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Press Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2024

**Lax Kw'alaams objects to proposed Kitselas and Kitsumkalum First Nations treaty proposals**

**Territory of the Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams** –Lax Kw'alaams continues to object to the proposed Kitselas and Kitsumkalum First Nations treaties' potential to negatively and irreparably impact and infringe Lax Kw'alaams' rights, title, interests, and self-determination within our territory. This press release comes on National Indigenous Peoples Day, and the 3rd anniversary of the Government of Canada signing into law the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* on June 21, 2021.

Lax Kw'alaams does not take issue with other First Nations seeking self-government and self-determination through treaty. However, as these two proposed treaties move toward initialing next week the Federal and Provincial crowns (the "Crowns") have not yet met their consultation obligations, and Lax Kw'alaams has yet to receive adequate information on these proposed treaties. Further, portions of the two treaty proposals violate Tsimshian law, as well as a significant and well documented historic agreement between each separate Tsimshian group – this included a Tsimshian map, fully endorsed and agreed to by Kitselas and Kitsumkalum, that clearly indicated Kitselas and Kitsumkalum territory outside the boundaries of Lax Kw'alaams territory.

Lax Kw'alaams maintains that the Crowns must not proceed with initialing these two agreements, as both concern and would impact our territory, until such time Lax Kw'alaams is meaningfully and adequately consulted and accommodated.

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The only defensible means the Crowns could demonstrate honourable and good faith dealings with Lax Kw'alaams on these two treaties would be through meaningful and adequate consultation and accommodation prior to initialing the treaties.

### **Concerns**

On June 19, 2024, Mayor Garry Reece of Lax Kw'alaams expressed serious concerns regarding the Crowns' conduct and proposed treaties with each of the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum First Nations on a formal submission to the Hon. Minister Gary Anandasangaree, Crown-Indigenous Relations for the Government of Canada and Hon. Minister Murray Rankin, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for the Government of British Columbia.

It is deeply concerning to Lax Kw'alaams that the Crowns seek to initial these proposals:

- absent full disclosure of the terms of these treaties to Lax Kw'alaams;
- without understanding or meaningful consideration of Lax Kw'alaams' issues;
- in violation of the legitimate territorial boundaries among the Tsimshian;
- without accommodation proportional to the proposed infringement of our rights; and
- without the consent of Lax Kw'alaams which is required at law given the strength of Lax Kw'alaams claims and the severity of the proposed infringement.

### **Quote**

For over a decade, Lax Kw'alaams has been consistent in declaring concerns to the Crowns in respect of the impacts these two treaty proposals would have on Lax Kw'alaams. On May 6, 2010, Mayor Garry Reece declared to the Crowns:

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“Given that the Lax Kw'alaams traditional territory borders on the territories of the Kitselas and the Kitsumkalum territories, Lax Kw'alaams' legal interests must be acknowledged and protected in any land selection process with the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum which might affect any of the claimed territory of the Lax Kw'alaams. To that end, any process of land selection with these two First Nations must be transparent and must involve full consultation with us.” –

**Mayor Garry Reece of Lax Kw'alaams**

### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**

The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have each made commitment to act and make laws in accordance with UNDRIP. The Government of Canada passed the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* into law on June 21, 2021, and the Province of British Columbia passed the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* into law in November 28, 2019.

An integral aspect of UNDRIP is the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for Indigenous peoples with regard to their territories and in accordance with Indigenous laws, traditions, and right of self-determination as set out in international and human rights law. These treaty proposals derogate starkly from the principles and articles of UNDRIP as they are understood by Lax Kw'alaams and have been recognized in legislation.

### **Media contact**

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