



CAMPBELL RIVER INDIAN BAND

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AN OPEN LETTER TO K'ÓMOKS MEMBERS FROM WEI WAI KUM

November 4, 2024

Dear K'ómoks Members,

We are writing this letter to you to, the members of K'ómoks. In the interest of transparency, it will also be made publicly available to members of the Liǵʷiǵdaǵʷ Nation and interested stakeholders. We want to explain why we may have to challenge your draft Treaty in court and through other means. This is something we would prefer to avoid. We have many close ties with K'ómoks and would like to be able to support your Treaty and have you support ours. Unfortunately, your Chief Negotiator and some of your recent leadership have taken things in a direction that deeply impacts our aboriginal rights, title, interests and Territory.

For the past few years, we have tried to work out these issues with your Chief Negotiator, your Chief and Council and the governments but have not made any progress. If you have time to read this letter, we hope you understand why we felt forced to write it. We hope you will want to work with us to try and make things right so we can all move forward in a good and respectful way.

We used to work together well

We have many close family relations with K'ómoks because of our history. In the late 1700s and early 1800s our ancestors moved south and conquered the Territory we hold now. However, after the end of a long conflict and series of wars between various Salish tribes and the Liǵʷiǵdaǵʷ, we found peace through intermarriage and potlatching. Our Liǵʷiǵdaǵʷ Nations and K'ómoks respected each other's areas and some of our families joined together. All intermarriages in our Territory were under Liǵʷiǵdaǵʷ law but they created common ground for us all to work together for many generations. Until recently, these relationships resulted in much cooperation and we had come to consider K'ómoks as one of our Liǵʷiǵdaǵʷ member Nations. If K'ómoks had continued to identify as a Liǵʷiǵdaǵʷ member Nation, we would have had fewer problems.

Until K'ómoks left the Hamatla Treaty Society, K'ómoks was part of the Liǵwítdaǵw negotiations. Under the old Treaty Society, we had agreements with former K'ómoks Leaders that K'ómoks would not assert title north of Oyster River and we would not select lands south of Oyster River.

When K'ómoks left our Treaty Society, we assumed these agreements were still in place. We have worked hard to have cooperative arrangements with K'ómoks for sharing elk, sharing forestry opportunities in the Salmon River area, and negotiating a Fisheries Reconciliation Agreement.

Things have taken a bad turn – Serious problems with draft K'ómoks Treaty

Unfortunately, over the last few years, things have taken a bad turn. We didn't know until we saw the draft K'ómoks Treaty. It appears that someone at K'ómoks has made decisions that K'ómoks no longer wants to be part of Liǵwítdaǵw and that K'ómoks wants to be identified as a Salish Nation. This leads to all kinds of problems because we conquered the Salish up and down the coast. If your leadership have decided to identify as Salish, under our traditional law, K'ómoks must be treated like other non- Liǵwítdaǵw Nations and seek permission and protocols to use our Territory.

Unfortunately, that is not the direction taken in the draft K'ómoks Treaty. Here are some of the very serious problems with the draft K'ómoks Treaty. The K'ómoks draft Treaty:

- claims nearly 100% of Liǵwítdaǵw Territory.
- ignores hereditary chieftainships and Bighouse protocol.
- does not acknowledge any core Territory for Wei Wai Kum. K'ómoks would have constitutionally protected Treaty rights, and be able to pursue shared decision-making and economic benefits, everywhere including in the heart of Wei Wai Kum Territory at Campbell River and Loughborough Inlet.
- would give K'ómoks exclusive ownership of the Salmon River Reserve and wipe out all the promises and commitments in the 1941 *Indian Act* amalgamation between K'ómoks and the Walitsama Liǵwítdaǵw.
- would give K'ómoks new constitutionally protected fishing rights in places where K'ómoks never fished historically such as in Loughborough Inlet.
- would remove the ability for continued inter-marriages and Band transfers between Liǵwítdaǵw First Nations and K'ómoks. The new K'ómoks Treaty eligibility and enrolment clauses would mean most descendants of the Walitsama who have a right to be K'ómoks members under the 1941 amalgamation would not be eligible for membership.

Specific Problems at Salmon River

We accept that some K'ómoks or Sasitla ancestors were at Salmon River at some point prior to 1835. However, we conquered the area and the Salmon River Reserve was created for the Liǵwítdaǵw in 1886. This made sense because every census since 1835 confirmed that there were only Liǵwítdaǵw people there. We have hereditary chieftainships from Salmon River and extensive potlatch records. The headstone for Walitsama Liǵwítdaǵw Chief Harry Moon is there, and the remains of our house posts and Bighouses.

In 1941 there was an *Indian Act* amalgamation voted on by K'ómoks members and the Walitsama Liǵwíłdaǵw. At that time, the federal government had completely failed to protect the Salmon River reserve from Mamał̄a settlers who were grazing their cattle through our village there and pushing their way into our homes. One of our great Chiefs, Moses Moon, married a woman from Gilford Island named Nak. Nak had previously become a K'ómoks member through a previous marriage with Billy Frank, but Billy had passed away. Consequently, Nak was at risk due to her situation. Chief Moses Moon worked in Deep Bay and wanted to protect Nak, but also wanted to protect the Walitsama Liǵwíłdaǵw after the failures of the federal government. For this reason, he and his brother, Harry, were open to amalgamating with the Comox Band.

There were a lot of problems with the 1941 vote, and at that time, several Walitsama members expressed that they were against the amalgamation of the Walitsama and K'ómoks Bands. Also, Walitsama women were not allowed to vote. In many ways, our Members would like to challenge that amalgamation and have it undone and to have the Salmon River Reserve returned to the Liǵwíłdaǵw. If it is not undone, we expect that Canada and K'ómoks will live up to the terms. The 1941 agreement guaranteed the following:

- Two Chiefs, one for K'ómoks and one for the Walitsama Liǵwíłdaǵw.
- Equal sharing of all Reserves between the K'ómoks and the Walitsama Liǵwíłdaǵw, including the Salmon River Reserves and all the Comox Reserves.
- Equal sharing of all assets and revenues between the K'ómoks Members and the Walitsama Liǵwíłdaǵw Members.

Unfortunately, these commitments have not been respected. K'ómoks has not shared any revenues with the Walitsama Liǵwíłdaǵw descendants. In 1946, K'ómoks Council of the day authorized logging at the Salmon River Reserve against the wishes of our Walitsama Liǵwíłdaǵw Chief who was suffering from a serious illness at the time. All the money went to the "Comox Band." Furthermore, we have families with rights to homes on the Comox Reserve that housed regalia and K'ómoks Council did not allow the rightful heirs to reclaim their homes and regalia. And finally, when some Walitsama families decided to move back to Salmon River in the 1990s, they attempted to apply for membership with the K'ómoks Band, but they were denied membership and denied access to the Salmon River Reserve by K'ómoks Council.

The actions of the recent Council in trying to take 100% ownership of the Salmon River Reserve, ignoring all the commitments from the 1941 amalgamation, and claiming all our territory for potential decision making and economic benefits for K'ómoks are the last straws for us.

A Clear Path Forward

Despite the challenges we have faced, we remain confident that K'ómoks Members recognize the importance of working together. It is time for us to meet, face-to-face, as our Elders did, to openly discuss the way forward.

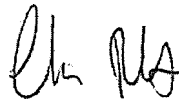
We formally invite you, along with your Leaders, Elders and Hereditary Chiefs, to meet with us in our Gukwdzi. We will respectfully work through K'ómoks Chief, Council and Administration

to coordinate this meeting; however, if we are unable to coordinate with the elected Council, our invitation to you remains standing. We will provide additional details, including the confirmed date and time, soon. Our ancestors understood the value of these gatherings, and we are committed to honouring that tradition.

We would welcome any questions or suggestions.

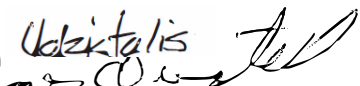
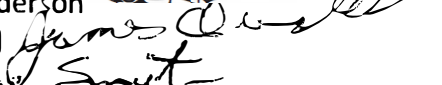


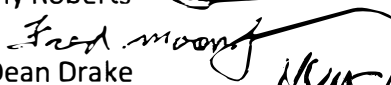
On behalf of the Wei Wai Kum Chief and Council and our Hereditary Chiefs.

Chief Councillor Chris Roberts



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Ġġame P'aselath, Tony Roberts 
Ġġame, Fred Moon 
Ġġame Ha a tla las, Dean Drake 