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Ma'amtagila Nation Seek Recognition of Inextinguishable Rights & Title

VICTORIA, Łək'wəŋən Territory & l'tsikan, Ma'amtagila Territory - The Ma'amtagila leadership demand the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia and the Tlowitsis First Nation Chief and Council to cease all negotiations or treaty processes pertaining to Ma'amtagila territory and invite healing and reconciliation of historical and ongoing injustices.

"The Ma'amtagila never gave their land away," said chief Nelson Bruce of the Hayalikawayi namima (clan), whose grandfather was the great chief kwəmxəlagalis-ik'awegilakw.

The Ma'amtagila are one of the Kwakwəkwə'wakw First Nations whose territory lies in the Johnstone Strait area of northern Vancouver Island and the Great Bear Rainforest. Notably the areas of Call Inlet, Port Neville, Port Harvey and on Vancouver Island areas of Adam & Eve River and adjacent watersheds.

The Ławit'sis (Tlowitsis) and Ma'amtagila have always been distinct neighboring nations with kinship and resource sharing practices. Colonial duress forced their centralization and amalgamation, but they have always maintained their own governance, territory and hereditary practices. In 1945 it was decided by the majority of Ma'amtagila and Ławit'sis chiefs that they could help one another and share resources if they were to join as one under the DIA band structure. The amalgamated band was known as the Turnour Island Band. Turnour Island Band is now known as the Tlowitsis First Nation which has not had an election in approximately 40 years.

Through a series of ill mannered, unvalidated and illegitimate resolutions and processes the Ma'amtagila have been silenced, disempowered, and disregarded by the federal and provincial governments. But we are still here. We still love our Ławit'sis family relations, our nation, and our Potlatch governance.

"The Ma'amtagila Hereditary Chiefs are the rightful representatives of the Ma'amtagila people and remain the holders of Aboriginal rights and title in their territories," said Noah Ross, lawyer for the Ma'amtagila.

"The Tlowitsis First Nation has no authority to cede Ma'amtagila territory in treaty negotiations with the Provincial and Federal government."

Ma'amtagila leadership is now calling on the governments that are negotiating with Tlowitsis First Nation to cease all negotiations pertaining to Ma'amtagila lands and waters and do the hard work of reconciliation with the Ma'amtagila to repair the injustice.

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For more information, please contact:

Seneca Ambers Țłatłəkwalaga - 250-508-8173, senecaambers@gmail.com

www.maamtagila.ca



Bob Harris Design