



huu ay aht

ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND

April 27, 2020

Dear Citizens,

Although the numbers of COVID-19 cases in British Columbia are not as startling as in other parts of our country, we are not out of the woods. The message is clear, B.C. is doing well, but we must stay the course.

In fact, recently we have received disturbing news that First Nations communities across the country are seeing an increase in the novel coronavirus last week. According to Canada's Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller since April 24 there have been 95 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in First Nations communities and an additional 14 in Nunavik Inuit communities. In B.C., the First Nations Health Authority is reporting approximately 57 cases in First Nations communities in our province, with almost half of these cases on Vancouver Island.

This is upsetting because it could just as easily happen in Anacla. We are isolated from much of the risk, but if people come in and out of our community there is still a risk. Executive Council has taken extreme measures to protect Huu-ay-aht citizens living in our village, but everyone must do their part.

The biggest challenge so far has been keeping people safe from the virus, but that in no way compares to the challenge we would face if someone in Anacla tested positive for this virus. Our isolation keeps us safe, to some degree, but it also means the risk is far greater if the virus arrives because we do not have the health care services of other communities.

Just this weekend, the Namgis First Nation suffered the loss of one of its elders from COVID-19. This small island community was not safe from the outbreak in neighbouring Alert Bay. We must learn from this difficult lesson.

Please take all precautions to minimize the spread of COVID-19. This means isolating yourself from others, staying home, and refraining from social interactions with anyone that is not part of your direct household. This is not easy. As Huu-ay-aht, we find strength by gathering and being one big family. It is a way of life for us, but this is not the time for gathering.

When this virus is no longer a threat we will come together and celebrate. For now, please stay home. This means your children might not be able to see their grandparents if they do not live with them. They cannot enjoy the usual activities they love, like playing in the playground or having a sleepover. You too must also make sacrifices at this time and set a good example by staying home and isolating yourself.

This will not last forever. We will be able to share a meal, sing our songs and dance together, but how long that takes is up to all of us. If we take this seriously and follow the recommendations of our health care professionals, then maybe it will not be much longer. Until that time, it is essential that everyone work together to protect each other.



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Huu-ay-aht is doing everything it can to offer support during this difficult time. We have put many measures in place to protect you and our community. Together Team Huu-ay-aht is meeting the needs of our citizens and ensuring your concerns and issues are being heard.

I want to take a moment to praise two of the people who are there for us every day. Kevin Peters and Shawn Rielley have been working together to enforce the rules Executive Council has put into place that restricts access to our community to keep you safe. No matter how warm or wet and cold it gets, they are at their site at the entrance to our community in Anacla. They have made a safe place for themselves with benches and protection from the elements, and they are our first line of defense. Together they screen who enters our village. This act will keep you safe, and for that we all owe them our heartfelt gratitude. This week Justine Mack joined the team.

Next time you drive through, please take a moment to thank them for being our guardians. You can help too. Stay home, stay safe and together we can minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Dennis Sr.