
NEWS RELEASE

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Snuneymuxw First Nation
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

B.C. returning downtown Nanaimo village site to Snuneymuxw

NANAIMO – Snuneymuxw First Nation and the Province are rejuvenating a prominent property in Nanaimo's downtown while restoring Snuneymuxw's presence on the land.

This significant step involves the acquisition and return of 2.67 hectares, part of the historic sxwayxum village site, also known as Millstone River Village. This return of land under the Sarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854 marks an important milestone in honouring and upholding treaty promises.

British Columbia and Snuneymuxw have bought 1 Terminal Ave. and adjoining properties for \$28.5 million, of which the Province contributed nearly \$26 million for lands with the explicit purpose of returning it to Snuneymuxw for redevelopment.

“Today marks a historic milestone for Snuneymuxw First Nation and the Province of British Columbia as we announce a joint acquisition that reflects the solemn promises embedded in our treaty relationship. Today we honour and uphold the commitments of the Sarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854,” said Chief Mike Wyse of Snuneymuxw First Nation. “The return of 2.67 hectares of our sxwayxum village carries profound spiritual and cultural significance for the Snuneymuxw People. This village is integral to our way of life and is fundamental to our traditional legal, economic and social systems. Today marks an example of how a shared pathway will bring transformative success to Snuneymuxw, Nanaimo and the entire region. Our people deeply appreciate the Province’s swift action and bold decision-making in collaborating with our Nation, bringing forward reconciliation and shared prosperity.”

The 2.67-hectare property, which previously included a hotel, parking lot and other businesses, has fallen into a state of decay due to a lack of activity or development over the past decade. The site will benefit from being under Nation control, with future development plans that will reflect the magnificent setting, being next to Swy-A-Lana Lagoon and Maffeo Sutton Park.

“Snuneymuxw community members have waited a long time for the return of this land,” said Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. “This initiative provides a unique opportunity to reunite Snuneymuxw with its historic village site, while also taking action to support the economic goals and aspirations of the Nation, which will also enhance the lives of all those in the area.”

As part of the initiative, the Province is contributing \$1 million to help with security infrastructure, demolition and remediation costs. Snuneymuxw and B.C. are working in partnership to maintain security at the site and complete site remediation.

In 2020, the Province and Snuneymuxw entered into a Reconciliation Implementation Framework Agreement, leading to a working partnership for Sarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of

1854 implementation, as well as a Land Transfer Agreement for the return of lands in Snuneymuxw territory.

The City of Nanaimo is a critical partner in the advancement of key reconciliation priorities, with Snuneymuxw First Nation and British Columbia.

Quotes:

Leonard Krog, mayor of Nanaimo –

“The rejuvenation of a crucial site in Nanaimo's downtown marks a significant milestone for Snuneymuxw First Nation. The return of ancestral lands is a long-awaited step toward rectifying past injustices, revitalizes the current derelict area and reaffirms an enduring connection to this land, ensuring that Snuneymuxw’s presence and heritage remain for generations to come.”

Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo –

“This village site was at the heart of Snuneymuxw’s culture and community. It’s also at the heart of Nanaimo’s downtown. It’s right it’s being returned and I’m glad our government and Chief Wyse acted together on this. And it’s going to build back in the right way, repairing both a historic wrong and a hole in our cityscape.”

Quick Facts:

- Snuneymuxw First Nation is a Coast Salish, hul’q’umi’num’-speaking Nation located in Coast Salish territory on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, with villages in Nanaimo, on the Fraser River and waterways in the Gulf Islands.
- Snuneymuxw has more than 2,000 members and the smallest land reserve per capita in B.C.
- On Dec. 23, 1854, the Crown and the Snuneymuxw People entered into the Saarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854 to forever and always preserve and protect Snuneymuxw villages, enclosed fields, waterways, harvesting and gathering, and the rights to hunt and fisheries as they did formerly.
 - Often referred to as a trade and commerce treaty, the Saarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854 is protected under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
- Snuneymuxw First Nation Chief and Council have made it a priority to assert the recognition and implementation of the Saarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854.

Learn More:

Snuneymuxw First Nation: <https://www.snuneymuxw.ca/>

2020 Reconciliation Implementation Framework Agreement and Land Transfer Agreement: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/snuneymuxw_first_nation_framework_agreement.pdf

Contacts:

Sonya Hartwig
Communications
Snuneymuxw First Nation
sonyah@snuneymuxw.ca

Ministry of Indigenous Relations
and Reconciliation
Media Relations
250 893-2028

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