



SPUZZUM FIRST NATION

Our Land. Our Future. Our Success. Forward Focused Nation Building.

36500 Main Road, Spuzzum, BC V0K 2S1
Office: 604-863-2395 / Fax: 604-863-2218
www.spuzzumnation.com

May 3, 2022

Matt Austin, Assistant Deputy Minister Integrated Resource Operations Division
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

VIA Email:

Re: Critical Need for Heritage Inspection of Spô'zêm First Nation Village Site

Mr. Austin,

This letter follows up on our letter to Minister Conroy nearly a year ago on June 29, 2021, seeking a Ministerial Order for an inspection order of our ancient Tikwalus village with our full participation. We are frustrated and concerned that we have not received a response to our letter as our heritage continues to be at risk.

Our ancient Tikwalus village is the location upon which the Alexandra Lodge sits. Tikwalus village is one of our Nations most sacred gathering sites for honouring our relatives, connecting with our land and our teachings. In fact, this village may prove to be the most important as it also has oral history of being the host meeting place for many tribes, including the now USA tribes Nooksack and Skagit, this was also the junction of the oolichan grease trail from Squamish and the Tikwalus trail that our nation showed the fur traders as a direct route to the Merritt area.

Thousands attended sacred ceremonies at the Tikwalus potlatches, including all relations big and small. This area has a very sordid past with a storyline of corruption and greed by colonists, stories of fake deeds, deceptive agents and in the end a recently admitted illegal pre-emption by Canada.

“Upon hearing that Biggest Star was coming to visit, Owl, Bear, Fire and Otter gathered at Tikwalus to honour Biggest Star’s place in the family.” - Hrome Tik Inquakosen (1969)

In Canada’s history, this location includes the “Chapman’s Bar” gold mining site of 1858, so named for Spô'zêm’s Chapman family members, that tragically resulted in the loss and desecration of our beloved Tikwalus village that was set ablaze by miner-militias during the Fraser River War (1858), one of the seminal events of the founding of the colony. To date, a small, charted area of land has been fenced into a westernized burial ground beside the old lodge (just next to Hwy 1) that contains many members of our Spô'zêm nation, grave markers that are a mute testimony to





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our Nation's founding existence. A ceremonial or rites of passage that differs from our distinct cultural practices.

Atop our ancient Shwimp village sits an enormous capacitor station, constructed in the 50-60's, our sacred site was previously used for a gravel dump and by the time the capacitor station was proposed, the archaeological test results were minimal containing statements such as, "previously disturbed", "nothing noteworthy" and "barren flat space" to describe our Nations home.

Our land defiled with transformers, capacitors and relays set the pathway for further perimeter grounding that included below-surface trenching, during this process our Ancestors history became blatant. Sacred sites unearthed from their resting state to reveal graves, pit houses, earth ovens and food caches, an Indigenous history of existence, way of life and rightful landowners whose connection to the land must be acknowledged by the province. A history our Spô'zêm nation remembers, feels, and remains connected with.

With this newfound acknowledgement also comes a grossly neglected due diligence in consultation, reconciliation, and truth.

The two villages our Nation brings to your attention today, are in dire need of an expedited order under s 12.3 of the Heritage Conservation Act ("Section 12 Order").to protect our nation's heritage and cultural significance. This is within your authority to address and is imperative to reconciliation. We are aware some of site area is currently designated under the HCA and we are seeking a copy of the Statement of Heritage Significance or any other enabling documents for the Alexandra Lodge/14 Mile House. We were not ever consulted in the designation of this site which straddles on into one of our reserves.

The recent atmospheric river phenomenon has created numerous concerns as the water is washing away the ground where our village was, in our culture we often utilized the talus slopes for our burials, and we have Elders who tell us that some of their babies were buried there in upright positions. Members have found many projectile points and other culturally important items in our land.

Currently there are storage containers atop one known unmarked grave, the site has two currently documented graveyards, in our culture there would be a site on opposite sides of a major village such as Tikwalus for cultural reasons.

This site has been the major focus of true indigenous ownership and our Nations expectations are ones we would hold steadfast to preserve our land, our history, our Ancestors. Decades have passed since we have had proper ceremony for our Ancestors that are buried all throughout Tikwalus because we are not free in our inherent rights to attend our very own ancient ceremonial village.



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The recent recovery of the countries residential school children weighs heavy on our hearts. We were particularly saddened for our children who we would bring back home however we cannot even bury them next to their schoolmates, their relatives, their nation due to the provincial government's recent and uncanny transfer of one of our sacred graveyards to extremely disrespectful homeowners, we are now concerned what other providence may either be hidden or destroyed indefinitely.

As a sovereign government, we are asserting our inherent right to expect the BC government to adhere to UNDRIP and immediately impose a Section 12 Order with respect to our entire sacred village footprint, including the use of ground-penetrating LiDAR. We are open to discussing additional tools under the HCA to cooperatively protect these sites, including section 4 of the Act.

Included in this letter is our Nations chosen archaeologist, Brenda Gould, who has advised us regarding the known significance of this site, our legal team, and media outlets who have been following our story. Furthermore, our Nation extends this open letter to the FLNRORD Indigenous Liaison, Kevin Chisholm and to Minister Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations, and Reconciliation.

We cannot move our relationship with this ministry further until we feel we are not only heard, but that measurable action has been taken to fulfill our request. We request an immediate meeting with you to discuss this letter, as well as a written response no later than May 30, 2022.

Respectfully,

Hromtik'en Kwakosen, Chief James Hobart
Spô'zêm First Nation, Nlaka'pamux Territory

cc. Kevin Chisholm, FLNRORD Indigenous Liaison
Minister Murray Rankin, MIRR
