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Press Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 4, 2024

**Lax Kw'alaams collaborates with Gitxaala, Gitga'at and Kitasoo/Xai'xais to advocate for reconciliation and rights recognition**

**Territory of the nine Allied Tribes of Lax Kw'alaams** – Lax Kw'alaams Rights and Title Chair, Councillor Joey Wesley, attended a meeting with the Honourable Minister Murray Rankin and Honourable Minister Gary Anandasangaree, along with representatives from Gitxaala, Gitga'at, and Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nations to discuss reconciliation efforts with each First Nation.

Lax Kw'alaams was pleased to collaborate with Gitxaala, Gitga'at, and Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nations on shared reconciliation priorities, as each of the First Nations have dedicated years of work towards tripartite reconciliation discussions with Canada and BC.

In particular, Canada and BC's clear de-prioritization of entering reconciliation framework agreements, good faith measures, fiscal arrangements, and other important potential agreements and advance the First Nations self-determination was concerning.

**Lax Kw'alaams' Reconciliation Framework Agreement**

On February 23, 2024 the Honourable Minister Anandasangaree met with Lax Kw'alaams leadership and committed to imminently entering into the Uks-Baask (East Wind) Reconciliation Framework Agreement ("RFA") with Lax Kw'alaams. However, Canada and BC have since stalled on our RFA, and in mid-April of 2024 Mayor Garry Reece of Lax Kw'alaams indicated, by letter, the need to move ahead with our RFA in the interest of our community and the broader region. Lax Kw'alaams has not received any response to this letter.

Lax Kw'alaams was clear with the Ministers:

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- It is difficult for Lax Kw'alaams to discuss reconciliation when Canada and BC ignore Lax Kw'alaams interests by advancing, prioritizing, and initialing treaty proposals within our territory that would infringe our rights.
  - Lax Kw'alaams expects our rights and interests in our territory to be recognized and respected by Canada and BC – which is our understanding of reconciliation.
  - Lax Kw'alaams has demonstrated its commitment to reconciliation, yet it appears Canada and BC have stalled on their recent reconciliation commitments.
  - Lax Kw'alaams rights and title interests must be fully consulted and accommodated by Canada and BC.

### **Concerns**

Lax Kw'alaams and other Nations have experienced tremendous delay from Canada and BC in advancing our reconciliation priorities, and we are concerned about more election delays.

Lax Kw'alaams was also concerned to hear Canada and BC admit they prioritized and advanced initialing two modern treaties urgently before the upcoming interregnum and election period – we are concerned that Canada and BC made it clear other modern treaties take priority over and above our rights, title and interests and over and above reconciliation with Lax Kw'alaams and the good faith measures, RFA, and other commitments made to us by Canada and BC.

Lax Kw'alaams was also concerned with the statement from the Hon. Minister Gary Anandasangaree that our Tsimshian ancestral territorial boundaries were “non-linear” and “fluid” “prior to contact.” This is categorically incorrect in Tsimshian law and contrary to volumes of expert and oral history evidence that all Tsimshian Tribes and First Nations have acknowledged and agreed to in numerous public, political and legal processes by countless generations of all Tsimshian groups.

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Lax Kw'alaams concerns have been ignored by Canada and BC, and this was demonstrated again today in our meeting with Canada and BC.

## **Background**

On June 19, 2024, Lax Kw'alaams Mayor Garry Reece sent a formal letter via email to 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, expressing concerns regarding the Canada and British Columbia proposed treaties with each of the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum First Nations.

On June 21, 2024, Lax Kw'alaams [issued a press release](#), outlining our objection to the proposed Kitselas and Kitsumkalum treaties, which were initialed days later with the governments of Canada and British Columbia.

On June 28, 2024, representatives from Gitxaala, Gitga'at, Kitasoo/Xai'xais First Nations and our Lax Kw'alaams Rights and Title Chair, Councillor Joey Wesley, met with the Hon. Minister Murray Rankin and Hon. Minister Gary Anandasangaree, to voice concerns and highlight the need to move ahead with important priorities of the respective Nations.

## **Media contact**

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