



huu ay aht

ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND

May 12, 2020

Dear Citizens,

As I look back on the past two months, it is amazing how much has changed in our lives. Who would have believed that 2020 would end up like this – with us separated from our loved ones, working remotely, and facing health risks many of us had never even considered possible?

Although unbelievable, we are not out of the woods yet. In fact, the battle has only just begun. Together we are facing the worst pandemic of our time, but the hardest part could still be ahead of us. As the province begins to lift some of the restrictions in place, we as a Nation must decide what is best for our citizens and community.

It is essential that we begin to rebuild our economy, but this must not be placed at a higher value than the health, safety, and well-being of our citizens. The question we now face is, 'How do we move forward and still ensure we continue to protect our vulnerable citizens?'

Huu-ay-aht First Nations has decided that our top priority is the health of our citizens and protecting the vulnerable population in Pachena Bay.

Luckily, we do not face the future alone. Our Nation has been working hard with our community partners on a plan that is good for the whole region – one that protects remote communities like ours, while looking to the future. I am proud that we have taken measures to work with the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, the City of Port Alberni, Parks Canada, and the Bamfield Chamber of Commerce. Given we are working together on this, I have asked each of these groups to share a few words in my letter so that you also hear their perspective on this important subject.

Mayor Sharie Minions – City of Port Alberni

“This is such a difficult time for everyone in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. On behalf of the City of Port Alberni’s elected council, I want to express my appreciation to all residents who have been doing their part during this pandemic. I also want to stress that this is not over.

“Like everything we do, we are stronger together, and I am pleased the regional district is approaching this issue united in our goals and messages. I am honoured to be working with Huu-ay-aht First Nations as we navigate this journey.

“We will continue to get through this pandemic by working together and doing what is right for the whole community. If we approach our recovery plan the same way, our region will come out of this stronger than ever. So, thank you for all you have done and for the faith you have shown in the leadership of this province and region.”

Bob Beckett – ACRD Bamfield

“While COVID-19 has turned our world upside down, it has also provided opportunities for us to get back to the things that are truly important to all of us including family, community, communications, and relationships. As Dr. Henry has said many times, “this too shall pass”.



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“In the meantime, however, and until it does, I appreciate and value the support, leadership, and friendship of Chief Dennis and the Huu-ay-aht Nation as we collectively move forward.”

Karen Haugen – Parks Canada

“Parks Canada values our partnership with the Huu-ay-aht First Nations and the ways in which you enrich the national park reserve experience. We also recognize your dedication to protecting your community during this challenging time.

“The health and safety of local communities, visitors, and Parks Canada team members is of the utmost importance to Parks Canada. Parks Canada followed the advice of public health experts and implemented measures to support Canada’s efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19. Parks Canada suspended all camping, group activities, events, and vehicle traffic in Parks Canada places across the country until at least May 31, 2020.

“Pacific Rim National Park Reserve is working diligently to plan for resuming visitation and conservation, with guidance from the Agency and health experts. We will also work with First Nation partners and communities to ensure we do this thoughtfully. We look forward to a time when we can all meet again in person. Until then, we wish you all the best.”

Marnie McAughtrie – Bamfield Chamber of Commerce

“The Bamfield Chamber of Commerce encourages local business operators to use caution and discretion when deciding when, or if, to re-open their business for the 2020 tourist season. Provincial Health Authority as well as WorkSafe BC protocol must be followed, along with opening date guidelines outlined by the Province.

“We are confident that with the proper safety measures in place, as well as the co-operation of our local residents and visitors, we will be able to offer a safe environment for businesses to regain income and move towards ‘the new normal’.”

As we head into another long weekend in our province, I urge you to continue to follow the recommendations laid out by the province. This will mean continued social and physical distancing, following proper hygiene recommendations, and staying home.

As a Nation, we have made the difficult decision to close our treaty settlement lands, private lands, and two forest tenures during the pandemic. We will not allow any overnight camping at this time. This will remain in place until it is safe to lift these restrictions. Over the long weekend, we will be monitoring popular camping areas such as Pachena Bay Campground, Sarita Lake Camp area, Blenheim Main, Sugsaw Main, and more. Our barricade will remain at the entrance to our village.

This means many of you will not be able to come to your homelands for the long weekend. We understand this is a sacrifice you are making to keep our vulnerable, remote community safe, and we want you to know we appreciate the respect you are showing our Nation by honouring these restrictions.



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Please have a good long weekend. We look forward to hosting you in our territory at another time when it is safe.

We are all in this together, and we are Huu-ay-aht strong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RD', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert J. Dennis Sr.