



WSÁNEĆ TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S FORUM

June 22, 2021

Event Notes

ATTENDING

- ~15 members of W̱SÁNEĆ nations
- Mayors and staff from Central Saanich, Sidney and North Saanich
- MODUS (consultants)
- Speakers: Eric Pelkey, Israyelle Claxton, Tracy Underwood, Rebecca David, PENAC Underwood, Linda Elliot, Joni Olsen, Faye Oakes

WELCOME

Eric Pelkey (Hereditary Chief of S̱TÁUTW Tsawout) provided an opening prayer. Patrick Oystryk (MODUS) provided a land acknowledgement that recognized the children's graves recently identified at the Kamloops Residential School and the systemic harm that these schools have created. He then provided an overview of the agenda.

DISCUSSION

Question 1. What are your greatest hope and fears for the Saanich Peninsula?

- Grateful for meeting today. Important to have the opportunity to speak out—for the 215 kids who cannot speak, for the kids they never had.

DEVELOPMENT

- Fear of urban sprawl. The peninsula is becoming more urbanized piece by piece; it feels like we could end up looking like Hong Kong. At the same time, there is a need for more First Nations housing and development.
- Fear of development like Langford, where the landscape and watersheds have been raped, and cultural sites like the caves destroyed. Want kids and grandkids to have a future that does not look like this.
- Saddened by rich people building large mansions on prime land, while First Nations are pushed into small reserves with overcrowded housing.
- Farmlands have been taken over and become apartment buildings. We grew up here eating local food, we knew the people we were buying from. Now there are huge mansions. It is dangerous, because the time will come when we will need local food but it will not be there for us.
- A legacy of the Indian Act has been infighting within our own people.





CREEKS AND WATERSHEDS

- Need for space for kids to play, creeks that are safe for swimming. Pre-settlement, the creeks were clean for drinking and swimming; now there are too many cows and no longer safe.
- Creeks were once places of healing. They should be restored; it was the role of women to protect the water.
- There needs to be more protection for our streams and beaches. The creeks used to run like rivers, with Coho, Chum, trout. Now because of the agricultural land they have filled with silt and pollution. Example of Sandhill Creek, where the silt from farmland sits at the mouth of Tetayut Creek—so much silt that fish can no longer pass through.
- There was a large fish kill in Keating Industrial area—we tried to restore and restock this.
- Include hydrogeologists when approving development. When we pave over, we are not allowing groundwater to recharge—we keep bulldozing over. Where do we expect the water to come from? We can't live without water. We must have a plan for the protection of the watersheds and prevention of groundwater depletion and recharging our water table.
- Beaches need protection too. People are building right to the beach edge, even below the high tide mark. Beaches should be free to high tide for people to walk on.

RESPECT AND RECONCILIATION

- People still try to access Tsawout from Island View Beach regional park; very disrespectful words and gestures when told this is not allowed. Settlers took all of our land and left us with less than 1%, now they want access to this too?
- Fear of lack of education in surrounding communities; people are not educated about our issues / struggles. Our lands were stripped away and given to the Crown—but it was illegal for us to hire a lawyer for land issues. It is always an unlevel playing field.
- Hope for respectful dialogue. We have a right to be respected, not exploited.
 1. Learn about what respectful dialogue means
 2. Learn about our culture/history
 3. Understand our traditional laws (water and land)
- Move to reconciliACTION. Good that you have an open mind for this discussion.



WE WERE PROVIDED FOR BY OUR LAND AND WATERS ...
WE WERE BOUNTIFUL ~

ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

- Need to protect our archaeological sites. When you are digging in the ground, you may be digging up the remains of our ancestors. An example is Cordova Bay – once an extensive village site – where the road crew found the remains of a baby.
- There needs to be a cultural observer on site whenever there is excavation. Any remains and other artifacts belong to the First Nations and should be given to them, we can teach our children what was there. There should be a commitment to this from the municipalities.
- Lands such as the former village site along Tseyum Harbour have been lost to First Nations. All of these areas should have been protected under the Douglas Treaty, which promised to protect all villages—but the Indian Reserve Commission took away those lands.

CONNECTION TO LAND

- The name W̱SÁNEĆ was given to us with a powerful message of stewardship/well-being of the land. All the uses of “Saanich” derive from W̱SÁNEĆ. W̱SÁNEĆ refers to the emerging people and emerging land. After the floodwaters receded, this was the first word uttered, people came together to talk about this event. There are also teachings from ancestors before the flood.
- We are the descendants of the people who survived the great flood. LÁU, WELNEW (Mount Newton) is our sacred mountain, our place of refuge.
- All things are connected. You cannot speak about one thing without speaking about others. It is not just about preserving the memory, but of how important it was to look after the land. You could go to any of the streams and drink water, there were salmon in the streams – it was all there because it was cared for.
- These things are now historical artifacts. We aspire to do this again.
- Happy there is this place for our voices to be heard. Our W̱SÁNEĆ people have a great deal to offer to those who are willing to listen. We can share how our land has been taken care of by our forefathers, and everything was plentiful. We were rich people and did not need for anything; we lived in harmony and treated the lands and oceans with respect. We do not own the land, the land owns us. Now the salmon, killer whales, creatures that inhabited forests are disappearing. We want to help the non-native community to understand how to live on this land in harmony. We would like to impart knowledge of how to live on his land into eternity. But, without cooperation, it won't happen. We have the knowledge that you're seeking to have a better life if we cooperate. We are willing to share our knowledge and understanding.
- Would like a nekway (phonetic) day – a green day when we hear the sounds of the birds, not the highway. During COVID, people stopped moving around and the earth healed a little. The nekway day would be a day with no traffic, no airplanes—perhaps this could become a trend in Canada!

Question 2. What actions could the municipalities take to build better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents on the Peninsula?

- Ask us for input so that we can share our traditional knowledge. An example of KELSET (Reay Creek) where working with incredible scientists, but they did not know how the Cutthroat would respond to proposed changes. Indigenous Knowledge is there, people are willing to share. We all need to work together in order to survive.
- Seek out First Nations opinions. Municipalities should work in cooperation with the four bands, bring them into the conversation about development, protecting the environment, use of chemicals on agricultural land.
- Talk to many people. People living on reserve experience the harms of the Indian Act and cultural genocide, and frequently facing cultural stereotypes and racism. Important to remember that First Nations communities are diverse—do not just speak to one First Nations person and assume that they represent all of the points of view. Example of Fairy Creek where people prey on the Indigenous people who disagree with each other—this is an impact of the Indian Act. Not all older people are cultural Elders.
- We want to be seen as humans. My grandmother was not allowed to go upstairs on a ferry because of segregation, but she was welcomed in a Chinese restaurant.
- Municipalities could adopt UNDRIP at their council tables.
- Recognize the oral version of the Douglas Treaty. This was a peace treaty, not ceding of land. The version at Mary Winspear Theatre should be revised.
- Assist nations in acquiring/returning land. The nations traditional lands were far larger than just the reserve areas – these were our winter homes, where there were fewer resources.
- Help with rezoning land for First Nations. Public hearings are very difficult for First Nations projects, as they often create a place for hate and racist comments.
- Use artwork, signage and other ways to show pride in the First Nations heritage of this region. In other places like Hawaii or Albuquerque, the design of the places features the identity of the people prominently.
- Focus on reconciliation. This meeting is a beginning.



WSÁNEĆ TERRITORIES

INDIGENOUS

COMMUNITIES FORUM

EDUCATE THE PUBLIC ON
TRUTHS
OF OUR WAYS + PEOPLE

HAVE OUR PEOPLE
WATCH OUT FOR AND
KEEP AN EYE OUT
FOR OUR OWN!

MORE SUCH FORUMS
WHERE WE CAN
BE HEARD!

RECONCILI-ACTION

Really RESPECT
& LEARN our LAWS
OF THE LAND + WATER

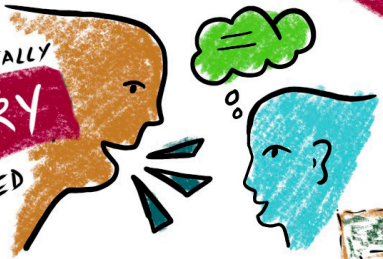
GIVE / GIFT
SOME LAND
BACK

MORE INDIGENOUS ART + CULTURE

I FEAR....
URBANIZATION



OF WHAT REALLY
HISTORY
HAPPENED



WE WERE PROVIDED FOR BY OUR LAND AND WATERS...
WE WERE BOUNTIFUL
ASK US...

WE CAN SHARE OUR
KNOWLEDGE

WE DON'T
OWN THE
LAND...

WE NEED
HEALING FOR
OUR LAND and OUR PEOPLE

... THE
LAND owns
US!

PROTECT OUR ISLAND!



our AGRICULTURAL LAND

our WATER

NATURE