Uyaqḥmis

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Huu-ay-aht celebrates return of Cultural Treasures

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After more than a century, part of our history is returned

Story and photos by Heather Thomson

The sound of a rattle and the soft words of a Huu-ay-aht prayer filled the Alberni Athletic Hall on November 18 as citizens caught the first glimpse of a painted wooden screen that once stood proudly in the village of Nuumaqimis.

It was a somber moment, one the Nation has waited decades to witness. The screen was only one of 17 artworks and cultural treasures returning to Huu-ay-aht after being housed at the Royal BC Museum for more than a century. Approximately 20 people witnessed the historic return, and it was clear from the emotional reaction in the room just how significant the moment was to Huu-ay-aht First Nations.

The day was made possible as it was stipulated as part of the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement, completed in 2011 with the governments of British Columbia and Canada. That document outlined that the Huu-ay-aht would reclaim some of their cultural heritage and art from the Museum in a physical and legal transfer.

The 17 Huu-ay-aht cultural treasures (one of which has 37 individual components) were on display for Huu-ay-aht citizens at the annual People's Assembly in Port Alberni, November 18 – 20, 2016. After the meeting, the items finally returned home to the Nations' traditional territory for permanent public display at the Huu-ay-aht Government Office in Anacla.





Leslie Cook carries in one of the carved and painted birds that is part of the cultural treasure display returned to Huu-ay-aht First Nations. (Below) A number of trinket baskets and woven coasters were also returned, attributed only to "Mrs Johnson."

It has been more than 100 years since some of these cultural treasures left Huu-ay-aht's territory, and it was with excitement that the Nation celebrated the awakening of the treasures and their journey home.

"The return of these cultural treasures is a clear sign of reconciliation that will not only help us heal our ancient spirit, but it will also revive it," explained Chief Councillor Robert J. Dennis Sr. "To have your history come back to you, and the ancient spirit, you feel it. It's something that you can't describe."

Standing beside the items for the first time, the Chief Councillor expressed his excitement that this day had finally arrived.

huu ay aht
ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND

We, the Huu-ay-aht People, envision a strong, self-governing and self-reliant Nation. ʔiisaak will guide us as we work together to foster a safe, healthy and sustainable community, where our culture, language, spirituality and economy flourish for all.

Huu-ay-aht Uyaqḥmis is printed up to six times per year in order to foster community engagement among a population of over 700 citizens. Huu-ay-aht Uyaqḥmis promotes the recovery and sharing of the Huu-ay-aht dialect of the Nuu-chah-nulth language, as well as knowledge of Huu-ay-aht culture.

Please send all comments and questions to the Huu-ay-aht Communications Department.

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Huu-ay-aht dances in the cultural treasures. (Below) Colleen Peters brings in part of the whaling gear.

Citizens witness awakening of cultural treasures

"To witness our Ḥaw̓iiḥ signing the papers and having the (treasures) come back, you're witnessing stuff that was banned, because of the Potlatch Act, and so to have them come back and for us to say this is ours, there's no describing that."

He said Huu-ay-aht can now determine its own future. They can celebrate their Ancient Spirit as well as their Modern Minds. Moving forward, he said, culture, language, customs, and traditions would all play an important role in everything the Nation does.



"We are going to be Huu-ay-aht on our own terms. So that in itself is exciting."

It is also an exciting time for the museum, marking the end of a journey for these historic items.

"The Royal BC Museum has held these treasures in trust for their rightful owners, who are now taking them back to their place of origin and deepest meaning, their cultural home," said Royal BC Museum CEO Prof. Jack Lohman. "We hope that this act of repatriation will inspire other museums to do the same in the spirit of reconciliation."

This is the first transfer of artifacts to be completed under the terms of the Maa-nulth Final Agreement. In total, 51 Huu-ay-aht cultural treasures from the Royal BC Museum collections catalogue are named in the Maa-nulth Final Agreement for return to the Huu-ay-aht. Of the 51 cultural treasures identified, the other 34 will remain at the Royal BC Museum until the Huu-ay-aht First Nations requests their transfer.

"The Province is committed to work with First Nations, community by community, to create positive economic and social change," explained John Rustad, minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. "Huu-ay-aht First Nations' cultural treasures play an integral role in the continuation of their culture, values and traditions, and the Province is committed to doing everything it can to reunite interested Aboriginal peoples with their cultural belongings."

On Saturday, November 19, a ceremony was held to mark the return of the cultural treasures. Unlike Friday's small crowd, more than 300 people watched and participated as the items were danced into the Alberni Athletic Hall. Tears fell on this proud day for Huu-ay-aht. It is a day citizens will speak of for generations to come – the day their history came home.

The cultural treasures are currently being held at the Anacla Government Office, with plans to soon have them set up so that others can bear witness to their historic importance.



Gathering together at People's Assembly

November 18 to 20, 2016 was a time of family, friends, celebration, and pride for Huu-ay-aht First Nations as citizens took part in their annual People's Assembly. Close to half the Nation registered for the event.

Photos by Heather Thomson














Hello







Wickaninnish (Cliff Atleo) addresses the crowd, with his warriors behind him at the meeting in September. *Photo by Brittany Johnson*

Chiefs meet to discuss fisheries

By Brittany Johnson

The Nuu-chah-nulth Council of Ḥaw̓iiḥ met on September 28 in Anacla for a Forum on Fisheries. It was a two-day meeting focused on Management and Capacity Building, as well as reviewing the 2012 changes to the Fisheries Act.

Wickaninnish (Cliff Atleo) of Ahousaht and Wahmeesh (Ken Watts) of Tseshaht made a presentation to the Council of Ḥaw̓iih at this event.

Wickaninnish spoke in Nuu-chah-nulth explaining the events of the T'aaq-wiihak meeting on Friday, September 23. He spoke of negotiations and of the government. Wahmeesh of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council addressed the Council and interpreted.

Wahmeesh explained that negotiations between the Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the five nations from the T'aaq-wiihak Fisheries have been taking place for more than seven years. Despite this time, they still do not have any progress. He talked about the new Liberal government and how they have made a great effort to be in good relations with the First Nations of Canada.

He believes that even though our new Prime Minister has spent a large amount of time rallying for First Nations rights, his government - Fisheries and Oceans Canada - has not been reflecting this change in government.

Wahmeesh asked the Council of Ḥaw̓iih to support the T'aaq-wiihak and stand united against the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). He asked the Council to deny DFO entry to their meeting. The Council of Ḥaw̓iih unanimously voted to keep the Fisheries and Oceans Canada delegates from joining their meeting the following day.

"It is time to be heard. The world is watching," Wahmeesh explained.

After the vote Wickaninnish rallied a group of men, his warriors, and he spoke passionately about moving forward.



Citizens in gather at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre in Vancouver in September for an update on the Project. *Photo by Heather Thomson*

Citizens kept up to speed on LNG Project

By Rebecca Henn

In September, the LNG Negotiating Team hosted a series of Community Engagement Sessions on the proposed LNG project.

These sessions included meetings in Anacla, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Victoria, and Vancouver. They explored how the Nation is approaching economic development options including an LNG liquefaction and export facility at Sarita. The Nation is currently in active negotiations with Steelhead LNG and some preliminary research is taking place.

The engagement sessions held in September presented on the environmental assessment process and the steps being taken to ensure that citizens' concerns are being recognized during early exploration of the proposed project. The purpose of these engagement sessions is to help Huu-ay-aht citizens understand and participate fully, ensuring that Huu-ay-aht rights and interests over environmental matters are being given full and fair consideration.

In summary, 18 categories of concern were identified:

- Accidents and Malfunctions
- Archaeology and Cultural Resource Use
- Community and Culture
- Freshwater and Fish Habitat
- Human Health
- Marine Aquatic Resources
- Marine Vegetation
- Surface Water (freshwater)
- Vegetation
- Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat
- Atmospheric
- Availability and Access to Land Resources
- Economics
- Groundwater
- Lands
- Marine Water
- Site Specific Issues
- Transportation

If citizens have additional concerns or would like to review the exhaustive list and detailed subcomponents, we implore you to contact us.

A second round of engagement sessions took place in November in Anacla, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Vancouver, and Victoria. The team presented on the status of negotiations, as well as continued discussion around economic development, in general. With an economic development plan in place, we have a diverse approach to rebuilding our economy and exploring new opportunities.

In summary, the September sessions reached 95 citizens and the November session reached 102 citizens. These numbers do not include members of Executive or Ḥaẃiiḥ Council.

We remind citizens that no decisions have been made. We are still in the early exploratory stages of this project. If it gets to the point where a draft agreement is reached between the Nation and Steelhead LNG, the proposed agreement would go to citizens for final approval by referendum. At that point, an extensive community engagement campaign would implement to ensure that citizens have all available information to make an informed decision.

If we do not reach a draft agreement by March 31, 2017 then negotiations will cease and that will be the end of this LNG exploration.

Again if you have any questions or concerns regarding the proposed LNG project, please contact Rebecca Henn, LNG Communications Coordinator (rebecca.h@huuayaht.org or 250-723-0100) or Councillor John Jack at john.j@huuayaht.org.

Team pulls off great feat and successful season

By Gary Wilson

The peak season of our operations have come to an end, and looking back, reflecting on the 2016 season, we are proud of what we have accomplished.

Despite the myriad of challenges that come with acquiring and operating a number of hospitality properties, especially considering Huu-ay-aht has little experience in the hospitality business to this extent, our Huu-ay-aht Group of Businesses team did us proud.



Gary Wilson addresses his team at an end-of-season luncheon, thanking them for their hard work. *Photo by Brittany Johnson*

Although, having successfully run a campground for a number of years has provided us with some exposure in this regard, this acquisition took us to an entirely different level. Taking possession of the properties in January 2016, then expecting to be prepared for the coming season, is a daunting task, but the team that we had assembled did not hesitate to step up to the plate. They looked at this challenge as an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, and to assure the communities of Anacla and Bamfield that we are committed to rebuilding the economy in the region.

If you can imagine, The Motel and Pub were not in the best of conditions and definitely required a number of improvements, both on the inside and outside. Safety was paramount in the minds of management, so, they identified those areas that needed the most attention, such as the stairwells, the fire escapes, and the decks.

As well, management recognized that the Motel and Pub did not have the best reputation in terms of accommodations. In fact, there were many disparaging and unfavorable remarks about what was known as the Bamfield Trails Motel. Therefore, it was management's objective to make the necessary enhancements to ensure that our guests, and employees alike, were safe and comfortable, and the perception of The Motel and Pub was no longer abysmal, but a warm and welcoming place to visit. This was definitely going to be a difficult, but not impossible assignment for our team considering they only had a few months to accomplish the necessary tasks before the season started.

Come May long weekend, just four short months later, the Motel and Pub was in much better condition than it was on the day of possession. We had newly updated, painted rooms, with new, more comfortable beds, new linens, including bedding and towels. Although The Pub did not need much in terms of renovations, management focused on cleaning it up. In particular, they focused on cleaning and stocking the kitchen, acquiring the necessary inventory and equipment.

As for the exterior, the stairwells, fire escapes, decks, and walkway were up brought up to code, standard, the parking lot was cleaned and freshly painted, and any plumbing, water, and sewage issues were addressed. In other words, our team did an amazing job in the short time they were given to get The Motel (and Pub) in shape to receive our very first guests for the 2016 season.

When I was provided the opportunity and gladly accepted the role as CEO, I was extremely excited about the opportunity to work with Huu-ay-aht Group of Businesses and Huu-ay-aht First Nation, in December 2015.

Story continued on Page 9

Cando proves to be good opportunity

The 2016 Cando conference was held in Whitehorse. For the second year in a row, a delegation from Huu-ay-aht First Nations attended this Aboriginal economic development conference.

This year was another success for Huu-ay-aht. Trevor Cootes, who holds the economic portfolio on Executive Council, sat on the speaker's panel and did an excellent presentation on the forward strides the Nation is taking to be the forerunner in self-sufficiency.

Huu-ay-aht was the only First Nation in Canada that had a three-page profile in the Connect magazine on the businesses the Nation owns. This was an excellent marketing promotion that will draw attention to the Bamfield businesses, as well as St. Jean's Cannery.

Trevor also made connections with important future business partnerships that will assist Huu-ay-aht. The communications staff set up a booth to showcase our partnership with St. Jeans, the Motel and Pub and campground. They also shared information on the treaty.



Trevor Cootes and Brittany Johnson show off Huu-ay-aht's booth at Cando.

Cando (Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers) is instrumental in facilitating partnerships with Economic Development Officers, academics, Aboriginal leaders, and senior corporate and government representatives. It is the only national organization that focuses on economic development.

Successful 2016, and looking forward to more in coming season

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I knew going in that I must be prepared for a challenge and progressive developments, considering the current business assets of HGB. However, little did I know what I was in store for in terms of the property acquisitions! It was one flurry of activity after another, and I was thrust into the middle of what I knew was going to be a game changer for the Anacla and Bamfield region. Before, I knew it we were operating a number of hospitality assets and doing our best to meet the needs of our guests in an effort to establish a sound, sustainable and reputable operation.

Fast forward to the fall of 2016. It is a time of reflection. Time to consider what we did well and where we need to make improvements. But most of all, to celebrate our successes and to thank and uplift our Huu-ay-aht Team for their accomplishments.

Specifically, I would like to recognize our management team, our finance department, our "rock star" staff for stepping up and accepting the challenges we put in front of each of you.

Furthermore, I would like to show our gratitude and appreciation to the HDC Board, the HFN Leadership and citizens for your support and patience in this regard. Collectively, I would like to express sincere gratitude for your diligence and commitment to making our inaugural season a success.

ʔeko ʔeko for a fantastic year of lessons learned and many successes along the way, and I look forward to what is in store for the coming season.

Traditional foods made easy with book

In March of this year, the Community Services team completed the, *Traditional Foods of the Huu-ay-aht First Nations* book. It was created with the help and support of many elders and community members. Thank you to Ambar Varela and Jody Vos for their hard work and making sure it was published on time.

The book covers many traditional foods, how to gather them, their traditional names, and uses.

It also includes a healthy eating guide that shows proper portion sizes and tasty recipes that reflect the use of traditional foods.

In October, the Nation held a workshop in Anacla to promote and hand out the books. Participants cooked a traditional meal and listened to guest speaker Matilda Atleo. She spoke of the healthy eating guide and advised people to avoid processed foods. Even though it was a cold day in October, the room was filled with laughter and the delicious smell of fish soup. Thank you to everyone who worked on this project.

If you would like a copy, contact Coral Johnson (coral.j@huuayaht.org).



Citizens gather in Anacla to learn about traditional foods, share a meal, and to receive a copy of Huu-ay-aht's new book. *Photo by Brittany Johnson*

Nation continues to move forward in positive direction

St. Jean's Cannery & Smokehouse has been in operations since 1961 and since creation has been owned by the St. Jean family. After many successful years and spanning a few generations, the family decided to look for a partner to carry on their vision.

The NCN Cannery Limited Partnership (NCN Cannery LP) announced their position as majority shareholders of the St. Jean's Cannery in November 2015. The purchase had been in negotiations for many months and both companies look forward to a bright future for the cannery.

Representing five Nations from the Nuu-chah-nulth territory, including Huu-ay-aht, the NCN Cannery LP strives for economic success that values people, culture, and environmental integrity. The purchase does not affect the business directly, instead it provides a strong, connected, and direct partnership with west coast First Nations.


Trevor Cootes, Robert (Todd) Dennis, Shawn Mack, Robert J. Dennis Sr. and Tayii Ḥaẇiłʔiišin (Derek Peters) attend the ceremony at St. Jean's. *Photo by Brittany Johnson*

Several team members were hired at St. Jean's from the member Nations and most are still working. They will work through to the end of the busy winter holiday season. NCN Cannery hopes they will all return on-call in mid-January and stay with St. Jean's for years to come.

In July of 2016 the Nations and the St. Jean's family came together to celebrate the acquisition of the company. St. Jean's prepared a barbeque luncheon and each of the Nations shared their songs and dances.

St. Jean's stores are located in Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Campbell River and Tsawwassen. They also have kiosks in both the Mayfair Mall in Victoria and Woodgrove Mall in Nanaimo. The main plant and warehouse is in Nanaimo and a warehouse will be opening in the lower mainland in 2017.

A personal reflection on a day filled with pride

ʔukłamaḥ Hinatinyis ʔuh ʔaa ʔaƛ Brittany Johnson. ʔuhukʷaḥ ʔumʔiiqsu Darlene Leonew. ʔuhukʷaḥ ḥuẇiiqsu Larry Johnson. Huuʕiiʔaqsumaḥ ʔuh ʔaa ʔaƛ Ojibweʔaqsumaḥ.

(My name is Hinatinyis and Brittany Johnson. My Mother is Darlene Leonew. My Father is Larry Johnson. I am a Huu-ay-aht woman and an Ojibwe woman.)

Wednesday September 28 was a day I'll never forget. I felt like I was part of something larger than myself. I was fortunate enough to witness the Council of Ḥaẇiiḥ deliberate through a forum on fisheries.

On that day, fourteen Nations gathered in Anacla for the Nuu-chah-nulth Council of Ḥaẇiiḥ (Hereditary Chiefs) Forum on Fisheries. Ḥaẇiiḥ, elected Chief Councillors, and Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council members/staff gathered to speak about fisheries issues related to management, access, and capacity building for Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations communities.

I was honoured to be present while the Ḥaẇiiḥ spoke about what was important to them, their ḥaḥuuɬi (lands and waters) and their musčim (citizens). Listening quietly in the corner, I looked on at the people. Some I've known my whole life, and I grew up admiring their passion. Others I've never met and was moved by their boldness and wisdom. I felt like I was riding a wave on the ocean, and I could feel a deep resonance within while the Ḥaẇiiḥ spoke.

Wahmeesh (Ken Watts) and Wickaninnish (Cliff Atleo) addressed the room and spoke about the negotiations between the five Nations involved with T'aaq-wiihak Fisheries and the Department of Fisheries. They spoke about the new liberal government and how they have made a great effort to be in good relations with the First Nations of Canada. They said they felt that even though our new Prime Minister has spent a large amount of time rallying for First Nations rights, his government, the Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), has not been reflecting this change in government.

They asked the Nuu-chah-nulth Council of Ḥaẇiiḥ to support the T'aaq-wiihak Fisheries and stand united against DFO. During the discussion that followed, I could feel the power behind their words. Many of the Ḥaẇiiḥ spoke of their struggles, and with every speech I could feel the power build. I felt the tides change and the waters became rough.

The chair of the meeting, Hupinyuk (Tom Happynook), called a vote and asked each of the Nations in turn if they would like to have DFO join the meeting. As each Nation said "wik" (no), I became more and more anxious. I knew this wave would crest, and I wasn't sure if we would ride it or falter.



Julia Lusas enjoys sea urchin, ƫuċup, a traditional food of many Nuu-chah-nulth nations. *Photo by Brittany Johnson*

With a unanimous vote to deny DFO to join the committee I felt the need to celebrate. I wanted to shout from the mountains, "It's time for action!" I found myself overwhelmed and full of emotion. I knew I just witnessed something important, a story to share with my future children and grandchildren.

We want fishing rights. We want a say in how our waters are managed. Our federal government needs to address this issue and move forward in reconciliation. The West Coast Nations are coastal people and many of their traditional foods came from the ocean.

It filled me with joy to watch our visiting Ḥaẇiiḥ excitedly eating ƫuċup (sea urchin) from our ḥaḥuuɬi. For many of them, harvesting this traditional food is no longer an option.

Even though we have lost a generation of fishers, I am hopeful. I am hopeful for my Nation and for other First Nations up and down the coast fighting for their fishing rights. I look forward to the day when being a fisher is an honourable and profitable career again.

Panel seeks citizen input for Huu-ay-aht solution

Huu-ay-aht wishes to develop "Made-in-Huu-ay-aht" solutions that will help keep our children safe, happy, healthy, and connected to their Huu-ay-aht families and culture. An independent, four-member panel has been appointed to explore and recommend changes and improvements to child and family services for Huu-ay-aht families.

The panel has respectfully requested that Huu-ay-aht citizens meet with them to share stories and experiences. The panel needs to hear and learn from our people and from all caregivers for our children to understand what is working and what is not working for Huu-ay-aht children and families.

The panel wishes to hear from us about:
• You or your family's experiences with child and family services,
• Stories you have been told that guide or anchor a Huu-ay-aht way of caring for children and families,
• Your thoughts and ideas about how to bring our children home and keep them safe, happy, healthy, and connected to our Huu-ay-aht culture.

The panel is open to meeting in whatever way people feel safe and comfortable to discuss these important issues, for example, with individuals privately and confidentially, with family groups, and in community gatherings.

The panel will also be available to meet in a variety of locations (e.g. Anacla, Port Alberni, Nanaimo, Vancouver). For those who prefer to provide input to the panel in writing, please send your written comments to the panel at the email address below.

The first community gathering with the panel will be held in Port Alberni in early 2017, with further details to follow. Everyone who has information to share is encouraged to come. Please contact the panel at hfnpanel@gmail.com or check the Huu-ay-aht website for updates.

Apprenticeship program offers skills in commercial fishing industry

By Brittany Johnson

The Aboriginal Commercial Fisheries Apprenticeship Program was created to build capacity in a meaningful way and bridge the gap that the Commercial Fishing Industry faces today.

The Pacific Integrated Commercial Fishing Initiative purchased fishing licences and quota from industry and transferred it to First Nations Commercial Fishing Enterprises based on business models. This was a step in the right direction however, there is a huge disconnect from First Nations currently in the fishing industry.

A generation has been lost and the continuity disrupted. The average age of skippers is 54 and first mate deck hands are 55, on average. The question on the table was, "How do we get young kids involved in the fishing industry and how can we support them entering into the fishing industry?"

The pilot project, which began in Saanich School District, stressed the importance of this program being First Nations driven. This model was then brought to Port Alberni, and had real First Nations fishermen as mentors and an Education Assistant throughout the program was another key to success. Their first experience showed that you can't just have a teacher come in and teach. You can have your Professional Navigator come in and teach Small Vessel Operator Permit (SVOP) but you need to have another fisherman to interpret.

There was an opportunity to hire an Education Assistant. Huu-ay-aht citizen Alyssa Johnson was Education Assistant hired and, although she felt nervous about starting her first job, she thought she experienced significant personal growth. "I was so very close to turning down the offer, but I finally decided to just make myself slightly uncomfortable and go for it. It was the best decision I've ever made for myself."

One of the main highlights that Alyssa watching the students grow and learn. At the beginning of the course many students were uncomfortable and quiet. Many had hurdles to overcome like transportation, college level material, and finding childcare for their young ones. "I watched students transform from quiet and uneasy, to more confident forms of themselves. I also watched people better their lives, by changing their old negative ways of living," Alyssa explains.

It was rewarding for her to watch the students complete the course and see the camaraderie between them. She expresses gratitude to her supervisors and partners for all the support they offered her throughout the program and would like to see the program be offered again in the future.

The program was a collective achievement between SD 70, NETP, Uu-a-thluk, Huu-ay-aht, Tseshaht and Hupacasath. Larry Johnson, President of the Nuu-chah-nulth Seafood Development Corporation explained more about the program, "It's a launching pad for a diversified career development". The program ran for 10 weeks and 10 students successfully completed the program.