huu ay aht

ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND

August 5, 2025

RE: Public Statement of Investigation Report

The Huu-ay-aht First Nations Council ("**HFN Council**") is publishing the statement below to communicate the outcome of an investigation concerning former Chief Councillor Robert Dennis Sr. Below, we set out the process of the investigation, the outcome and the conclusion of the HFN Council.

On August 3, 2022, the Executive Council of the Huu-ay-aht First Nations ("**Huu-ay-aht**"), under the leadership of Robert Dennis Sr., the then elected Chief Councillor, directed that an Inquiry Panel be convened to inquire into allegations of abuse of power, intimidation, harassment, assault, sexual harassment and sexual assault committed by members of government.

This action was taken in response to complaints of misconduct raised by community members against Trevor Cootes, a former sitting Executive Council member, and Derek Peters, the Tayii (hereditary chief) of the Huu-ay-aht. The Inquiry Panel's resulting report dated May 15, 2023 was made available to the public.

During the Panel of Inquiry and subsequent processes, certain allegations of misconduct by Mr. Dennis were received, and it was recommended that a subsequent investigation into those allegations take place.

As a result, on January 22, 2024, the Huu-ay-aht engaged external investigators to conduct an investigation into the alleged misconduct by Mr. Dennis and to afford him a full opportunity to respond to those allegations. Mr. Dennis participated in the investigation process.

On February 19, 2025, the Executive Council received the final investigation report ("**Report**"). The Report concluded that Mr. Dennis had breached Huu-ay-aht legislation by:

- failing to take adequate action despite having knowledge of Mr. Peters and Mr. Cootes' sexual, financial, and governance misconduct; and

- engaging in political interference, including by directing administrative staff, permitting bullying in the workplace, and acting in a conflict of interest and/or an apparent conflict of interest.

Mr. Dennis was given an opportunity to respond to the Report and has indicated his disagreement with the Report. The Executive Council considered the Report and Mr. Dennis's response and concluded that the findings and conclusion in the Report as briefly set out above are substantiated.

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The Executive Council met with the ḥaẃiiḥ Council to advise them of the Report and the outcome.

As we strive to promote self-reliance and to empower and support Huu-ay-aht citizens and elders reach their highest potential through lifelong nurturing, teaching, and healing, the Executive Council remains committed to addressing the “culture of silence” addressed in the Panel of Inquiry’s report and to seeing a healthy, restored Huu-ay-aht community for all in the future.

In the spirit of addressing community complaints and concerns, the Executive Council considered it important to make this public statement to inform members of the outcome of the investigation against Robert Dennis. The ḥaẃiiḥ Council supports the publishing of this statement as well.

*ʔuušyak šiƛiiʔic (T*hank-you)

Sayaaċathḥ, John Jack
Chief Councillor

Thlut’as aksup,Theresa Nookemis
ḥaẃiiḥ Councillor

We recognize that this statement may be difficult for some of our citizens. Huu-ay-aht is available to provide services and to help you access resources:

1. Child and Family Wellness Department 250-723-0100 (please call for individual support)
2. Cultural Support (Cory Howard Sr.) 1-888-644-4555 or 250-723-0100
3. Cultural Wellness Program (QuuʔasaQuuʔasa) – 250-724-3939
    - For referrals, please fill out the referral form and email it to the NTC Mental Health Manager, Ayushi Shukla, at ayushi.shukla@nuuchahnulth.org
4. Kuu-us Crisis Line (24-hour support)
    - 250-723-4050 (Port Alberni)
    - 250-723-2040 (Port Alberni)
    - Toll Free 1-800-588-8717 (BC Wide)
    - Outside of BC, please contact the Crisis Line in your area
5. First Nations Health Authority – for counsellors covered by your First Nations Health Authority Benefits in your area, see https://www.fnha.ca/benefits/mental-health