

News Release

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Wei Wai Kum First Nation Office. Image Credit: Weiwaikum.ca

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Agreement Returns Lands to Wei Wai Kum First Nation

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

CAMPBELL RIVER - At a community celebration, the Wei Wai Kum First Nation and the Province of B.C. signed an Incremental Treaty Agreement (ITA) that will transfer 2,276 hectares of territorial lands back to Wei Wai Kum and help boost the Nation's economic activities.

Lands transferred under the ITA will help increase Wei Wai Kum First Nation's participation in the forest industry for economic purposes and give its citizens access to lands for cultural and harvesting activities. Crown lands were carefully selected to balance support for Wei Wai Kum's interests and maintenance of public access to popular recreation sites such as Loveland Bay Provincial Park and areas required for BC Timber Sales operations.

The ITA demonstrates the commitment of Wei Wai Kum and the Province, along with the federal government, to the treaty process – a critically important pathway to meaningful reconciliation. The Province, federal government and Wei Wai Kum are currently in the final phases of treaty negotiations, and the lands transferred under the ITA are an early benefit as the final treaty is negotiated. The tripartite treaty negotiations have been underway since 1997, with ITA discussions between the Nation and B.C. regarding this specific land parcel ongoing since 2019.

The ITA was possible thanks to the long-term support and significant effort of neighbouring First Nations. The ITA lands are within territories shared with Kwiakah and We Wai Kai (We Wai Kai Treaty Society). These three Laich-

Kwil Tach Nations have been working with and supporting each other.

Chief Chris Roberts, Wei Wai Kum First Nation –

“This agreement and transfer of land back to our Nation is a significant milestone in the treaty negotiations process and ongoing journey of reconciliation. It’s a strong sign of good faith from government on their commitment to supporting First Nations in reclaiming our lands and resources and restoring our positions as the beneficiaries from the values and gifts of our lands and those responsible for their enduring stewardship and sustainability.

“In the context of negotiating a treaty for Wei Wai Kum, this agreement is a significant step. We have been engaged in the treaty negotiations process for 25 years, and that is too long to await resolution to the questions of land ownership and access to resources, while everything carries on around us, business as usual, and the value of our lands continues to diminish. We are now the rightful beneficial owners of these land parcels and will resume management and utilization in a sustainable manner that balances economic, environmental and recreational values, and this will benefit all residents of the surrounding area in our territory.”

Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –

“Treaties are one of the most important pathways to reconciliation. Wei Wai Kum and B.C. have made great strides and built trust while negotiating a final treaty, including ensuring the benefits of the treaty are able to flow to Wei Wai Kum more quickly through this ITA. This agreement supports a strong relationship with Wei Wai Kum in the future, advances Wei Wai Kum’s economic prosperity and returns significant lands to their use and benefit.”

Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests –

“This important agreement ensures Wei Wai Kum share in the economic benefits of the lands and resources derived from their traditional territory. The Province and First Nations both benefit from a thriving, sustainable forestry sector, and I commend those who have worked on this agreement that focuses on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including shared decision-making, informed consent and respect for and protection of culture.”

Andy Adams, mayor, Campbell River –

“As mayor for the City of Campbell River, we are pleased to work collaboratively with the Wei Wai Kum First Nation on this ITA, which confirms the city's commitment to reconciliation and strengthens our relationships. We are happy for Wei Wai Kum on this achievement and look forward to the benefits it will continue to bring to the region.”

Michele Babchuk, MLA for North Island –

“This is an important step forward for Wei Wai Kum, reconciliation, and Indigenous economic self-determination. I’d especially like to congratulate Chief Chris Roberts and council for their hard work and efforts that got us to this ITA.”

- Wei Wai Kum has 850 members and reserve lands in the mid-Vancouver Island and Discovery Island areas.

- The ITA parcels represent a potential allowable annual timber harvest of 17,054 cubic metres, valued at \$1.2 million per year.
- Approximately \$600,000 has been set aside from 2023 to 2025 for survey costs associated with the agreement.
- A small number of campsites at three locations are within the ITA lands and will be managed by Wei Wai Kum

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