December 2024.

That was up four per cent from the previous year, it said.

“Being Habitat, we didn’t want to destroy or deconstruct the home. So we wanted to make sure it went somewhere that was needed,” Arnet added at the time.

B.C. First Nations express concern over fast-tracking projects to counter tariffs threat

First Nations, environmental organizations and the BC Conservatives are concerned about the government’s plan for speedy project permitting, saying details are lacking

By Shannon Waters—Feb. 25, 2025—The Narwal.ca

The B.C. government’s plan to fast-track resource and energy development in response to the threat of U.S. tariffs is not a guarantee all projects will be built, Finance Minister Brenda Bailey said last week.

“Acceleration doesn’t necessarily mean only getting to yes,” Bailey said in the legislature on Feb. 19.

“Acceleration can also mean getting to no, because we’re still keeping the vital protection of the environment and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples as our guiding light on these decisions.”

The government’s new plan to “expedite” 18 energy and mining projects remains vague, but its Feb. 18 throne speech — which serves as a blueprint for government priorities over the next year — included a focus on “prioritizing efficiency and regulating in a way that makes sense.” The speech also emphasized the need to “grow a stronger, more self-sufficient economy” in response to economic belligerence from the U.S.

The expedited project list includes nine wind projects that will not be subject to environmental assessments and the North Coast transmission line, which will power liquefied natural gas (LNG), mining and other

industries. In January, Premier David Eby announced the \$3-billion line will get speedy permitting under the BC Energy Regulator, whose authority will be broadened this spring to include major transmission lines and renewable energy projects.

The push to accelerate project permitting has drawn criticism from environmental organizations, First Nations and opposition politicians.

“I think the government has put the cart a little bit ahead of the horse here when it comes to trying to fast track some of these projects, but not having that process in place for exactly how you’re going to do that in the important component of consultation with First Nations,” Scott McInnis, the Conservative Party of BC’s Indigenous relations and reconciliation critic, told The Narwhal.

Robert Phillips, from the First Nations Summit political executive, said the government’s recent announcement indicates politicians have let themselves get “caught up in the momentum” generated by the U.S. tariff threat, while sidelining important considerations like Indigenous Rights and Title. Phillips is a member of the B.C. trade and economic security taskforce Eby struck to craft the province’s response to Trump’s tariff threat.

“There are some significant concerns that we have to discuss and negotiate,” Phillips said in an interview. “First Nations are not stakeholders — we negotiate with Canada on a nation to nation basis and we negotiate with British Columbia government to government. If they’re going to do this, then definitely we’re not going to be pushovers, that’s for sure.”

In response to the expedited projects announcement, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs warned that the province’s response to the tariff threat must “uphold the inherent and constitutionally protected title and rights and jurisdictions of First Nations.”

“Direct involvement of First Nations in the development and implementation of any related concessions or retaliatory and relief measures is vital,” Terry Teegee, regional Chief of the B.C. Association of First Nations, said in a statement.

Nanwakolas Council president Dallas Smith, whose organization represents six First Nations on northern Vancouver Island and the central South Coast, sees room to improve an environmental assessment process he described as “bloated.” But he does not believe First Nations will allow projects to proceed without a thorough appraisal of their impacts.

“It’s definitely necessary for us to find a more efficient path through the environmental assessment,” Smith said in an interview. “But even with the province not requiring environmental assessments [for wind projects], I can guarantee every First Nations community is still going to ask the same fundamental questions that are asked during an environmental assessment. They’re just going to ask it in a different room and through a different process.”

Lack of communication about expediting resource projects sparks frustration

The government’s plan to fast-track two mining projects as part of its tariff response took the Tahltan Nation by surprise. Two of the mine projects slated for fast-tracking — the Eskay Creek mine revitalization project and the Red Chris Mine expansion — are on the nation’s territory, and it has signed decision-making agreements with the province for both projects.

“Premier Eby’s decision to expedite two projects in Tahltan territory without recognizing the necessity of obtaining the Tahltan Nation’s consent does not align with true reconciliation,” Iskut Band Chief Marie Quock said in a statement.

The “frustrated” statement from the nation suggests “a bit of hubris or lack of planning” on the government’s part, according to Kevin Hanna, an associate professor with the University of B.C. Okanagan’s faculty of earth, environmental and geographic sciences.

“That to me is non-negotiable — Indigenous engagement and consent,” he said in an interview. “You have to get that right.”

Effective planning and decision-making processes, like those specified in the agreements between Tahltan Nation and the province, make it easier to streamline permitting, he added.

“If you don’t have that, then you have a problem.”

The NDP government’s communication about its fast-tracking plans could have been better, Smith, with the Nanwakolas Council, said.

“I wish the government would work with us a little bit more before they go public with some of these ideas that many of us support,” he told The Narwhal.

“It’s important to talk about how we’re making things more efficient, but we’re not throwing out the years of progress we’ve made around reconciliation and joint decision making based on an expedited process,” he added. “That expedited process just has to be inclusive of First Nations.”

Cutting consultation corners could lead to court challenges: lawyer

Deborah Curran, executive director of the Environmental Law Center at the University of Victoria, said taking the fast-tracking effort too far could breach Section 35 of the federal Constitution Act, which recognizes and affirms Aboriginal rights in Canada.

“The duty of the province is to assess the potential infringement of any activity or development that’s going forward that might have an impact on Aboriginal and Treaty Rights, and then to work out a process by which they are consulting and accommodating those interests,” she said in an interview. “It’s unclear to me how you could possibly expedite that constitutionally mandated process.”

Courts have also affirmed the government has obligations to uphold Indigenous Rights and Title and has historically fallen short of those obligations. In 2021, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled the province had breached its treaty obligations to Blueberry River First Nations by allowing decades of development to degrade the nation’s land. (After inking an agreement with the province in 2023 to uphold the court’s requirements, Blueberry River First Nations took the province back to court in 2024, alleging B.C. has failed to uphold the agreement.)

The court decision states the province’s permitting processes failed to account for the impacts dozens of resource projects approved over decades have had on the nations’ territory, Curran explained.

“It’s unclear to me how exempting even good projects like green energy projects from environmental assessment is going to enable the province and Indigenous nations to assess what the cumulative impacts are,” she said.

One of the energy projects the government intends to expedite — NorthRiver Midstream’s NEBC connector, a pair of natural gas pipelines that would straddle the B.C.-Alberta border — crosses Blueberry River First Nations’ territory. In a statement to The Narwhal, Blueberry River council members said the nations have reached an agreement with the company that upholds Treaty Rights.

“Blueberry looks forward to continuing to build a positive relationship with NorthRiver and other project proponents,” the statement said. “Blueberry’s council continues to support balanced industrial development in northeast B.C. that respects our Treaty Rights while contributing to economic growth.”

According to Bailey, B.C.’s finance minister, the province plans to reduce the time it takes for projects to reach the finish line — or the end of the line — rather than letting them linger in limbo.

“What we’re getting rid of is death-by-maybe,” she said.

McInnis, with the BC Conservatives, said he’s keen to see how the NDP will achieve its stated goals while fulfilling its consultation obligations.

“The government has, in my opinion, painted themselves in a corner here with trying to appease the public as far as getting some projects moving to generate revenue for the province,” he said. “But there are processes that understandably have to be followed and we just don’t have those details yet as to how they’re going to do that.”

Heiltsuk Nation Launches Charter Challenge Against RCMP for Failure to Enforce Band Council Bylaws: UBCIC

By refusing to enforce Indigenous trespass bylaws, while enforcing property laws in non-Indigenous communities, the RCMP engages in unequal and discriminatory treatment.

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA (February 25, 2025) – The Heiltsuk Nation has filed a Charter Challenge lawsuit against the RCMP in BC Supreme Court, claiming the force’s ongoing failure to enforce trespass bylaws on Heiltsuk reserve lands, duly enacted under the Indian Act, amounts to unequal and discriminatory treatment that infringes their section 15 Charter rights to receive equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and other Indigenous leaders joined the Heiltsuk at a press conference, affirming the RCMP’s failure to enforce is a Canada-wide problem that erodes the rule of law in First Nations communities; exacerbates systemic problems involving substance abuse, mental health issues, and violence against women and girls; and deprives First Nation governments of the necessary tools to protect their communities.

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs Council passed a resolution on February 13th supporting the Heiltsuk (Resolution no. 2025-15) and calling on the RCMP to enforce First Nations' bylaws.

"We are launching this lawsuit to secure equal treatment and enforcement of trespass bylaws by the RCMP, to protect our communities and save lives," said Marilyn Slett, elected Chief of the Heiltsuk Nation. "Today, when a non-Indigenous municipality, landowner or business requests enforcement of a property law, the RCMP enforces it without question, but when an Indigenous government makes the same request, we are refused. This is racist and discriminatory, and it is putting our lives at risk."

Heiltsuk have produced a short and powerful testimonial video (3:35) about the issue for media.

Like many Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, Bella Bella is experiencing a crisis of public safety, due to violence, and to addictions exacerbated by drug-dealing. These harms are worsened by the RCMP's refusal to enforce bylaws, as offenders can act freely without fear of enforcement, creating an atmosphere of fear and lawlessness. Given the risk of violence and a lack of action, witnesses are reluctant to agree to testify, to press charges, or to even provide basic facts to the RCMP, further undermining trust and putting reconciliation further out of reach.

"The RCMP's failure of enforcement is racist and discriminatory, and it violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. "They have no problem enforcing bylaws to keep non-Indigenous Canadians and businesses safe, but when it comes to Indigenous people, they have an illegal double standard. We stand with the Heiltsuk Nation in calling on the RCMP to enforce First Nations' bylaws across Canada." "When Indigenous leaders ask the RCMP to enforce their bylaws, which are subordinate federal legislation with force and effect under the Indian Act, they are refused with claims that the bylaws must "go through RCMP legal services for their review" before they can be enforced.

Even though the RCMP does not question, pick, or choose which federal laws to enforce in any other instance, they are choosing to ignore federal laws passed by Indigenous governments, despite there being no legal impediment preventing them from enforcing.

Like other First Nations across Canada, Heiltsuk Tribal Council has enacted bylaws relating to residency and trespass, as per section 81(1) of the Indian Act, which authorizes councils to make bylaws for a variety of purposes, including:

- The observance of law and order.
- The prevention of disorderly conduct and nuisances.
- The removal and punishment of persons trespassing on a reserve or frequenting a reserve for prohibited purposes.

The Heiltsuk Nation's lawsuit seeks treatment equal to that provided to non-Indigenous communities, through assistance in removing any individual who has no right to reside on reserve lands, has lost residency rights due to serious criminal activity, or whose activities create a risk to public safety, in accordance with the Nation's *Ġvìlàs* (Heiltsuk law).

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The Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line (1-800-721-0066) is available 24 hours a day for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their residential school experience.

Provided by the Government of British Columbia: People struggling with opioid addiction can call 1-833-804-8111 toll-free for immediate assistance from a dedicated team, including doctors and nurses, who can prescribe life-saving opioid agonist medications.

ANNUAL BC ELDERS GATHERING INFO CORNER

**DATES: THE 2025 ANNUAL ELDERS GATHERING
WILL BE AUGUST 26-27, 2025**

August 25th - Check-in for Group Leaders only

PLACE: Vancouver Convention Centre, East Building