



# huu ay aht

ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND

## Huu-ay-aht Statement on Allegations Involving Members of Executive Council

Significant allegations have been made against two members of Huu-ay-aht's Executive Council. We take these allegations very seriously, and we have instructed the Executive Director to make available the resources needed to support the physical, mental, and spiritual health of our Citizens and staff.

We encourage any Huu-ay-aht Citizen or staff member who has been affected by the alleged conduct, triggered by the allegations, or otherwise needs support during this time to contact the Huu-ay-aht Child and Family Wellness Department or Community Service Department at 250-723-0100 for confidential and culturally appropriate support.

Chief Councillor Robert Dennis Sr. said: "I and the other members of Executive Council have been deeply affected by these allegations. We recognize the need to support our Citizens and staff, and that's why we have made professional and culturally appropriate resources available to them. Huu-ay-aht government offices have now reopened for business. In addition to providing these important additional resources, Huu-ay-aht First Nations will continue to deliver the programs our Citizens require and to complete the projects our community needs."

Since learning of these allegations, Huu-ay-aht has dealt and will continue to deal with them in accordance with our laws and policies. Huu-ay-aht also has respected and will continue to respect the privacy of the individuals who have made these allegations.

In January 2022, a complaint regarding Councillor Trevor Cootes was made under the Nation's Public Complaints Policy. The Executive Director promptly launched an independent investigation in accordance with the policy. Executive Council requested that Councillor Cootes take leave from his position on Executive Council during the investigation, but he chose not to do so. Under Huu-ay-aht law, Executive Council cannot require its members to resign or take leave. The Chief Councillor removed Councillor Cootes' portfolios during the investigation and Councillor Cootes currently sits as a Councillor without a portfolio. In early April 2022, the investigation report concluded that Councillor Cootes' conduct amounted to sexual harassment and abuse of power and that he had breached the *Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Act*. Upon receipt of that report, Executive Council unanimously directed the Executive Director to apply to the Huu-ay-aht Tribunal for a determination that Councillor Cootes is disqualified from holding public office. The matter is now before the Tribunal and the dates for that hearing will be confirmed later this month. Information about the hearing is available on the Huu-ay-aht website (<https://huyuayht.org/government/tribunal/>), which will be updated as the matter progresses.

More recently, on May 4, 2022, Huu-ay-aht learned of very serious allegations against Tayii Ḥawiiḥ Ḥiishin, Derek Peters. On May 5, 2022, in light of those allegations, the Ḥawiiḥ Council asked Mr. Peters to resign from his role as Ḥawiiḥ Councillor on the Executive Council. On May 6, 2022, Mr. Peters submitted to the Law Clerk his resignation from his role as Ḥawiiḥ

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Councillor. That position will become vacant on May 14, 2022, at which time the H̱awiih Council will be able to appoint another qualified individual as the H̱awiih Councillor. In accordance with the requirements of the *Government Act*, s. 24, the Law Clerk gave public notice of the resignation, which is available on the Huu-ay-aht website here: <https://huyuayht.org/hfn-public-notices/> Huu-ay-aht will update Citizens when more information about these allegations becomes publicly available.

Huu-ay-aht First Nations remains committed to ensuring our community is safe and secure for everyone. We encourage anyone who needs support right now to contact the Huu-ay-aht Child and Family Wellness Department or Community Service Department at 250-723-0100.

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