

Lax Kw'alaams Band
206 Shashaak Street
Lax Kw'alaams BC V0V 1H0
Telephone: (250) 625-3293
Fax: (250) 625-3246



Lax Kw'alaams Band
822 3rd Ave West
Prince Rupert BC
V8J 1M6
Telephone: (250) 624-5000

Press Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 11, 2024

Lax Kw'alaams unveils new signage in traditional territory along Highway 16

Territory of the 9 Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams - On Monday April 8, 2024, Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Terrace saw 6 new public signs raised, informing readers about the history of the traditional territory of the 9 Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams.

The signs were stood up at rest stops along the lower Skeena watershed along Highway 16. These signs are unique in sharing *adaawx* (oral history) as a part of the larger Ts'msyen territory, stewarded by the 9 Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams. This project also promotes the *Sm'algyax* language (the language of the *Ts'msyen*) in the Skeena corridor, including *Sm'algyax* place names, plants, and animals.

After several years of development, Lax Kw'alaams Band and hereditary leadership, staff and membership are taking pride in the raising of the signage project. The signage was developed in close communication with tribal representatives, with additional archival research and surveying conducted by Lax Kw'alaams staff.

Challenges

Despite the signage having overwhelming support by council, hereditary leadership and Lax Kw'alaams members alike, some of the signs have already been vandalized by unknown persons or stolen completely. Lax Kw'alaams leadership wishes to assure the membership that the signs will be reinforced and replaced, and that the Lax Kw'alaams Band does not condone vandalism of any kind.

Additionally, the signs may not be accessible to all interested readers, as they are located outside of town along Highway 16. To make this information accessible, digital copies of the

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signage will soon be available on the Lax Kw'alaams Band website at:

<https://laxkwalaams.ca/truth-and-reconciliation/>

Background

This Skeena signage project began in 2017. The project has support from the hereditary leadership of *Gitwilgyoots*, *Gitzaxlaaʔ*, *Gits'iis*, *Gitnadoixs*, *Ginaxangiik*, *Gitando*, *Giluts'aaw* and *Gitlaan*. These *Ts'msyen* tribes either host or are in close proximity to the location of the new signage. Lax Kw'alaams leadership maintains that Lax Kw'alaams has never ceded or surrendered their rights, or any part of the traditional territory of the 9 Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams.

About Us

This is a joint project between Lax Kw'alaams Band, Lax Kw'alaams Business Development LP and the Allied Tsimshian Tribes Association.

Quote 1

Lax Kw'alaams has always affirmed our territorial boundaries on the basis of the *adaawx* (oral history) of the 9 Allied Tsimshian Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams. Our territorial map has largely remained the same over the years, because it is firmly rooted in our history and culture - pre-contact to the present day. This project is intended to share the history of our traditional territory with residents and visitors alike. - **Garry Reece, Mayor of Lax Kw'alaams**

Quote 2

When this project was brought for consideration, and after lengthy discussions with the 9 Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, tribal representatives volunteered to have these signs installed in their tribal territories along the Skeena River. These signs were developed with the intent of putting

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them in our unceded territory. Since time immemorial we have left markings and markers within our territory – which we see archaeological evidence of to this day. We've created signs throughout our history, and this signage project is a continuation of practice. We are sharing our adaawx, in a new way, with consent and support of the tribal representatives of Lax Kw'alaams. - **Stan Dennis Jr., Allied Tsimshian Tribes Gal'malgyax**

Media contact

Lisa Girbav

Manager of Communications and Public Relations

Lax Kw'alaams Band

communications@laxband.com