

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  
100 1<sup>st</sup> Ave East  
Prince Rupert BC V8J 1A6  
Telephone: (250) 627-5733  
Fax: (250) 627-5933

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## **LAX KW'ALAAMS BAND GOES TO FEDERAL COURT TO DEMAND CONSULTATION ON THE NORTHERN SHELF BIOREGION MPA NETWORK**

**Vancouver** – The Lax Kw'alaams Band, including members and representatives from the nine Allied Tsimshian Tribes, are in Vancouver for a five-day court hearing regarding their concerns that a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - scheduled for implementation - will negatively impact their fishing interests.

Lax Kw'alaams is requesting a judicial review of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans' decision to endorse the network and launch the implementation of fishing restrictions in the Northern Shelf Bioregion, an area of 102,000 square kilometers stretching from North Vancouver Island to the Alaskan Canadian border, where the Lax Kw'alaams commercial fleet regularly fish.

The MPA Network was endorsed in February of 2023 by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the BC government and less than half of the First Nations with territories in the region (15 of 42). Lax Kw'alaams is deeply concerned with the lack of meaningful consultation. The socio-economic, cultural and cumulative impacts of the MPA network have never been analyzed or mitigated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).

**“All we're asking is that Canada seriously considers how this plan could impact our fisheries and way of life, and to work with us to mitigate these impacts. We have shown up to the table for years in good faith, but it's frustrating to have our concerns ignored. It's 2024—how much longer will we have to wait for Canada to do better and uphold its duty to consult Indigenous Peoples?”** Mayor Garry Reece, Lax Kw'alaams

**"Consultation should be a process designed collaboratively with the Indigenous People involved. We want to work with the Federal government to minimize impacts and to move forward positively in a timely manner."** Stan Dennis Jr, Galmalgyax/Speaker, Allied Tsimshian Tribes Association

**“Ever since DFO took over management of the fisheries they have screwed everything up. The two fisheries that are on the brink of collapse, herring and salmon, are directly managed by DFO and have the greatest conservation concerns. DFO has turned fisheries into a political chip, and they aren't collaborating with the people who fish these stocks and have a responsibility to take care of them for future generations. As First Nations Peoples we have been stewards of**

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**our land for thousands of years. Our community is worried this might be the final nail in the coffin of our fisheries and our livelihood.” Robert Hughes, Chief Nisawap, Gispaxlo'ots Tribe**

**ENDS**

#### **ABOUT LAX KW'ALAAMS BAND**

The Lax Kw'alaams Band is made up of nine Allied Tsimshian Tribes with traditional territories in Prince Rupert and areas along the northwest coast of British Columbia. Our communities are proud fishing families who uphold intergenerational resource management practices and traditional laws. Fishing has been a way of life for Tsimshian people since time immemorial and remains a cornerstone of economic well-being and cultural identity for Lax Kw'alaams. The Coast Tsimshian Fish Plant is the biggest employer in the community of Lax Kw'alaams, offering full-time employment to over eighty members. No serious attempt has been made to understand and mitigate the potential impacts of this MPA Network to our way of life and social, cultural and economic stability.

To learn more: <https://laxkwalaams.ca/history/> and <https://laxkwalaams.ca/traditional-economy-and-people/>

#### **CONTACT**

Torrye Wheaton  
NSB MPAn Consultation Manager, Lax Kw'alaams Band  
[torrye@snakingrivergroup.com](mailto:torrye@snakingrivergroup.com)  
1-250-991-9424