



May 30, 2022

Clare Frater  
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Islands Trust  
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**RE: WSÁNEĆ INTERESTS IN ISLANDS TRUST POLICY STATEMENT**

ÍY SŁÁĆEL Ms. Frater,

My name is Gordon Elliott, and I am Director of Operations for the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council. We are an organization that advocates for the shared interests of the WSÁNEĆ people and those of the Tsartlip, Tsawout and Tseycum First Nations. I understand that Islands Trust is undergoing an update to its Policy Statement with the intention of enhancing preservation and protection within the Trust Area.

This is an admirable goal, and we all must work together to ensure our natural areas are protected. However, from the WSÁNEĆ perspective, the Southern Gulf Islands were never sold, and they are our TELETÁĆES (“Relatives of the Deep”). These islands were once WSÁNEĆ people, and they were thrown to their current locations by XÁLS. Once they had settled, XÁLS turned to the remaining WSÁNEĆ people and gifted us responsibilities and obligations for their care.

With that said, I understand that staff at the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council have worked with WLC advisory committees to provide Islands Trust with information about WSÁNEĆ interests. Since then, Islands Trust staff have worked to embed these interests into the draft Policy Statement, and the next step of this work is community engagement. Near the end of summer, WLC staff will work again with WLC advisory committees to provide a fulsome review of the work completed to date on the draft Policy Statement.

It has come to my attention, however, that the Trust Council will meet in June to contemplate feedback received thus far from First Nations, other government agencies, and the public. In advance of that meeting, I wanted to reiterate, at a high-level, the importance of the feedback we have provided so far and outline some of the key areas of interest for WSÁNEĆ people.

- **Rights, Responsibilities, and Decision-Making:** While the province has recently recognized UNDRIP and has made progress toward reconciliation, municipalities,



regional districts, and the Islands Trust have not followed suit. WSÁNEĆ people have rights and responsibilities throughout our territory that are protected by the Constitution. These rights are impacted by decision-makers at all levels. As a result, through greater understanding of WSÁNEĆ interests and WSÁNEĆ involvement in decision-making, all parties can move toward reconciliation.

- **Environmental Protection:** To exercise WSÁNEĆ rights, WSÁNEĆ people require a healthy environment. Further, WSÁNEĆ people have obligations to care for the environment. The preservation and protection of the Trust Area must include WSÁNEĆ input and WSÁNEĆ Traditional Knowledge. We must preserve our forested areas and wetlands. And, we must protect our foreshores. Docks and other structures have both environmental and policy-based impacts on WSÁNEĆ harvesting. Further, although agriculture is important for our shared economy, agricultural run-off (along with other pollutants) have detrimental impacts on WSÁNEĆ marine harvesting. Consideration for these impacts—along with the creation of remediation plans and the involvement of WSÁNEĆ monitors—ought to be considered in any amendments to the Policy Statement.
- **Cultural Heritage:** WSÁNEĆ people lived, and live, all throughout the Gulf Islands. Colonialism has largely pushed our community toward the villages on the Saanich Peninsula, but the Southern Gulf Islands remain vitally important to us. Throughout these islands, records of our ancestors are preserved in our burial places, in middens, and in other archaeological sites. Provincial policies have not adequately protected or mapped these places. As a result, we are interested in increased scrutiny in sensitive cultural heritage areas.
- **WSÁNEĆ Presence in the Gulf Islands:** Throughout the late-1800s and early-1900s, WSÁNEĆ people were removed from the Gulf Islands. It is our sincere interest to reintroduce WSÁNEĆ culture and a WSÁNEĆ presence to the Gulf Islands. We envision this occurring through public education events, public art, and the renaming of significant features. Lastly, additional housing for WSÁNEĆ people is imperative and efforts toward this goal ought to be considered in any amendments to the Policy Statement.

With this high-level overview of WSÁNEĆ interests, I hope we can move together toward the protection and preservation of the Trust Area with special consideration for the unique WSÁNEĆ rights and responsibilities over these lands and waters.



**WSÁNEĆ**  
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

ENHANCING RECOGNITION OF, AND RESPECT  
FOR, WSÁNEĆ DOUGLAS TREATY RIGHTS AND  
WSÁNEĆ ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AND TITLE

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HÍSWŪKE SIÁM,

Gordon Elliott  
Director of Operations  
WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council

cc: Peter Luckham, Chair, Islands Trust Council  
Dilani Hippola, Senior Policy Advisor, Islands Trust  
Daniela Murphy, Legislative Services Clerk, Islands Trust  
Justin Fritz, Policy/Negotiations Manager, WLC  
Kristen Bill, Tseycum First Nation  
Christine Bird, Band Manager, Tsawout First Nation  
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