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## **Nine Tribes Oppose B.C. Government Sale of their Land to the Nisga'a** *Information Blockade Set up to Share Alternate Solution that Benefits Everyone*

**PRINCE RUPERT, B.C./COAST TSIMSHIAN TERRITORY, June 7, 2019** – Today the Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian hosted an information blockade in their traditional territory along Highway 16 to tell the public why the B.C. Government should meet with them and work collaboratively on a shared solution regarding the Nasoga Gulf Lands, instead of unilaterally selling the lands in their territory to the Nisga'a Nation.

“The B.C. Government is proposing to unilaterally sell 22,100 hectares of our Nasoga Gulf Lands to the Nisga'a Nation with no justification,” said Lax Kw'alaams Mayor John Helin. “We strongly oppose the transfer of our land and will defend it vigorously, through the courts and through direct action like the information blockade we are hosting today. Selling our land would cause irreparable harm to us and unjustifiably infringe our Aboriginal Title while undermining provincial reconciliation efforts with the Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian.”

Tsimshian law, history and oral traditions indicate that the Nine Tribes have Aboriginal Title to the Nasoga Gulf Lands. In an independent report by UBC expert Dr. Andrew Martindale, this ownership is confirmed and is unequivocal. There are many Nine Tribes pictographs and other archeological sites that testify to the use, occupation and governance of the lands that the Province is trying to sell. The sale of this land to the Nisga'a Nation would contradict the Province's 10 Principles that guide its relationship with Indigenous Peoples and its commitment to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UNDRIP).

The Nasoga Gulf Lands are located in the vicinity of the Nasoga Gulf and Mylor Peninsula. As a result of the location, these lands have significant potential to support British Columbia's liquified natural gas (LNG) industry. The Nine Tribes support responsible development in our traditional territory and membership would consider LNG development.

The Nine Tribes recognize the importance of responsible development by minimizing climate change impacts through the use of electrification with renewable sources of energy for the infrastructure. This requires all First Nations on the North Coast to work together with the Province and the Federal Government to make it all happen in an efficient and effective way.

“We have heard from LNG proponents that they will not invest in this area if there is a conflict on these lands,” said Metlakatla First Nation Chief Harold Leighton. “We look forward to a day that we all share in the benefits that LNG and other uses of our lands bring to everyone. But this can only happen if this unilateral sale to the Nisga'a Nation doesn't proceed.”

The Nisga'a Nation relinquished any claims they may have had when they signed their Treaty with the Province of B.C. and Government of Canada in 1998. The Treaty includes harvesting rights in the area, which were granted by the Nine Tribes; they did not give them title to these lands.

The Nine Tribes have formally and repeatedly written to the Government of B.C. asking them to co-develop a shared solution with them and the Nisga'a Nation. To date the NDP Government has refused to meet.

Benefits of a shared solution between the Nine Tribes and Nisga'a Nation include:

- An investment climate that attracts investors, based on collaboration not conflict
- Mutual benefit for the Nisga'a Nation, Nine Tribes, the region, B.C. and Canada



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- Low GHG LNG, which requires renewables and electrification. By working together, it is possible to build the infrastructure to make B.C.'s LNG the cleanest in market and consistent with the Province's CleanBC Plan
- A chance to include other First Nations in connection with pipelines
- An opportunity for a collaborative Environmental Assessment

The Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian look forward to working with our neighbours and the Province to enable environmentally sustainable developments and seek a mutually beneficial resolution to the Nasoga Lands that ensures the Nine Tribes, Nisga'a Nation, B.C. and Canada all benefit.

After information was distributed to each driver, they were welcome to continue their travel through Coast Tsimshian Territory.

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#### **Lax Kw'alaams**

Lax Kw'alaams community is located in the northwest coast of B.C., approximately 20km north of Prince Rupert. The Lax Kw'alaams Band are members of the Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian. The name, Lax Kw'alaams, derives from Laxl̓gu'alaams, which means 'place of the small roses' in Sm'algyax, the language of the Coast Ts'msyen (Tsimshian). For more information visit: [laxkwalaams.ca](http://laxkwalaams.ca)

#### **Metlakatla**

Metlakatla village is located 5km north of Prince Rupert, on an ancient site - occupied for thousands of years. The Metlakatla Band are members of the Nine Tribes of the Coast Tsimshian. Metlakatla means 'saltwater pass' in Sm'algyax, the language of the Coast Ts'msyen (Tsimshian). For more information visit: [metlakatla.ca](http://metlakatla.ca)

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