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Press Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2024

Lax Kw'alaams unveils repaired educational Skeena Signage along Highway 16

Territory of the nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams - On Friday May 3, 2024, Lax Kw'alaams staff, hereditary leadership, youth and members at large celebrated the repairs to the educational Skeena Signage along Highway 16. The signage project was installed last month, and was vandalized or stolen entirely quickly thereafter.

Since the initial installation in April, structural repairs were made to the signage, and by May 3rd the information signage was re-installed to their bases. The installation was marked by an event involving ceremony, speeches and witnessing by tribal members. The repairs and reinforcement to the signs are in line with Lax Kw'alaams' commitment to reinstate the signs, and the information they represent.

These educational signs are the result of several years of planning, archival research and survey work.

About the project

This Skeena signage project began in 2017. The project has support from the hereditary leadership of the Allied Tsimshian Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, who either host or are in close proximity to the location of the new signage.

There are six educational signs of the Skeena Signage Project, which have been stood up along the lower Skeena watershed, at various rest stops and points of interest along Highway 16. These signs inform readers about the pre-contact history of the Allied Tsimshian Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams, and their respective territories along the Skeena River.

These signs are a unique addition to the existing information signage along the Skeena, as they share the *adaawx* (oral history) of the points of interest that are stewarded by the Allied Tsimshian Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams. This project also promotes *Sm'algyax* language (the language of the *Ts'msyen*), including place names, plants, and animals.

To make the information of these signs accessible to all interested readers, digital versions of the signage is on the Lax Kw'alaams Band website at: <https://laxkwalaams.ca/truth-and-reconciliation/>

This project is a joint initiative between the Lax Kw'alaams Band Truth and Reconciliation department, Lax Kw'alaams Fisheries, Lax Kw'alaams Business Development LP and the Allied Tsimshian Tribes Association. 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 nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams.

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Challenges

While this project has been a celebrated source of pride for Lax Kw'alaams members at large, the project has also seen very serious theft and vandalism to the sites. These acts of vandalism occurred immediately within hours following the initial installation of the signage on April 8th.

If you have any information on the vandalism of the Skeena Signage project, please contact the Prince Rupert RCMP detachment at 250-624-2136, with reference to file number 2024-2507.

Quotes

The territory for which we operate within is rooted within the tribal territories of the nine Allied Tsimshian Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams. The Skeena Signage Project is a reflection of this tribal history, and stays within the scope of the *adaawx* (oral history) of the nine Allied Tribes. The Lax Kw'alaams Band has never acknowledged that we share lands with neighboring communities or tribes. – **Garry Reece, Mayor of Lax Kw'alaams**

The Skeena Signage Project means a lot to the membership of Lax Kw'alaams, but also the community at large. The signs make the tribal histories of the Allied Tsimshian Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams accessible to the public, aims to educate readers about the territory, and share who we are as a people. We received good feedback on the visibility of the signs – from both Lax Kw'alaams members, and members of neighbouring nations alike. – **Joey Wesley, Councilor & Chair of Rights and Title Portfolio**

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