

Volume 25 Issue 2

MARCH 2025

ATTENTION: Elder's Contact People
Please Make Copies of the EV Each
Month For Your Elders, Chief & Council
or Board of Directors.

EV'S 284th Issue!

BC ELDERS COMMUNICATION CENTER SOCIETY



ELDERS VOICE

**The Annual Elders Gathering
2025 CULTURAL HOST IS
S̓kwx̓wú7mesh 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

Inside this issue

List of Paid Support
Fees

2

**CIVIL RESOLUTION
TRIBUNAL**

3

**Canadian Red Cross:
Friendly Calls Program**

4

**March is Kidney Health
Month**

5

ICBC: ZEBALLOS TRIP

6

**ORCAS Wearing Dead
Salmon Hats**

7

Pg. 8-9: No 'Team Canada' Without FN

Pgs. 10-12: FN Sues Province, Canada
Over BC's Largest Port

Pgs. 12-13: We Might Finally Know
How the Brain Refreshes Itself At
Night

Pgs. 14-15: Info Commissioner Orders
DFO to Release Sea-Lice Report

Pgs. 15-16: Heiltsuk Nation Passes
Written Constitution With 67% of
Votes

Pgs. 16-18: 'Welcome to Seḥákw'

Pgs. 19-20: BC's Smallest FN Big Plans

Pgs. 20-21: Seen Fr. Space: 6th Ocean

Pg. 22: Kamloops Indian Residential
School: National Historic Site

Pg. 23: UBCIC: Nir'kus'chin, Steve Basil

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*.

March is Kidney Health Month. Tips and Tools to Help Protect Your Kidney Health

March is Kidney Health Month. Kidneys and their importance to our overall health is not as obvious as some other organs. We feel our lungs breathe and our hearts beat. But our kidneys are vital organs that help regulate water, flush out toxins, produces hormones and help balance the bodies minerals.

It's important we know what to do to keep our kidneys healthy and happy to help prevent kidney disease. Many people don't show symptoms until the disease is very advanced so its important to know the risk factors. Diabetes and high blood pressure are among the leading causes of kidney disease. Indigenous peoples are among those most at greatest risk for kidney disease. In fact, one in three will be impacted by kidney disease in our lifetime.

Though there is no cure for kidney disease, there are things we can do to help maintain our kidney health. This includes maintaining a healthy weight, and lifestyle which includes managing blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

I am encouraged to know there are things within my control that I can do to help protect my kidney health. Outside of eating well and staying hydrated, I like to spend a lot of time in nature and take daily walks to help stay active and boost my mental wellbeing. These walks help reconnect me with mother nature but also serves as a mindful way to support my health.

The support I feel from my jaunts outside every day after work is endless. The best part about it is how accessible it is. In as little as five minutes a day, I can already start to feel the benefits that getting outdoors provides. During my strolls, I can feel my stress melt away, my heart pumping and my breathing regulating itself. I also like to express gratitude for another day of being alive and all the things I enjoyed about my day while mindfully appreciating nature around me. Switching up my environment is so good for my mental state; I find my mind racing less when I'm not sitting in the silence of my home for too long. For me, it's about taking the opportunity to unwind, centre myself and feel rejuvenated.

For the times I can't get outdoors, I am so glad that I can tune into the **Kidney Foundation's Kidney Wellness Hub at kidneywellnesshub.ca**, it's a free online platform filled with tons of videos and resources to help maintain one's overall health and wellbeing.

In honour of Kidney Health Month, I invite you to take to check out the Kidney Wellness Hub. Your kidneys will thank you for it.

Last year, ICBC Road Safety & Community Coordinator, Rowena Narayan, Manager Clay Steiro, and Road Safety Speaker John Westhaver traveled to Zeballos, Ehattesaht First Nation, on the North West coast of Vancouver Island.

John delivered a compelling presentation, telling his tragic personal story, to Grades 7 – 12 students at the school. Students and staff alike were very receptive. You can learn more about John and ICBC's Road Safety Speaker program on icbc.com here: [Road safety speakers](#).

ICBC also brought our popular pedestrian feather reflectors (and equally popular Timbits) to Zeballos with them, and they plan on continuing to build their relationship with further road safety initiatives such as a Graduated Licencing Program presentation, fatal vision goggles activity and a walking distracted course.

Everyone had a beautiful stay and felt it was truly a gift to visit the community, connect with students, and really understand the challenge that remote communities face. Thank you to Ehattesaht First Nation for hosting ICBC in Zeballos. We look forward to our next visit!



Orcas start wearing dead salmon hats again after ditching the trend for 37 years

By Sascha Pare published November 27, 2024

Orcas off the coast of Washington State are balancing dead fish on their heads like it's the 1980s, but researchers still aren't sure why they do it.

Northwest Pacific orcas have started wearing salmon hats again, bringing back a bizarre trend first described in the 1980s, researchers say.

Last month, scientists and whale watchers spotted orcas (*Orcinus orca*) in South Puget Sound and off Point No Point in Washington State swimming with dead fish on their heads.

This is the first time they've donned the bizarre headgear since the summer of 1987, when a trendsetting female West Coast orca kickstarted the behavior for no apparent reason. Within a couple of weeks, the rest of the pod had jumped on the bandwagon and turned salmon corpses into must-have fashion accessories, according to the marine conservation charity ORCA — but it's unclear whether the same will happen this time around.

Researchers think the orcas sporting salmon hats now may be veterans of the trend when it first appeared nearly 40 years ago. "It does seem possible that some individuals that experienced [the behavior] the first time around may have started it again," Andrew Foote, an evolutionary ecologist at the University of Oslo in Norway, told New Scientist.

The motivation for the salmon hat trend remains a mystery. "Honestly, your guess is as good as mine," Deborah Giles, an orca researcher at the University of Washington who also heads the science and research teams at the non-profit Wild Orca, told New Scientist.

Salmon hats are a perfect example of what researchers call a "fad" — a behavior initiated by one or two individuals and temporarily picked up by others before it's abandoned. Back in the 1980s, the trend only lasted a year; by the summer of 1988, dead fish were totally passé and salmon hats disappeared from the West Coast orca population.

Orca researchers' best guess is that salmon hat fads are linked to high food availability. South Puget Sound is currently teeming with chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*), and with too much food to eat on the spot, orcas may be saving fish for later by balancing them on their heads, New Scientist reported.

Orcas have been spotted stashing food away in other places, too. "We've seen mammal-eating killer whales carry large chunks of food under their pectoral fin, kind of tucked in next to their body," Giles said. Salmon is probably too small to fit securely under orcas' pectoral fins, so the marine mammals may have opted for the top of their heads instead.

Camera-equipped drones could help researchers monitor salmon hat-wearing orcas in a way that was not possible 37 years ago. "Over time, we may be able to gather enough information to show that, for instance, one carried a fish for 30 minutes or so, and then he ate it," Giles said. But the food availability theory could be wrong — if the footage reveals that orcas abandon the salmon without eating them, researchers will be sent back to the drawing board. Whatever the reason for the behavior, Giles said it's been fun to watch it come back in style. "It's been a while since I've personally seen it," she said.

No 'Team Canada' without First Nations land rights, BC leaders say

By Rochelle Baker, News Energy, Politics, Island Insider, January 22nd 2025

First Nations leaders say they must be part of “Team Canada” — and decision makers on resource projects — to combat looming U.S. tariffs as they head into a key annual summit with the B.C. government.

Eby's opening remarks at a press conference for the ninth B.C. Cabinet and First Nations Leaders' Gathering on Tuesday focused on the province working closely with Indigenous leadership to address challenges, such as housing affordability, the toxic drug crisis, global inflation and the threat of the U.S. President Donald Trump's trade tariffs.

However, chiefs with the First Nations Leadership Council made it clear that making headway on rights and title issues, decision-making around resource projects and aligning B.C. laws with the province's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) were their priorities over the next two days.

The declaration is the “cornerstone” of the First Nations relationship with the provincial government, said Regional Chief Terry Teegee, of the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations.

The act was passed unanimously by all parties in 2019, and enshrines the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the minimum standard for Indigenous rights in the province. The act also mandates the government to harmonize provincial legislation with the U.N. declaration and involve First Nations in provincial decision-making related to Indigenous rights, such as land use in traditional territories.

First Nations across the province are also concerned with the ability to take care of their territorial lands, Teegee said.

When it comes to environmental assessments or resource project approvals, First Nations should not only be consulted, but also be involved in “consent-based decision making,” he added.

Chief Cheryl Casimer, of the First Nations Summit political executive, agreed there's been some measured success, but there is still “a long way to go” for the province and First Nations to achieve key objectives.

Casimer raised concerns that the NDP government's new mandate to cabinet ministers focus on economic growth and looming U.S. tariffs, but lacked “the spirit and intent of reconciliation.”

“When you take a look at the mandate letters from the previous government, reconciliation was threaded through the whole thing — it was embedded everywhere,” Casimer said.

“It was a strong directive to the ministers to work closely with First Nations, and we need to make sure that that continues to happen.”

First Nations also need to be partners in protecting and growing the economy in the face of Trump's potentially devastating tariffs, the leadership council stressed. “There can’t be a ‘Team Canada’ [approach] if you don’t have a strong contingent of First Nations leadership sitting at that table with you,” Casimer said.

To avoid conflict and to craft a unified response, First Nations must have a voice at the table when decisions are being made that affect their lands and resources, she said, noting the council hasn’t been approached to be part of the tariff strategy.

“We need to be allies. We need to be working together... We need to be good stewards of these lands,” Casimer said. “We need to make sure that these lands and the resources that it provides are available not only to us today, but to our future generations.”

Eby acknowledged the importance of Indigenous representation in “Team Canada” discussions.

“That's certainly not up for debate,” he said. “I know, at least for British Columbia, the topic of tariffs and our response to them will be key topics over the next couple of days.”

Given the heavy involvement of many First Nations in resource industries like forestry and mining, there is concern about the economic impacts of looming tariffs and a need to find alternative markets to reduce dependence on U.S. trade, said Teegee.

However — citing First Nations court battles in a bid to protect their rights tied to mining in their territory — Teegee urged Eby to bring B.C.’s Mineral Tenure Act in line with the U.N. declaration.

On Monday, the Gitxaala Nation and Ehattesaht First Nations launched a Supreme Court appeal in a bid to make DRIPA the province’s legal standard — instead of the mere “duty to consult” — to ensure no mining rights are granted without First Nations’ consent. The FNLC issued a statement the same day backing the court case.

“The provincial Mineral Tenure Act is not consistent with the Declaration, and the Declaration Act requires the Province to work with First Nations to take all necessary measures to ensure the [Act] is amended to address that inconsistency,” said Teegee.

First Nation sues province, Canada over B.C.'s second largest port

Gitxaala Nation seeks declarations over Canada and B.C.'s failure to consult over the Port of Prince Rupert, as well as damages related to economic losses

Stefan Labbé Jan 27, 2025 Times Colonist

A B.C. First Nation has sued multiple levels of government and a port authority in a lawsuit that seeks damages and recognition of land title over Canada's third-largest port.

The Gitxaala Nation filed a notice of civil claim in a B.C. Supreme Court Monday alleging the Canadian and B.C. governments as well as the Prince Rupert Port Authority failed to properly assess its historic presence at the mouth of the Skeena River — where the port is located.

The First Nation, whose name translates to "People of the Open Sea," cites archeological evidence and oral histories showing its continuous occupation of territories near the port. The claim also challenges the results of government ethnographic studies, alleging they failed to consult the Gitxaala.

As a result, the lawsuit says the First Nation "has suffered loss and harm, including economic losses."

Elected Chief Councillor of Gitxaala Nation Lou Ga Gwelks (Linda Innes) said that to date, the consultation process has been like a "box-ticking exercise" used to "clear the way to development and resource extraction."

"We have always been here," said the chief councillor in an interview. "We've had continuous occupation of the land and we've been denied that by Canada by their historic racist policies."

In an email, Prince Rupert Port Authority spokesperson Olivia Mowatt said the port was unable to immediately respond to the lawsuit due its "legally sensitive nature."

The Attorneys General of Canada and B.C. did not respond to requests for comment by the time of publication.

Lawsuit alleges other First Nations favoured despite lack of historical claim

Located on the shortest Pacific shipping route linking East Asia with North America, the port of Prince Rupert is 36 hours closer to Shanghai than Vancouver.

The port also claims to be built on the North America's deepest harbour, making approach times two to six hours less than many other major ports in the region.

Last year, the port moved more than 23 million tonnes of cargo — a slight decline from the previous two years when the port moved an estimated \$60 billion in goods. Canada and the Prince Rupert Port Authority signed an economic benefits agreement with the Lax Kw'alaams and Metlakatla First Nations in 2011.

In the intervening years, the port authority and federal government undertook ethnographic reports assessing Indigenous occupation of the area. The court document claims those studies were never disclosed to the Gitxaala until years later.

The port and Canada, therefore, failed to consult with the nation on the “content, accuracy, or significance” of the findings. The B.C. government, meanwhile, “has refused to accept Gitxaala’s own expert reports” and “continues to consult with Gitxaala based on erroneous information.”

According to the court document, the Crowns have reasoned that at the time of European contact, the Prince Rupert Harbour area was occupied by the Lax Kw’alaams and Metlakatla First Nations.

But the actual record, claims the lawsuit, shows the Lax Kw’alaams occupied and used an area upriver from the mouth of the Skeena. It was only after contact that the groups migrated down to the Prince Rupert Harbour, claim the plaintiffs.

They claim the groups abandoned the area around the port of Prince Rupert in 1846 when the Hudson’s Bay Company established a post at Port Simpson. Metlakatla “did not in fact exist” before 1846, but came together from a number of other nations under the religious leadership of the Anglican missionary William Duncan.

The defendants based their assessments on unsupported evidence and weighed competing claims that “favoured other nations over Gitxaala,” the lawsuit alleges.

Innes said the approach taken by both B.C. and Canada is to incentivize First Nations to accept agreements that compromise their rights and title so they can avoid being left with nothing. The result creates divisions and locks Indigenous peoples in competition with one another, she said.

“We are one of the most ancient societies in the region,” said the Gitxaala chief councillor. “We’ve been challenged by the Crown for years and years, and denied our meaningful place within the territory.”

Lawsuit seeks declarations and damages

In contrast to government findings, a 2017 report commissioned by the Gitxaala found a “strong” claim to title around the Prince Rupert harbour area.

The goal of the lawsuit is to “tell the Gitxaala Nation story and to seek justice, respect and acknowledgement of our inherent rights,” said Sim’oogit Łabiks (Elmer Moody), hereditary chief and co-chair of Lu Sa Hax Hoyaxgm Wil’nat’aal, a joint committee of hereditary chiefs and elected council.

“Over and over again we have provided the evidence to the Crowns that our claim to these territories are strong,” said the chief in a statement.

The claim also alleges governments have failed to uphold commitments to reconciliation made under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA).

Those failures, adds the court document, have cost the Gixtaala the ability to reasonably protect its lands and negotiate accommodations around industrial developments in the Prince Rupert Harbour.

The nation seeks legal declarations that the defendants breached their duties to consult with the Gixtaala and unspecified damages. When asked what those damages could add up to, Innes said their value is not clear because the Gixtaala have been left out of meaningful consultation.

Wherever the litigation goes, the Gixtaala chief councillor hopes it will help answer two fundamental questions.

“How do we secure a future for our people? How do we honour our people?” she said.

None of the claims have been tested in court.

We Might Finally Know How The Brain Refreshes Itself at Night

Health 28 January 2025 By Mike McRae

As you lay your head down to sleep tonight and dream all things weird and wonderful, scientists think your brain is going through a gentle rinse cycle, washing away a day's worth of toxic by-products in preparation for a new day of thinking ahead.

But the mechanisms behind this neurological cleansing system have yet to be described in detail.

Now researchers from the University of Copenhagen have applied a suite of technologies to map the subtle rise and fall of neurotransmitters, blood volume, and spinal fluid in mice as they go about their day.

The findings don't only help us understand better how the brain refreshes itself at night, they also reveal a surprise downside to common sleep drugs like Ambien.

Colorfully described as the brain's 'sewage network', the biological plumbing technically referred to as the glymphatic system is an anatomical novelty in many respects, having only been identified in mice a little over a decade ago.

Ongoing investigations have since mapped the network in human brains, revealing the glymphatic system draws spinal fluid deep into the brain's interior to carry away materials that risk causing damage in high concentrations. Some of these waste products are linked to Alzheimer's disease.

This 'sewage removal' also helps balance water levels across the brain, facilitates the presentation of potentially dangerous agents of disease to the immune system, and even helps deliver supplies of fuel to where it's needed most.

Studies on how the brain ejects material into the waste removal system to be rhythmically washed away for removal suggest brain wave patterns orchestrated collectively by neurons coordinate the process. Yet they typically rely on anesthetized animal models, leaving questions on how a naturally-occurring sleep-wake cycle manages its glymphatic system.

What's more, some have begun to challenge some of the fundamental assumptions of the process, such as whether it's truly a sleep-dependent exercise at all.

"The motivation for this research was to better understand what drives glymphatic flow during sleep, and the insights from this study have broad implications for understanding the components of restorative sleep," says Maiken Nedergaard, senior author and co-director of the University of Rochester's Center for Translational Neuro-medicine.

To trace the brain-washing process back to its physiological roots, researchers developed a new method of fiber optic implants which allowed them to record the dynamics of fluids through the brains of mice as the animals ran relatively free about their cages.

By tagging the neurotransmitter norepinephrine and using the fibre optic implant to activate light-sensitive genes engineered into the animal's brain tissues, the team could monitor and experiment on fluctuations in waste removal while the mice were asleep and while they were awake.

The researchers' work supported earlier studies showing norepinephrine caused blood vessels to contract rhythmically over pulses lasting around 50 seconds, followed by a subtle oscillation in blood volume throughout the brain. This relationship between neurotransmitter fluctuations and changing blood volumes was far more pronounced while the mice were in a non-dreaming sleep state than awake or in a dream-phase.

Furthermore, they demonstrated experimentally these pulsations did, in fact, drive the glymphatic system into penetrating further into the brain, affirming the role deep sleep plays in clearing out the garbage left by a day's hard thinking. "These findings, combined with what we know about the glymphatic system, paint the whole picture of the dynamics inside the brain, and these slow waves, micro-arousals, and the norepinephrine were the missing link," says the study's first author, neuroscientist Natalie Hauglund.

Not just any old sleep will do, either. Inspired by claims that sleep-aid pharmaceuticals like Zolpidem – sold as Ambien – can alter sleep phases, the research team tested what impact, if any, the drug had on the cleaning process, finding it reduced the oscillations and impeded the ability for cerebrospinal fluid to work its way into the brain's depths. Translating the work to humans will rely on further experiments, though it's a safe bet our brains behave in relatively similar ways.

This doesn't mean sleep medication doesn't have its place, though knowing it comes with a potential cost to our ability to hose out each day's neurological scraps might weigh into future decisions on the best ways to keep our brains healthy.

Information Commissioner Orders DFO to Release BC Salmon Farm Sea-Lice Report

Data concluded no significant link between parasitic lice in B.C. salmon farms, infestations in wild fish
Lauren Collins, January 30, 2025 Black Press

Canada's Office of the Information Commissioner has ordered Fisheries and Oceans Canada to fully disclose the records in its 2022 report into sea lice.

The information commissioner's final report, released Tuesday (Jan. 28), followed a complaint from Watershed Watch Salmon Society, alleging Fisheries and Oceans Canada has improperly withheld information in response to an access request for data that was analyzed in a 2023 sea-lice report.

The commissioner Caroline Maynard issued an order to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Diane LeBouthillier on Jan. 20. The DFO's acting director of Access to Information and Privacy Division gave Maynard notice on Jan. 22 that the department would be implementing the order and fully disclose the information to the complainant.

The 2023 Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat Science Response from Fisheries and Oceans Canada concluded that there was no significant link between parasitic lice infestations at B.C. salmon farms and infestations in wild salmon exposed to those farms in four regions. It added that the lack of statistical significance implies that the occurrence of lice infestation on wild migrating juvenile Pacific salmon "cannot be explained solely by infestation pressure from farm-sourced copepodids."

In a news release from the Watershed Watch Salmon Society Thursday, it says that since the release of the 2023 Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat Science Response, it has "pursued multiple avenues to access the data used in the report." That includes an access to information request and an environmental petition to Canada's auditor general.

In 2023, a group of 16 professors and research scientists sent an open letter to then-minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada Joyce Murray. The group said they had serious concerns about the processes in the report, and that it "falls far short of the standards of credible independent peer review and publishable science."

Watershed Watch Salmon Society senior science and policy analyst Stan Proboszcz said that Canadians deserve transparency.

"It should not be this difficult to access information about an industry operating in public waters," Proboszcz said. "This two-year struggle for the truth begs the question, 'what are they trying to hide about the harmful impacts fish farms have on B.C. wild salmon?'"

First Nations Wild Salmon Alliance chair Bob Chamberlin said Nations he worked with in the B.C. Aquaculture Transition Planning process made formal requests for this data two years ago and never received it or other similar information.

"Key DFO staff defend this industry at the expense of the honour of the Crown." The release added the data has not yet been released.

The records are five Excel spreadsheets, with four of those containing only temperature and salinity data. During the investigation, Fisheries and Oceans conceded that the temperature and salinity data provided by its Pacific Region office could be disclosed. The department also determined it could release most of the columns in the fifth spreadsheet containing sea-lice data, other than four columns that would allow for calculation of the number of fish per farm pen at a given point in time.

There were three third parties identified by Fisheries and Oceans that the information in the spreadsheets relate to: Cermaq Canada, Mowi Canada West and Grieg Seafood British Columbia. The commissioner's office tried to get representation from all three, but only received a response from Mowi.

The data related to Mowi was exclusively about temperature and salinity, which Fisheries and Oceans said could be disclosed.

The population and sea-lice data related to Cermaq, but the company didn't response to the commissioner.

According to the commissioner's investigation, when an institution withholds information related to third parties, they bear the burden of showing that refusing to grant access is justified.

However, the commissioner determined that the complaint was well founded, with the information not shown to be objectively confidential or supplied by a third party, as well as it wasn't show that the government intended to publish the information within 90 days of the access request being made.

Heiltsuk Nation passes written constitution with 67% of votes

Constitution will clarify decision-making powers previously left to courts, nation says

Brieanna Charlebois · The Canadian Press · Feb. 21, 2025

The Heiltsuk Nation has approved the adoption of a written constitution for the First Nation on British Columbia's central coast.

The nation says 67 per cent of the 725 people who voted on the referendum were in favour of the constitution.

It says voting this month came after about two decades of development and consultation.

That included six months of engagement with more than 2,000 Heiltsuk members in Bella Bella, Nanaimo and Vancouver.

Elected Chief Marilyn Slett says she felt "pride and happiness" upon hearing the result, calling the written constitution a "reclamation" of Heiltsuk ways.

She says the document, which will be ratified in May, lays out a legal framework for self-governance and will help guide others who want to work with the nation.

"It's a new day for our Heiltsuk people," she said in an interview Friday. "It's us charting our course forward based on our laws, our values and our beliefs."

The nation says the constitution will help provide clarity for its own members and those it chooses to do business with, clearing up questions around decision-making in Heiltsuk territory that have previously been left to the courts.

Hereditary Chief Elroy White says the constitution "reflects the deep history of our people and the ancient governance structure that existed prior to colonization."

"It's been a long time for us," he said in an interview.

"It's so important to have something written for the membership to be proud of and understand that this is accountable and transparent, and this means that our voice [will be] at tables."

White initially said the First Nation's new laws "won't take over any other laws," but the Nation later clarified that "questions about paramountcy will need to be worked out."

The nation says the constitution has also underwent a legal review, and the referendum was conducted by an independent electoral officer.

Slett says the next steps to implement the constitution will be "developing core laws" for the nation, which will cover issues such as land management and language.

"We'll move to developing those laws and having our celebration and ratification feast on May 30, [which] will be a big step for our community [to] move forward with the implementation," she said.

However, several neighbouring nations have expressed concern about the process.

In an open letter, the Nuxalk, KITASOO XAI'XAIS and WUIGINUXV nations took issue with a territorial map attached as an appendix item to the Heiltsuk's constitutional documents, saying it overlaps with their territories.

"Prior to finalizing your constitution, we encourage you to work with us to resolve our territorial matters," the letter reads.

The constitution does not grant the Heiltsuk formal governance powers over land beyond what already exists, but the other nations say the document has "significant potential repercussions [which] could adversely affect our Nations' rights now and in the future."

In a email, Slett told CBC News she hoped to speak with the other nations about their concerns soon.

"These are Nation-to-Nation issues, ones that are best addressed in ancient processes and guided by our Indigenous protocols and practices," she said. "We have formally responded with an invitation to our neighbors and welcome the opportunity to meet with them."

'Welcome to Seṇákw': A sneak peek inside Canada's largest Indigenous-led housing development

CBC Vancouver's The Early Edition was offered a tour of the building as part of a special live broadcast-
Maryse Zeidler · CBC News · Feb 07, 2025

Mindy Wight is riding in a hoist elevator on the side of a tall residential building going up, up, up to the 26th floor, exposing a view of downtown Vancouver and English Bay as it climbs.

"Seeing the towers coming to life and how fast the development is going — words can't describe it," said Wight, the CEO of the Squamish Nation's economic development arm, the Nch'kay Development Corporation.

"It's been amazing."

Below, workers and construction vehicles surround the busy work site named Seḥákw, which comprises more than 6,000 rental units and 1,200 homes across 11 towers on 4.2 hectares of Squamish Nation land at Kits Point adjacent to Vanier Park.

CBC was recently offered a sneak peek of the building as part of a special live broadcast of The Early Edition on Friday, Feb. 7, which will also highlight the Squamish Nation's culture, community, and ongoing initiatives.

"There are two sides to this story. It's learning the history for the Squamish people and bringing a presence back to the land for Squamish families," Wight says of Seḥákw.

"It's also economic reconciliation, so the power of partnering with First Nations in Canada to do large scale projects that benefits not just this nation but the broader community."

The Squamish Nation began building the tower in September 2022, after a decades-long court battle that began in the 1970s and ended in 2002 with a \$92-million deal that returned a prime, Y-shaped slice of land back to the nation.

Centuries ago, Seḥákw was a plentiful summer village — rich with clams, mussels, ducks, seals and even elk. About 20 families called it home, but by the late 1800s, the expanding City of Vancouver was circling.

The first units in Seḥákw are scheduled to be available to rent by the end of this year — 112 years after the provincial government forcibly removed its occupants, according to the project's website.

At a groundbreaking ceremony, the Squamish Nation said the development is the largest Indigenous-led housing and retail development in the history of Canada. The federal government provided the Squamish Nation with a \$ 1.4 billion loan to build 3,000 of the units.

Squamish Nation member George Hemeon says the nation's fight to regain the land was worth it.

"There's going to be Squamish Nation youth and their children's children living here in this village," said Hemeon, who is also the vice president of Indigenous Relations for the construction management company leading the development, Peak Construction.

"You can't help but feel proud."

Another part of the nation's goal was to recruit Indigenous people to work on the project.

Hemeon says the nation didn't just want to hire low-skilled workers on contract and have them leave with the same skills. Instead, the site is both an employment and a training opportunity.

"By connecting them with the different trades and having discussions around career paths, we can blend both the education and the work experience," he said.

"So if someone wants to get a Red Seal ticket (a trades certification), they're on that path, and they're fully supported in doing it."

Focus on Squamish culture and design

Squamish culture is at the forefront of the building's design.

Jacob Lewis is the chair of the committee ensuring Squamish identity is at the heart of Seṇákw. Lewis says the plan is to use the committee to inform art and design through all Squamish developments.

"There's a distinct Coast Salish style of art, and making sure we're in alignment with that," he says.

"We don't want to be inauthentic to ourselves and to our people."

Some of these features will be visible from afar, from vantage points in the West End, and to anyone travelling across the Burrard Bridge.

But others can only be noticed up close.

Lewis says Squamish identity and language will feature in the wayfinding signs, the elevators, and the landscaping.

A walkable village

The development has prompted some criticism from nearby residents — mainly due to the large number of units on such a small parcel of land in the city.

In 2022, a group representing residents in part of Vancouver's Kitsilano neighbourhood took the city and the Squamish Nation to court, asking a judge to quash the agreement that secured the development.

The association said the city didn't give residents a fair chance to offer feedback or express concerns about it.

Wight says developers on reserve land don't have to abide by city rules around issues like building height, complex density and requirements to provide amenities like park space.

"The nation is using this land to advance its economic independence, so that's where the concept of densification, 6,000 units, came from," said Wight.

"We do want to be good neighbours, but this is a project owned by the nation."

One specific aspect of the development that has garnered criticism is that the site will only include 800 parking spaces for all residents.

Wight says Seṇákw is built on the concept of walkability within the site itself, with amenities close by. She says there will also be space for bike storage, and the nation is in talks with TransLink about opportunities for transit services in the area.

"I'm hoping that ... that most people will choose a lifestyle where they don't need a car," Wight said.

"We'll have car share and transit if they need it, but it's focused on green living."

The nation says it does intend to rely on the city for police, fire services, utilities and public works.

B.C.'s smallest First Nation has big plans for a 'stewardship' economy

by Rochelle Baker, Canada's National Observer, Local Journalism Initiative, February 8, 2025

The West Coast's smallest First Nation is taking great strides toward the creation of an innovative stewardship economy that puts sustainability and conservation first.

The Kwiakah First Nation, led by munmuntle, Chief Steven Dick, consists of 19 members mostly based on Vancouver Island. The community is launching a "return home" by transforming a former open-net salmon farm into a floating, solar-powered scientific hub anchored in their traditional territory along B.C.'s wild central coast.

The Kwiakah Centre of Excellence will be the base for a dedicated research station, an experimental kelp farm, the nation's regenerative forestry operations and its territorial Indigenous guardian, or Forest Keepers, program, said Frank Voelker, the nation's band manager and economic development officer.

The centre marks the first permanent Kwiakah presence in Phillips Arm in nearly 100 years. Like many First Nations, the Kwiakah were displaced from their traditional coastal village sites by colonial practices in the early 20th century.

When renovations are complete this summer, the floating centre accessible only by boat will be based near the Nəts'inux village site at the Kwiakah Matsayno reserve at the head of the Phillips Arm, a remote mainland inlet approximately 52 kilometres north of Campbell River.

The nation intends to revitalize its lands and waters — much of which were badly damaged by logging and other resource industries. The community is on the path to building a "stewardship economy" that puts the environment first when it comes to economic development, Voelker said.

After years of hard work, the nation successfully established the M̓ačinux[™] Special Forest Management Area (SFMA) last May that covers 7,865 hectares of forested land within the Great Bear Rainforest.

The ninth management area within the wider Great Bear Rainforest conservation area, the Kwiakah SFMA bans logging in favour of regenerative operations aimed at bringing the forest back to its pre-industrial state. The nation also intends to expand its protected forest area to 56,000 hectares by purchasing other logging licences in its traditional territory, Voelker added.

The aim is to find a variety of ways to "monetize" and diversify the ecosystem services that preserving or regenerating nature can provide to create an economic ripple effect for coastal jobs and services, he said.

"We want to be stewards of the land and, yes, we have a guardian program, but you have to be able to afford to protect your environment, and that can happen by creating funds in a different way," he said.

"Eventually, revenue will be created by protecting the environment, by conserving forests and by not cutting them."

The centre will be used to deepen the collaborative research the Kwiakah have done with academic institutions, like the University of British Columbia, University of Victoria, and the University of Calgary, to advance sustainable aquaculture, land stewardship and Indigenous studies, Voelker said.

By combining traditional ecological knowledge with modern research in the Phillips Arm estuary and surrounding forests, results will include a 100-year management plan that integrates climate, salmon, kelp, and soil research to protect territorial waters and remaining old growth forests. It will also involve recruitment of new stands by regenerating mature second growth into biodiverse ecosystems.

In addition to revenue generation from things like forest carbon offsets, the nation has acquired small woodlots and will research and quantify the ecological and economic benefits of selective logging as a source of forestry revenue, rather than relying on destructive clear-cut tactics, Voelker added.

The new centre of excellence will create an estimated 12 full-time jobs, as well as seasonal work to start.

Island Coastal Economic Trust has invested \$200,000 in the project, through its Capital and Innovation Program, to develop the nation's kelp and seaweed farming initiatives.

The trust works to build a sustainable and resilient coastal economy in reciprocal relationships with First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts across Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast, said CEO Brodie Guy.

The organization looks to explore investment and funding opportunities for communities, First Nations, and industry associations that are innovative and will boost smaller coastal economies, Guy said.

The Kwiakah's goals and efforts to date are inspiring, he added.

"This really feels like a deeper opportunity to partner with the Kwiakah on something that's first and foremost an economic opportunity," Guy said. "But it also has many facets to it in terms of establishing their presence, leadership, stewardship and innovation.

"There are a number of threads here that are just so exciting for the North Island economy and certainly for the membership of the nation."

Seen from space — Earth has a sixth ocean, and it's being born in real time

by Sanusha S. February 6, 2025 in Technology

It is so easy to forget that geological processes of Earth are ongoing, always working at the same time, and surprising us. Recent scientific discoveries are revealing two extraordinary phenomena that could change the way we understand Earth's hydrology: the slow emergence of a new ocean in East Africa and the existence of a deep, concealed reservoir of water in the Earth's mantle. These discoveries reveal not just the planet's past but also suggest how the surface of the planet may continue to change in the future.

The birth of a new ocean is slowly emerging in the African continent

Under Ethiopia's desert, a radical transformation is taking place. In 2005, a gigantic 35-mile-long crack opened like a gash in the Ethiopian desert. Thus began the East African Rift, a geological process in which the continent is slowly being torn in two.

This opening, a rift that runs through Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, is being created by the very slow movement of one tectonic plate, the Somali plate, away from another, the larger Nubian plate. Scientists believe that in about 5 to 10 million years the split will be complete, leading to a new ocean.

The process is remarkably like the ancient rift that split South America apart from Africa, eventually giving rise to the Atlantic Ocean. As the rift increases, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden will inundate the growing valley, forming a body of water that will separate Eastern Africa from the rest of the continent.

Why does that matter? This phenomenon is significant because it shows that tectonic plates are still redefining our world. The event also offers geologists a rarely seen opening study of ocean birth in real-time, an event never detected before.

The process might take millions of years, but its effects are already being felt. The region has not been shy about its quakes, laying out everything from earthquakes to volcanic eruptions as the Earth's crust stretches and generalizes.

These changes might create challenges for residents of the rift zone, which may lead to community relocation as the land beneath them shifts. The new ocean (like this new ocean which is being born and is close to America) will change Africa's geography and will also affect climatic conditions and marine biodiversity millions of years in the future.

This new ocean could rewrite Earth's water cycle

Now, even more astonishing data has come from deep inside Earth's mantle, while a new ocean is forming above. There is however a huge reservoir of water 700 kilometers below the Earth's surface. This subsurface sea is contained in a mineral called ringwoodite, which can hold water within its crystal structure. This suggests there is more water under the surface of the Earth than in all the world's oceans combined.

If proven so, this subterranean reservoir could revolutionize our understanding of the planet's water cycle. For decades, scientists have argued over where Earth's surface water came from, was it brought by asteroids and comets, or did it bubble up from deep inside the planet? The presence of such a huge volume of water deep within Earth supports the hypothesis that much of Earth's water may have come from its interior. This discovery carries profound implications.

That overturns what we know about how water moves back and forth between the surface and deep Earth, potentially even implicating underground, deep-sourced water stores in replenishing what we see at the surface for billions of years. It also prompts questions about how water influences the movement of tectonic plates as well as the creation of earthquakes and volcanoes.

Two revolutionary discoveries transforming the future of Earth

These two discoveries are studied as two of the major insights that are shaping change on Earth. The slow formation of a new ocean in East Africa will cause major geographic and climatic changes, and the discovery of a deep-Earth water reservoir questions traditional theories about where, and how much, of the planet's water resides.

In the case of the East African Rift, scientists will have a prime opportunity to watch seismic activity, and the land itself, to learn more about how the continents come apart. While the rift continues to widen, this may present additional opportunities for marine ecosystems and influence regional climate in manners, most likely yet un-projected. Meanwhile, deep-Earth water reserves could lead to discoveries in geology and hydrology, which may help researchers gain a deeper understanding of natural disasters like earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

As we delve deeper into the mysteries of our planet, these discoveries remind us that Earth is a dynamic system in constant flux. The forces shaping the world around us today will give our planet its shape millions of years from now. From every new find, we recognize more and more how intricate and amazing our planet truly is (like this ocean which has a 1.2 million-mile hole).

Former Kamloops Indian Residential School designated a national historic site

National historic sites are appointed as places that have shaped Canada — be it good or bad

Courtney Dickson · CBC News · Posted: Feb 12, 2025

The former Kamloops Indian Residential School, where, in 2021, T'k'emlúps te Secwépemc shared that preliminary findings from a ground-penetrating radar survey had found some 200 potential unmarked graves on the institution's grounds, has been designated as a national historic site.

The former residential school was nominated to become a national historic site by T'k'emlúps te Secwépemc, and the federal government worked with the First Nation to determine its significance, Parks Canada said in a news release Wednesday.

National historic sites are appointed as places that have shaped Canada — be it good or bad — to help Canadians understand the country's past and present.

"The designation symbolizes hope and the vision of our ancestors for a prosperous future for our children, and those not yet born," T'k'emlúps te Secwépemc Kúkpi7 (Chief) Rosanne Casimir said in a statement.

Many of the buildings at the site have been preserved and are used for education, including on Secwépemc language and culture.

The Kamloops Indian Residential School was in operation from 1890 to 1969, after which the federal government took over administration from the Catholic Church to operate it as a residence for a day school, until it closed in 1978.

Up to 500 students would have been registered at the school at any given time, according to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and those children would have come from First Nations communities across B.C. and beyond.

It was one of many residential schools and day schools across the country; more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were forced to attend church-run, government-funded residential schools between the 1870s and 1997.

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation estimates about 4,100 children died at Canadian residential schools, based on death records, but has said the true total is likely much higher. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission said large numbers of Indigenous children who were forcibly sent to residential schools never returned home.

Several other former residential schools have also been designated as national historic sites, including the Muscowequan, Portage La Prairie, Shingwauk and Shubenacadie residential schools.

In a statement, Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change and minister responsible for Parks Canada — which deals with historic sites — said the designation acknowledges the harms perpetrated against those who forcibly attended the institution.

"The designation of the Former Kamloops Indian Residential School as a site of national historic significance will serve as a testament and memorial to the children who were forced to live there and who died there," Guilbeault said. "The legacy²² of their stories will resonate throughout future generations."

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil Waututh)/ Vancouver, B.C. – February 25, 2025) The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is deeply saddened with the recent passing of Nir'kus'chin, Steve Basil, a deeply respected and beloved Secwepemc leader from Bonaparte First Nation, and former UBCIC staff member between 1977-1981. Steve's unwavering commitment to First Nations rights, sovereignty, and stewardship of the land left an indelible mark on all who knew him.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President, stated "I had the privilege and good fortune to have known Steve Basil since he was a teenager. I watched him take instruction and learn from many Traditional Knowledge Keepers, Spiritual Leaders and Land Defenders. Over his lifetime, he became a very important Traditional Leader in his own right. He was our friend, spiritual advisor and our Son. Joan and I will miss his presence, and we will honour his life, support his partner and family, and remember his teachings."

Steve's passing has left us with profound grief and cherished memories of a man whose heart was as vast as the lands he sought to protect. Though this loss is immeasurable, we take comfort in knowing that his spirit remains with us, guiding our work and strengthening our resolve. Steve embodied the teachings of our ancestors, living his beliefs fully and fearlessly advocating for First Nations self-determination, sovereignty, and the recognition of our title and rights, and became an influential figure whose wisdom, passion, and integrity inspired many. He held multiple roles for UBCIC including producing the UBCIC film "Hat Creek." He was a humble and strong man as he spent the past thirteen years engaging in cultural and spiritual support work, cultural enrichment, language revitalization, coordinating land-based healing and food gathering in the traditional territories throughout British Columbia.

Louise Mandell K.C., friend and colleague, stated "Steve's contributions to UBCIC were a gift of spirit and love. He was unshakable in his belief that British Columbia is First Nations land, that sovereignty is inherent, and that First Nations were placed here by the Creator to be stewards of the land. It was his sheer conviction that it was his responsibility to protect Mother Earth, and to feed people, and ensuring the well-being of his people was unwavering. Whether standing with those victimized by colonization or those resisting it, Steve was always there, leading with kindness, conviction, and a powerful sense of justice."

His impact extended beyond advocacy. Steve's humor, strength, and collaboration helped shape monumental movements, including the Constitutional Express, a defining moment in the recognition of Indigenous rights in Canada. Today, as we mourn his passing, we imagine a powerful reunion on the other side—a gathering of ancestors, with the late Derek Wilson drumming him over, singing the Constitutional Express song, welcoming Steve home. Steve's presence will be deeply missed, but his spirit will continue to guide us.

As fate would have it, he chose a momentous day to journey onward, the day the Big Tide title agreement was ratified on Haida Gwaii—a fitting tribute to his life's work.

To his loving partner Janice who is a cherished member of our UBCIC family, to his three daughters, and to all his family and friends, we extend our deepest condolences. Though we may be apart, we are together in spirit, carrying Steve's light forward in the work we do.

The UBCIC will forever honor Steve Basil's legacy. His love for his people, his land, and his unyielding pursuit of justice will remain a beacon of strength for generations to come.

Steve's family held a wake and fire, followed by a funeral. He was buried at Bonaparte Cemetery on February 21.

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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