



## Tla-o-qui-aht Community Newsletter

### “Hiisikcimyim: The Way We Need to Go”

August 06, 2021

#### Introduction:

Tla-o-qui-aht Nation has started to engage in preliminary reconciliation discussions with both the Provincial Government of British Columbia (B.C.) and the Government of Canada (“Canada”). Tla-o-qui-aht has done this as both sitting governments have committed to reconciliation with First Nations.



*Photo Credit: Gisele Martin*

In short reconciliation, is a term that Canada uses to restore a relationship that has been broken. The current relationship between Tla-o-qui-aht and Canada/BC continues to be strained and rooted in colonization. Both parties have decided to move forward in a manner that respect Tla-o-qui-aht as government through the reconciliation process to create a new relationship.

It is important to remember that the government is reconciling with us, we aren't reconciling with them as we did not do anything wrong in this relationship. These discussions are part of them attempting to reconcile with us.

Tla-o-qui-aht is having these reconciliation discussions with the federal government of Canada and provincial government of British Columbia, creating government-to-government relationship. Reconciliation discussion are done with an understanding and respect for Tla-o-qui-aht culture, laws, and way of life.

Tla-o-qui-aht has identified an unprecedented opportunity to exchange ideas, proposals, and work collaboratively, shaping what reconciliation could look like between Canada, B.C. and the Tla-o-qui-aht Nation.

## Discussions:

During these discussions, Tla-o-qui-aht will be holding the government accountable to their commitment to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and by the Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia and Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (The Principles). We also know that reconciliation includes recognition and implementation of Tla-o-qui-aht title and rights, so all discussions will build in a recognition of the right to self-determination, including the inherent right to self-government.

It is important that discussions reflect what matters most to the Tla-o-qui-aht communities and people. We understand that the continued vitality of the Tla-o-qui-aht language and culture are a priority, and so is the Nation's leadership role in economic development and regional conservation, as has been shown by the stewardship of the ha-houlth-ee by the Tla-o-qui-aht Ha'wiih.

## Who is involved:

Ha'wiih are engaged in this process as we set the table for discussions with Canada and BC, and have been involved in planning meetings over the past two years.

On May 21, 2019 Chief and Council signed a Band Council Resolution supporting these discussions.

“Hisikcimiyim” in the Tla-o-qui-aht language means “the way we need to go”. This is a term that is being explored as an alternative to the word “reconciliation”. This roots the discussion in our language.

The Working Group is comprised of Ha'wiih representatives, Elmer Frank, with support from Lorena Frank. To date at preliminary planning meetings, Chief and Council has been represented by Chief Moses Martin. The Working Group has technical support from the Tribal Administrator, Saya Masso. John Watson and Saul Brown also provide technical support to the Working Group.

The Working Group is committed to meaningful consultation and engagement with Ha'wiih at every stage of the process. We also are committed to ensuring Council is supportive. We also recognize that community engagement is needed.

### **What work has been done to date:**

- Preliminary Relationship Discussions with both B.C. and Canada
- Set Priorities for Discussions
- Advancing Outstanding Commitments to Tla-o-qui-aht in Previous Agreements
- Research for Best Practices
- Work Plan for 2021/2022
- Drafting of bilateral agreement for process of reconciliation
- Two Community Meetings



*Photo Credit: Gisele Martin*

### **Why engage in reconciliation:**

This approach is proactive, with reconciliation occurring on Tla-o-qui-aht terms and is done as an assertion of inherent Tla-o-qui-aht authority. Both Canada and B.C. have committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, Tla-o-qui-aht is being hands-on in defining the terms and conditions of this commitment.

### **Is this a Treaty or part of BCTC:**

This is not a treaty or final agreement. This is outside of the B.C. Treaty Process. There will be no ceding, releasing or surrendering of any Tla-o-qui-aht territory, rights or title.

### **Will this process affect our current funding from Canada or B.C.:**

No. It will not affect our core funding we receive from INAC for programs and services. Canada and B.C. will provide additional funds to Tla-o-qui-aht to cover our costs associated with these discussions.

### **Who is funding the costs of these negotiations:**



Photo Credit: Gisele Martin

Canada and BC are funding the costs associated with the negotiations. These funds are non-repayable, this means it is done at no cost the Tla-o-qui-aht community.

### **Where are we in the reconciliation process?**

We are just starting our discussion with Canada and B.C. We will be setting out community priorities for these reconciliation negotiations. The more engaged the community is, the stronger the discussions will be. We are hoping for a good community turn out.

### **Has there been anything agreed to as of yet, or any formal agreement?**

No. Nothing has been agreed to, we are in the community engagement phase of discussions and we are the ones setting the agenda for these discussions.

### **How to get involved during COVID-19:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many difficult situations for everyone across the globe. This includes the Tla-o-qui-aht community and people. The pandemic has hampered many things in the name of safety, this includes reconciliation discussions. However, we have been able to have calls, emails, and video calls to ensure the process moved ahead during this challenging time. Strategically, we are in a position to give shape to what reconciliation looks like on the ground through these high reward, low risk negotiations. Now that things have opened up we will host more in-community meetings.

### **Next Steps:**

The work is progressing well for Tla-o-qui-aht, and the reconciliation Working Group has made good progress despite being limited by COVID-19. The community will be well-positioned to capitalize on opportunities presented by reconciliation as COVID-19 restrictions loosen up. Please watch out for announcements on upcoming community meetings.