
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2025IRR0023-000703
July 22, 2025

Snuneymuxw First Nation
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Mount Benson North transferred from B.C. to Snuneymuxw First Nation

SNUNEYMUXW TERRITORY (NANAIMO) – Snuneymuxw First Nation and the Province have completed a transfer of over 700 hectares of land on te'tuxwtun, also known as Mount Benson North, to the Nation, advancing its reconciliation journey.

This marks the latest step in the implementation of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and British Columbia Land Transfer Agreement (2020). Under this agreement, over 3000 hectares of land is being returned to Snuneymuxw.

“This third transfer marks another meaningful step forward in restoring our responsibility over our lands,” said Chief Mike Wyse, Snuneymuxw First Nation. “Each parcel returned strengthens our Nation’s economic independence and renews our deep connection to te'tuxwtun North. More than 2,000 hectares of our village lands have yet to be returned under the agreement, and we remain firmly committed to continuing this vital work until every piece is restored, for our people and future generations.”

The land will be held in fee simple by the Nation’s Petroglyph Development Group (PDG) and will join the Nation’s forestry business, Mount Benson Forestry.

“PDG, through a Mount Benson Forestry Limited Partnership, will continue working with the land to build an economic engine that drives prosperity and strengthens self-determination,” said Ian Simpson, CEO, Petroglyph Development Group. “We are reclaiming our vital role within our territory and continuing a legacy of sustainable growth.”

Spencer Chandra Herbert, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, said: “Working in partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation on the next steps of our reconciliation agreement is helping to create more jobs in Nanaimo and the mid-Island, and build strong, healthier communities. Working together on the path of reconciliation makes life better for us all.”

Since 2020, Snuneymuxw and B.C. have partnered on numerous agreements and collaborative work. This work was made possible with strong local and regional government support in the Nanaimo Regional District.

Quotes:

Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship —

“This return of land supports economic opportunity and responsible stewardship, recognizing Snuneymuxw’s deep cultural and environmental connection to these lands since time immemorial. It creates opportunities for sustainable forestry, protects important wildlife habitat and brings lasting benefits to Snuneymuxw members and the wider mid-Island

community. This is a meaningful step forward on the path of reconciliation, respecting Indigenous rights, supporting local economies and honouring the land.”

Ravi Parmer, Minister of Forests —

“This agreement puts the Snuneymuxw First Nation in the driver’s seat, bringing economic prosperity, protection of cultural values and greater certainty to the land base.”

Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo-Gabriola Island —

“Working together, we’ve moved forward. Today’s return of 700 hectares of land is part of the late premier John Horgan and my commitment to the Snuneymuxw First Nation to help resolve a long-standing desire for a greater stake in the economic development of Crown lands in their territory.”

Learn More:

Snuneymuxw First Nation: <https://www.snuneymuxw.ca>

Petroglyph Development Group: <https://petroglyphdg.com>

2020 Land Transfer Agreement:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/download/0583431F80F9413B8CB15E0038583FC9>

2021 Snuneymuxw, Canada and British Columbia Memorandum of

Understanding: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/agreements/snuneymuxw_tripartite_mou_final_-_signed_by_all_july_28_2021.pdf

212 hectares of land returned on Te’tuxwtun, known as Mount Benson East (2024):

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024IRR0001-000020>

B.C. returning downtown Nanaimo village site to Snuneymuxw (2024):

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024IRR0040-001110>

A backgrounder follows.

Contact:

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Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect

BACKGROUND

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Timeline, details of land transfer

- In 2021, a memorandum of understanding between the Nation, B.C. and Canada in recognition of the Sarlequun Treaty of 1854 was signed.
- The first step in the implementation of this agreement took place in January 2024, when 212 hectares of land on te'tuxwtun, also known as Mount Benson East, was transferred to the Nation. Subsequently, an additional 34 hectares were returned to Snuneymuxw in October 2024 at Mount Benson South.
- B.C. purchased a parcel of land that is entirely surrounded by the Mount Benson North parcel (known as District Lot 9) from the City of Nanaimo for future return to Snuneymuxw.
- B.C. and Snuneymuxw are working toward the transfer of 2,091 hectares on Mount McKay as the final portion of the land package under the 2020 Land Transfer Agreement.
- In July 2024, B.C. and Snuneymuxw announced the purchase of a key historic village site in downtown Nanaimo, sxwayxum, for future return to the Nation.
- Snuneymuxw First Nation is a Coast Salish, hul'q'umi'num'-speaking Nation located in Coast Salish territory on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, with villages on the Fraser River and waterways in the Gulf Islands.
- Snuneymuxw has more than 1,700 members and the smallest land reserve per capita in B.C.
- On Dec. 23, 1854, the Crown and the Snuneymuxw people entered into the Snuneymuxw Sarlequun Treaty of 1854 to forever and always preserve and protect Snuneymuxw villages, enclosed fields, waterways, harvesting and gathering, and the rights to hunt and fisheries as formerly. Often referred to as a trade and commerce treaty, the Sarlequun Treaty of 1854 is protected under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
- Snuneymuxw First Nation Chief and council have made it a priority to assert the recognition and implementation of the Snuneymuxw Sarlequun Treaty of 1854.
- Petroglyph Development Group (PDG) serves as the Nation's economic development arm, fostering sustainable business growth and creating opportunities that benefit the community. PDG is dedicated to building capacity, supporting Indigenous entrepreneurship and driving long-term prosperity for the Snuneymuxw people.

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