

NEWS RELEASE

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City Council approves property disposition for District Lot 9

Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to purchase land for the purpose of transfer to Snuneymuxw First Nation

Summary

In an historic move towards reconciliation, City Council unanimously approved the disposition of District Lot 9 to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation at their meeting held on Monday, Feb. 26, 2024. The property will subsequently be transferred to Snuneymuxw First Nation under the terms of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and British Columbia Land Transfer Agreement (2020), marking a significant step in honouring Snuneymuxw rights and advancing reconciliation efforts.

This move follows the Province's recent transfer of 212 hectares to Snuneymuxw First Nation under the 2020 Land Transfer Agreement. District Lot 9 spans 81 hectares (200 acres) on the southwest slope of Mount Benson (Te'tuxw'tun), is untouched by development and remains heavily forested. It was originally purchased from the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Company in 1889 for the purpose of diverting water to supplement water supply. The water diversion infrastructure, built in the early 1900s, is deactivated and will not affect Nanaimo's current water supply. District Lot 9 is surrounded by land identified for future land transfer to Snuneymuxw under the 2020 Land Transfer Agreement.

The collaborative effort between the City, Snuneymuxw First Nation and the Province underscores a commitment to implementing the guiding principles of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Government of British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

The approval follows a comprehensive appraisal and environmental assessment with the property valued at \$1,455,000. The purchase and sale is anticipated to be completed by Mar. 31, 2024.

Strategic Link: Identified in City Plan, the City encourages efforts by the Province to return land to Snuneymuxw and their Mustimuxw (peoples).

Key Points

- Snuneymuxw First Nation and the City have jointly requested that the Province continue to advance the collective reconciliation efforts of the parties by acquiring the property for the purpose of transferring the property to Snuneymuxw.
- The City will sell 200 acres of property known as District Lot 9 to the Province which is located on the Southwest slope of Mount Benson (Te'tuxw'tun).
- The funds from the sale will be used to reinvest in City Council initiatives such as affordable housing.

Quotes

"This disposition signifies our City's dedication to Reconciliation and partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation. It is a crucial step towards healing historical injustices and building a future based on mutual respect and understanding. Moreover, it provides capital funds to the City for important projects."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"In 2019, Snuneymuxw renewed a Protocol Agreement with the City of Nanaimo, committing to forging a path that recognizes our Sarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854. What occurred in the treaty making meetings in the fall of 1854 with our forefathers and foremothers remains omnipresent: the coal could be shared, but the land and water would be preserved and protected, for our children, and their children's children, forever and always. Returning Snuneymuxw villages back to our Nation remains a top priority for our People. Today, we celebrate Nanaimo City Council and the provincial government's decision to recognize their solemn obligations as agreed to in the Saarlequun Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854."

Mike Wyse
Chief
Snuneymuxw First Nation

"I'm proud of the historic step that the City of Nanaimo has taken today to support our shared reconciliation journey with Snuneymuxw First Nation. The Mount Benson lands hold much opportunity for the Snuneymuxw First Nation to strengthen their connection to land and culture, create new economic activity, and protect wildlife habitat. I thank the City of Nanaimo for its leadership; this initiative will help bring benefits to everyone in the region."

Murray Rankin
Minister
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

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