



DECEMBER 2024

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER

The Province **transferred 312 hectares of land** to Lyackson First Nation and Cowichan Tribes, a first step in remedying decades-long displacement.

Lyackson First Nation is working on a number of items to help support the community.

Here, you will find a **short summary of a recent** significant win: the long-awaited return of land to the community.



A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF AND COUNCIL

Au Siem Leey'qsun Mustimuhw,

The Leadership continues to be energized by the signing of our Incremental Treaty Agreement (ITA) with BC and Cowichan Tribes. Acquiring the land is the first step in the re-establishment of our Leey'qsun Village site on Vancouver Island!

This Village site has been a long-fought effort for our People. The past work of Leey'qsun Leaders, going back to the first Land Commission hearings, nearly a hundred years ago, is evidence of our Leadership fighting for the return of our Land to our People. **We raise our hands to all our Leaders who have gone before us for this work.** We thank all former Council members for their dedication to this work. We especially raise our hands to Grand Chief Pahalicktun, Richard Thomas, for his unrelenting dedication over 31 years to secure land for the Leey'qsun Mustimuhw.

We have prepared this special edition newsletter to share important information about the historic day of signing, May 11, 2024. This newsletter is focused on the ITA: a map of the new lands; images from the signing; snapshots of the ITA and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Lyackson First Nation and Cowichan Tribes. We hope you find this information useful.

Acting on the agreement, we have established a Joint Holding Corporation with Cowichan Tribes to hold the new lands.

The two Nations are working together to determine how the new lands will be divided into two equal parcels, as well as identify an evergreen space between the parcels, with equal contributions from each Nation. The MOU commits to the establishment of a Working Group, which will make a recommendation to the Leadership on how the parcel should be divided.

The fundamental principles guiding the joint Working Group are:

- i. **Snuw'uy'ulth:** *Hul'q'umi'num laws and teachings*
- ii. **Ts'ets'uw-wutul:** *helping each other*
- iii. **'Uy shaqwalawun:** *good thoughts, manners, and/or behaviour*
- iv. **Mukw ihwet'uw ts' qwul:** *everybody has a voice*

The Addition to Reserve application phase of the work will begin once the division of the new lands is completed.

After reading the enclosed newsletter, we hope you will share in our enthusiasm for our future and future generations of Leey'qsun Mustimuhw.

Au Siem,
Chief and Council
Lyackson First Nation





PROVINCE TRANSFERS LAND TO LYACKSON FIRST NATION

Thanks in large part to the persistent efforts of Lyackson Chief Pahalicktun, **the Province transferred 312 hectares of land** near Skutz Falls Provincial Park to Lyackson First Nation and Cowichan Tribes, creating **an accessible space Lyackson community members** can call home for the first time in decades.

The parties **signed the official agreement** at a ceremony at Skutz Falls on **May 11, 2024**. Signatories included Lyackson Chief Pahalicktun, Cowichan Tribes Chief Sulsulxumaat, Premier David Eby, Lyackson's Laxele'wuts'at, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Murray Rankin, and Sunaxwumaat of Cowichan Tribes.

The event included **singing, dancing, and the exchange of gifts** including blankets, paddles, cedar boxes, and more. An estimated **150 people attended**.



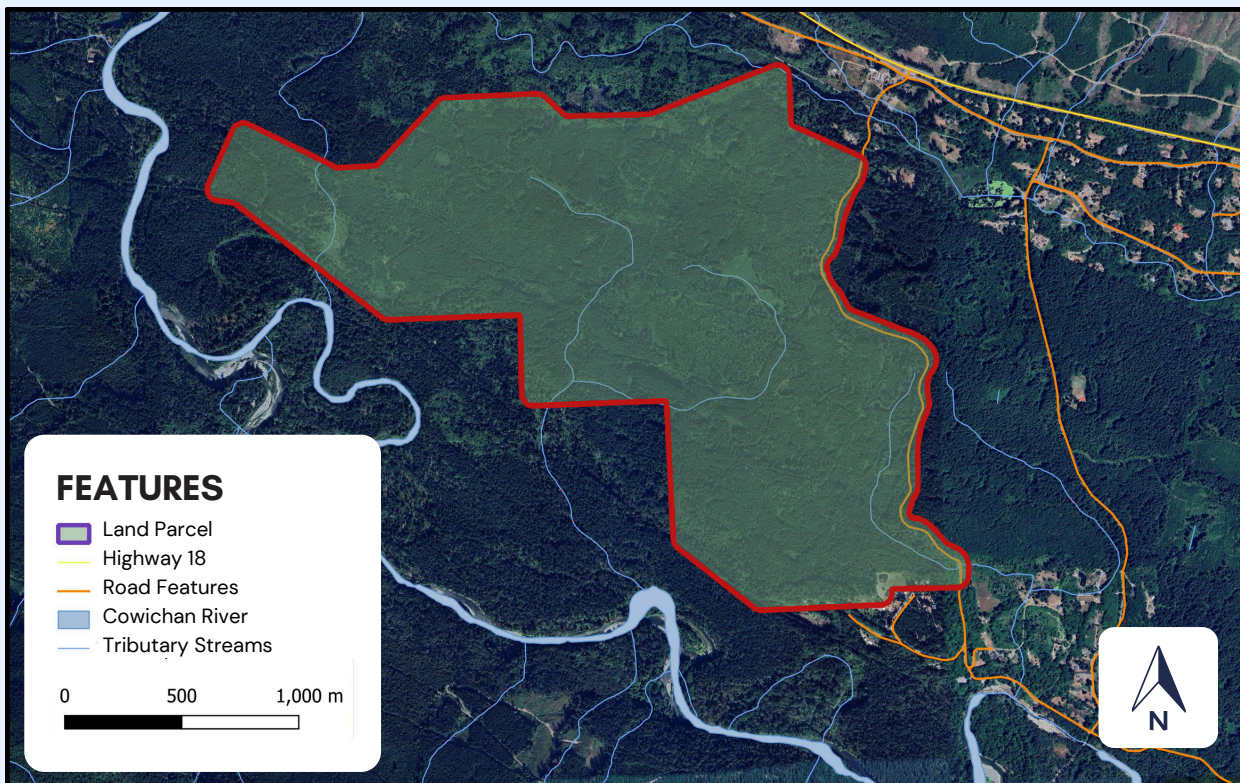
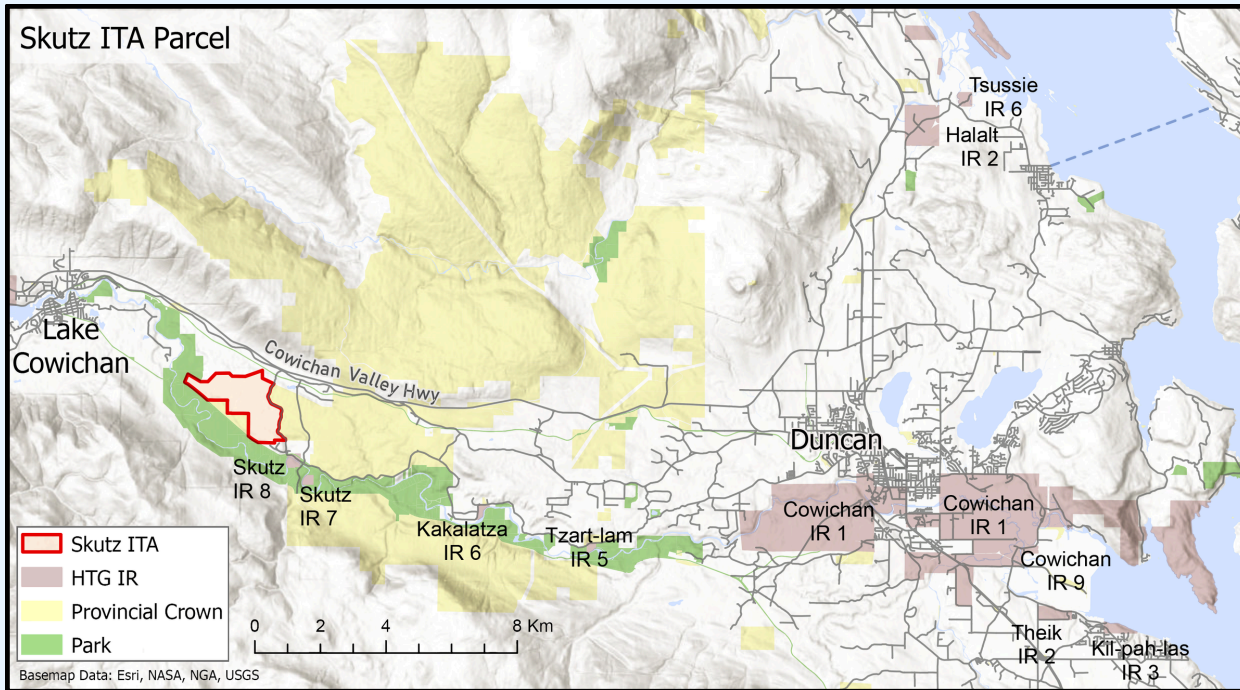
Bottom Row, left to right: Chief Pahalicktun, Chief Cindy Daniels, Premier Eby; Top Row, left to right: Shana Thomas, Murray Rankin, Dana Thorne

The land transfer is part of an Incremental **Treaty Agreement between B.C., Lyackson First Nation, and Cowichan Tribes**. To make the transfer possible, the Province purchased the land – which was previously privately-owned and is worth an estimated **\$8.55 million** – from Mosaic Forest Management.





MAPS: RETURNED LAND PARCEL





THE WORK OF GENERATIONS BEARS FRUIT THROUGH LAND BACK

Lyackson and Cowichan will **hold the land together** under an Inter-Community Memorandum of Understanding for the time being. Ultimately, Lyackson will work with Cowichan to **divide the land into two equal parts** – one for each community – and will maintain a portion of each parcel as green space for future generations to enjoy.

The transfer **was made possible by the work of four generations of Lyackson First Nation members**, carried forward tirelessly by Chief Pahalicktun, and is a small step towards remedying the total displacement of the community caused by colonization.

While Lyackson traditionally had a winter village at the mouth of the Cowichan River, Lyackson's post-colonization reserve lands were limited to Valdes Island, which is difficult to access and lacks basic infrastructure. The newly transferred land is much more apt to house a community.

In the coming years, Lyackson will **develop the land to meet the needs of members**. It will become a place to gather, share culture and language, access services, and, ultimately, to call home. The land will also house a cemetery, ensuring members are no longer buried on the lands of other communities.



Elder Irvin Norris



Elder Tracy Dales with granddaughter Ava.

"We've been displaced for four generations. My members live all over. We certainly needed a place so we can be like other First Nations and be neighbours with each other."

-Chief Pahalicktun





CELEBRATING LAND BACK





LYACKSON AND COWICHAN ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIP IN MOU



INTER-COMMUNITY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN:

Lyackson First Nation
(hereinafter referred to as "Lyackson")

AND:

Cowichan Tribes
(hereinafter referred to as "Cowichan")

Lyackson and Cowichan signed an Inter-Community Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to work together to acquire, hold, and, ultimately, equally divide the transferred land in a way which supports the growth and development of each community. The parties also agreed to collaborate to ensure the development of key infrastructure. **To learn more, visit lyackson.bc.ca**

HISTORIC AGREEMENT SIGNED MAY 11, 2024

Updates regarding the development of the land will be announced to the community through future editions of this newsletter. To view more details on this agreement and other news, **please visit our newly updated website at www.lyackson.bc.ca**



Lyackson First Nation
Cowichan Tribes
and
British Columbia

Commemorate our Partnership


Working in partnership, we – Lyackson First Nation, Cowichan Tribes and the Province of British Columbia – have strengthened our collaborative relationship through a key milestone: an Incremental Treaty Agreement.


Today, we commemorate the signing of our mutually developed agreement that gives us great reason to celebrate our shared commitment to the following:


- The return of culturally-significant land in the Cowichan Valley to Lyackson First Nation and Cowichan Tribes.
- Land for Lyackson First Nation to address a longstanding need for a village site to re-establish a community base, so that members have a place to live, gather, access services and prosper.
- Land for Cowichan Tribes to help address the need for housing, development opportunities and other cultural activities.
- An inter-community Memorandum of Understanding between Lyackson First Nation and Cowichan Tribes to share and use the lands in partnership.


We recognize and appreciate the hard work and leadership of the many people who have contributed to the co-development of this Agreement.


While the journey towards reconciliation is ongoing, we acknowledge that this Agreement is a critical collaborative step forward. The shared endeavour of reconciliation requires mutual commitments to continue to build meaningful relationships based on trust and respect, to address past and ongoing injustices and to collaboratively build an equitable and prosperous future for the coming generations. This Incremental Treaty Agreement is a step towards achieving that future.



Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia


Chief Pahalicktnun (Richard Thomas)
Lyackson First Nation


Honourable Mélanie Rankin
Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation


Chief Subléxumast (Cindy Daniela)
Cowichan Tribes


Laxe'wuts'aat (Shana Thomas)
Lyackson First Nation


Sunaxwumast (Dana Thorne)
Cowichan Tribes

Signed on this date: May 11, 2024

A commemorative copy of the Incremental Treaty Agreement between Lyackson First Nation, Cowichan Tribes and BC celebrating the land back agreement.





ON THE LAND

