



qathet
REGIONAL DISTRICT

Joint Statement on tisk^wat

August 18, 2023

The Tla'amin Nation and the qathet Regional District share a vision for the future of the tisk^wat mill site – once the Tla'amin people's primary village – that is currently offered for sale by Paper Excellence. The foundation of this vision is a belief that the site, and the water and other natural resources it relies upon, are vital assets that require responsible management.

The two governments are unified in their opposition to the sale of the property to any party that does not have the support of the Tla'amin Nation and the qathet Regional District. The Nation and the Regional District are steadfast in their resolve to protect the interests of local residents by ensuring an irresponsible or unsophisticated party cannot assume control of the site. Specifically, the two governments seek a clear demonstration that any prospective purchaser has conducted thorough due diligence on the site, has developed a comprehensive and responsible environmental plan, and has confirmed resources to steward the site appropriately.

Any future owner must fully understand and accept responsibility for ongoing environmental liabilities associated with the site, along with costly remediation and monitoring obligations. This is crucial to prevent a future bankruptcy or strategic abandonment of the property, as has happened recently with other former mills in British Columbia, requiring massive public spending to safely decommission and restore the site.

Tla'amin History and Legal Rights at tisk^wat

The Tla'amin village of tisk^wat dates back over 10000 years. The village was located on the banks of tisk^wat (Powell) River, historically one of the most productive sockeye salmon runs on the coast and a major source of food for the Tla'amin people.

The Tla'amin were forcibly removed from tisk^wat in the late 1800s. The area around tisk^wat was identified as a prime location for resource extraction and economic development by the new colonial administration, and Crown title for the vast parcel was granted to private interests in 1873. The river was later dammed, and the original mill was completed on the site in 1912.

The Tla'amin Nation's modern treaty with the federal and provincial governments, which came into effect in 2016, recognizes the Tla'amin people's historical occupation of tisk^wat and protects the Nation's right to a specific claim to the tisk^wat site, which is now formally underway with the Government of Canada. The treaty also codifies specific rights regarding resources upon which site uses rely.

The Province of British Columbia and the Tla'amin Nation have established an intergovernmental forum to address common interests at tisk^wat, including environmental considerations and appropriate future economic activities at the site.

The Tla'amin Nation is currently conducting a detailed preliminary assessment of the state of infrastructure and environmental liabilities at tisk^wat, as well as an in-depth review of legal agreements between the present site owner and third parties, including Evolugen/Powell River Energy Incorporated and BC Hydro.

The Tla'amin Nation is also engaged in active discussions with prospective business partners and tenants that share the Nation's values regarding public benefit and environmental sustainability.

Local Government Interests at tisk^wat

The local governments recognize that complex factors, including the dilapidated condition and toxic legacy of the mill and the unknown costs associated with the required remediation and ongoing management of contamination at the site, pose a significant risk to the region.

The local governments share an interest in seeing renewed economic activity at tisk^wat to help replace the jobs lost through the years as the mill slowed and then ceased production, which caused dramatic economic challenges and dislocation for many local families.

The City of Powell River has relied heavily on tax revenue from the site to fund public infrastructure and services during the life of the mill. The qathet Regional District has also benefitted from significant taxation deriving from the mill over the years. Tax revenue from tisk^wat will be a vital component of the future fiscal plans for both local governments.

A Unified Commitment to Responsible Renewal at tisk^wat

The Tla'amin Nation and the qathet Regional District believe that responsible renewal at tisk^wat could provide a model for economic reconciliation in coastal British Columbia, with significant benefits that extend far beyond the Tla'amin Nation to the regional and provincial economies. The Nation and the qathet Regional District are committed to working in partnership to build a new vision for local prosperity stemming from economic activity at tisk^wat. The realization of this vision will require active collaboration, responsible site ownership, and in-depth and ongoing environmental due diligence at tisk^wat in order to ensure that the public resources associated with tisk^wat, and suitable economic activity at the site, provide appropriate and lasting benefit to all residents of the qathet region.