



March 15, 2024

Dear residents of Haida Gwaii –

Since 2002, the Council of the Haida Nation and the Province of B.C. have been preparing for a court case on the question of Aboriginal title on Haida Gwaii, while trying to find a solution through negotiations. Our shared goal in talks over the past few years has been to recognize Haida's Aboriginal title through a negotiated agreement.

The purpose of this open letter is to provide you with an update on the process of formally recognizing the Haida Nation's title and rights. For more than 20 years, B.C. and the Haida Nation have been engaging constructively on new, successful approaches to reconciliation. These have included jointly managing aspects of natural resource and land-use decision-making on Haida Gwaii.

The Province and the Council of the Haida Nation have completed several reconciliation initiatives, including the groundbreaking Kunst'aa Guu-Kunst'aayah Reconciliation Protocol in 2009. The protocol, and the accompanying Haida Gwaii Reconciliation Act, ushered in shared decision-making between the two governments, in forestry and protected area management on Haida Gwaii.

We have taken several positive steps towards making things right on Haida Gwaii. In 2021, the Haida Nation, Province and Canada signed the GayGahlda • Kwah.hlahl.dáya "Changing Tide" Framework for Reconciliation. In 2023, the Haida Nation, Canada, and the Province entered the Nang K'uula • Nang K'úulaas Recognition Agreement, which recognizes the Haida Nation as the holder of Haida title and rights, and the Council of the Haida Nation as the governing body of the Haida Nation.

We are pleased to report that we have reached a draft agreement on the next phase of title implementation, which we hope to finalize and approve this spring. If approved, the agreement would recognize Haida's Aboriginal title throughout Haida Gwaii. The draft agreement is clear: recognizing Aboriginal title will not impact anyone's private property, or local government jurisdiction and bylaws on Haida Gwaii. It would also confirm that provincial laws continue to apply.

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## **What does this mean for you?**

Highways, airports, ferry terminals, health care, and schools would not be impacted. You would continue to receive municipal services and pay your property taxes in the same way you do today. Provincial leases, permits or other approvals to use Crown lands remain in effect. There would be no change in laws for private property, local governments, public infrastructure, programs or services.

## **There is more engagement to come.**

If the agreement is approved, changes will happen over time. The Council of the Haida Nation and the Province would work together and negotiate how provincial and Haida laws can work together, engaging with local governments, residents and others about those discussions. Land and resource decisions would continue to be made through existing processes already negotiated and in place between the Province and Council of the Haida Nation.

## **Why this approach?**

The Haida Nation has a very strong Aboriginal title case to Haida Gwaii. Rather than waiting for the uncertainty of a court decision declaring title, we feel a better approach is to work together on a solution – one that recognizes Haida's Aboriginal title to lands on Haida Gwaii, while confirming the existing private property, local government and business interests of everyone on the islands.

We are working to finalize the agreement this spring. Recognizing Aboriginal title is another foundational step in reconciliation for the Haida Nation and the Province, decades in the making.

**You are invited** to attend a community meeting to learn more:

***March 26, 2024 at 7:00pm at the Daajing Giids Community Hall, 134 Bay St.***

Additional community meetings are being scheduled in Masset, Port Clements and Sandspit as well – dates to be confirmed.

Please email [IRRCoastNegotiations@gov.bc.ca](mailto:IRRCoastNegotiations@gov.bc.ca) to receive updates or if you have questions. You can also find more information at <https://gov.bc.ca/HaidaTitle>.

Murray Rankin  
Minister of Indigenous Relations  
and Reconciliation

Gaagwiis Jason Alsop  
President of the Haida Nation