



May 3rd 2021

British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
Suite 1020-1200 W. 73rd Ave
Vancouver, BC, V6P 6G5

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
PO Box 9100 Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria BC V8W 9B1

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development
PO Box 9049 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Attention: Regional Chief Terry Teegee, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
Minister of Indigenous Relations Murrey Rankin, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Minister Katrine Conroy, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations and Rural Development

Re: Kweh-Kwuch-Hum Government Actions Regulation (GAR)

This letter serves to inform you about a situation that a Sts'ailes member has been facing over the last four years that has caused increased grief and suffering.

Background:

October of 2016, Claudette Leon, who is a Sts'ailes member, has been dealing with this situation since the traumatic death of her son. On November 3rd 2016, Claudette held her son Nelson Leon's funeral services in Sts'ailes and on that day his ashes were brought up and buried under a culturally modified tree chosen by her son. In Sts'ailes culture, parents place the placenta in the stump of a tree for it to remain until they leave this earth, where their bodies go afterward. She informed the forestry company, Western Canadian Timber Products Ltd. (WCTP) of the location where her son's ashes were placed.

*Claudette brought the flowers and arrangements from his funeral up to the sacred site **three days later** (November 6 2016) due to the snow levels on the day of the funeral and she discovered WCTP clear cut all the trees, including the culturally modified stump these ashes were placed in. She waited to bring the flowers and all his wreathes up because the snow going up there was too deep for vehicles to make it through. Claudette was devastated by this action, which further impacted her grief process.*



Sacred site of Nelson Leon.

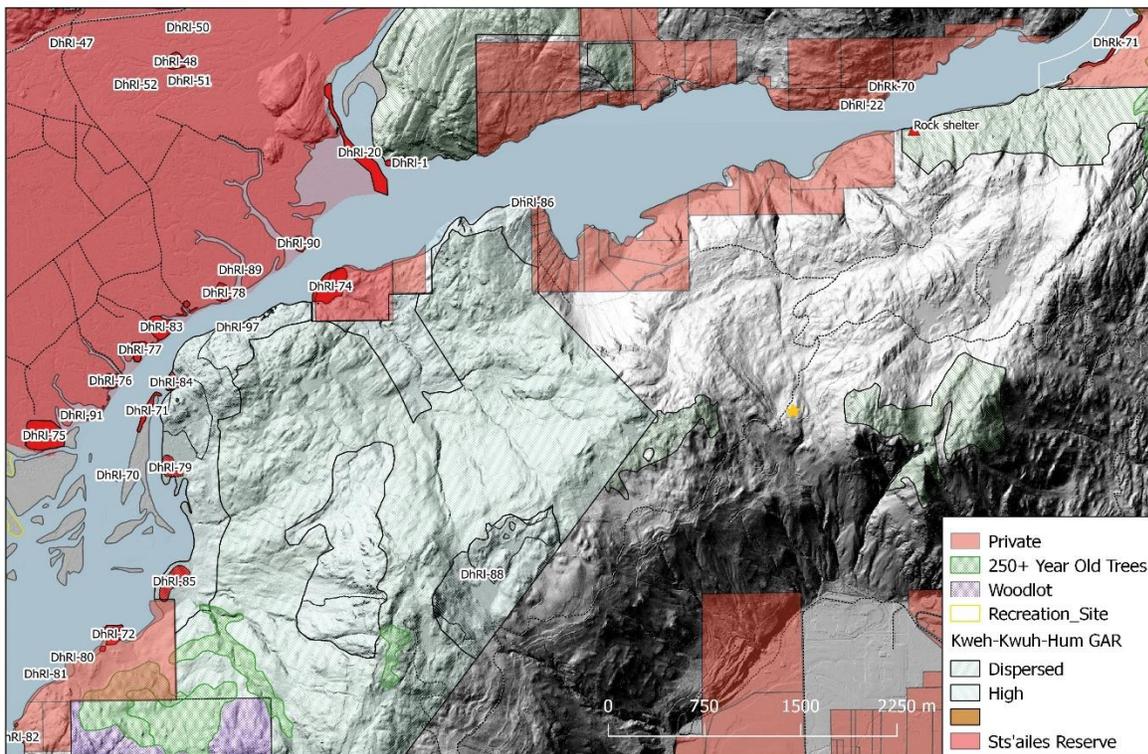


She sent them a letter subsequent to that discovery. She requested them to move all the stumpage and debris from their clear cut out of the area of her son's ashes and the placentas of his children. WCTP then placed all the debris in the middle of the space between the ashes and placentas. She requested they then move them out of the area, as it was disrespectful to the ancestors and the sacred site. WCTP asked if they could burn the stumpage. In horror, she refused because it would further damage the burial sites.

Claudette and her spouse cleared a spot for their vehicles to park so that they didn't block traffic going up the mountain. WCTP placed the debris from the middle of the space between the sacred sites and dropped them on the mother's parking space. In this discovery, she found the culturally modified trees dumped over the edge of the mountain across from the burial site. This time, they also cut out the center of the modified tree after she asked for a disc to count the age of the tree.

Please refer to the map below for the location.

Claudette has initiated a legal case against Western Canadian Timber Products Ltd; they wanted to settle out of court, offering her \$3,000 for her pain and suffering. Sts'ailes Council endorsed Sts'ailes Xwiléxmet provided a letter of political and governance support to Claudette to support her healing journey.



Map of the culturally sensitive site, yellow star is the location of Nelson's Leon's sacred burial site.

Sts'ailes is asking for support from the BC Assembly of First Nations for advocacy to protect many areas where ancestors lie that are not within the Government Actions Regulations outlined in the Sts'ailes Kweh-Kwuh-Hum GAR. Sts'ailes is asking for support to implement more stringent rules and guidelines on culturally modified trees, cultural training on sacred burial sites and follow through with consequences.

Sts'ailes

As you can see, this has caused detrimental harm to the well-being of the mother and children as each incident was compared to reliving the loss all over again. It has extended the grief journey because they continue to relive this grief every time they go up to Kweh-Kwuch-Hum. Although we understand that the physical location is just outside the culturally sensitive area, Sts'ailes was under the impression culturally modified trees were protected due to the significance of the tree and how our ancestors used the territory.

In this letter, you will also receive several images that show and prove that this tree was culturally significant and that it was damaged. Images prove that these logs were culturally modified trees, and also shows evidence that they were cut to undermine the wishes of the family and community.



Not even a week after ashes were laid to rest at the site. The debris was laid all around the burial site.



Grandparents go to the site of the tree, to lay roses and assess the damage.



The stump where the ashes are laid.



Culturally modified tree stump dug and disrespectfully discarded.



Chief Ralph Leon conducting site assessment with Sts'ailes Archeologist.



Sacred site of Nelson Leon, to show the proof it was a culturally modified tree. Shows the center was cut out intentionally to reduce ability to determine age of the

Sts'ailes is also implementing processes for members to get maps and locations of those protected currently so they do not have similar situations in the future. Sts'ailes Xwiléxmet which means "to stand up for" is formerly known as the Aboriginal Rights and Title Department has stressed the importance of reaching out to the Xwiléxmet Department to determine some locations that are protected so they do not suffer the same consequences.

We wanted to bring this to the attention of BC AFN to help provide advocacy support not only to Sts'ailes, but all BC First Nations communities. We also understand that as an individual with limited financial ability, taking on a giant such as this is insurmountable; therefore we are humbly asking the BC Assembly of First Nations for their support in this situation.

Sincerely,

Boyd Peters
Xwiléxmet Director & Sts'ailes Council man
Sts'ailes

CC: Chief Ralph Leon, Sts'ailes
William Charlie, CAO/CN, Sts'ailes
Claudette Leon, Sts'ailes Member, Sts'ailes