

April 3, 2023

Minister of Forests  
PO Box 9049 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2  
Via email: [FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Hon. Minister Bruce Ralston,

This letter is addressed to you as a matter of urgency as the Kwakiutl Nation and our people is currently in a state of duress due to a secret forestry deal that was concluded between certain elected officials of Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation, Western Forest Products, and Lemare-Lions Gate Group.

At the heart of the matter is the simple fact that no consultation or basic information sharing has ever occurred with our Kwakiutl membership, our Hereditary Chiefs, or the Matriarchs of our tribe. This deal was negotiated and concluded in secret without the free, prior, and informed consent of the true stewards of our lands and territory. Thus, the laws of British Columbia and the laws of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation have been violated. The agreements of this deal and the short- and long-term ramifications to the forests of our homeland and our future have not been considered. This deal is neither legal nor valid.

Needless to say, Kwakiutl residents and members are in an uproar as the agreement has authorized and resulted in the logging of old growth forests, destruction of ancient village sites and severely destructive environmental impacts. The elders, our families, and our youth are preparing to march into the homeland to occupy the several key home village sites, hunting grounds, and medicine sites to offer our protection and prevent the final insult to our land and people. This includes a march on the log sort operated by WFP that is situated in our home village at Port McNeill.

At this time, we require fulsome information on the nature of this deal. What little information we do know includes the following details:

- The lands in question include Tree Farm Licences held by Western Forest Products whose role in this deal is unknown to us.

- The lands in question are protected by our Douglas Treaties and were discussed at length with Western Forest Products and the Provincial Crown in *Chartrand v. British Columbia*, 2015
- The majority of the fibre is old growth – and Kwakiutl have unequivocally called for deferrals of all old growth within our territory, and this has been adopted as policy and enshrined in Kwakiutl's Land Use Plan (2018)
- Lemare group has harvested several cutblocks already and are currently building roads toward the next set of blocks at *Sagwas*, Suquash village protected by our Douglas Treaties

Undoubtedly, you will agree that a deal concluded in secret, without the reasonable minimum standards of good governance, engagement, consultation, and without any pathway to consent is morally flawed and untenable in our current climate of social justice. For us, it is a simple matter of respect, and these actions have demonstrated the exact opposite.

Therefore, to facilitate a process that is fair and peaceful, we ask that you immediately:

1. Suspend all activity on the ground related to this deal, including cutting and road building permits.
2. Share a copy of this forestry deal immediately with Kwakiutl Membership, our Hereditary Chiefs, and Matriarchs, so we can review its content and ramifications

These two steps represent a minimum for us to gain time, protect our last remaining old growth and gain an understanding of the damage that has transpired so that we can then initiate a dialogue with you and your Ministry representatives and anyone else involved in the crafting of this deal.

The Kwakiutl have been clear and consistent with respect to calling for protection of all remaining old growth as well as second growth trees in our Treaty Lands (Kwakiutl Title Lands) as well as our five watersheds. The Hereditary Chiefs continue to call for the return of these Treaty Lands to our people to be protected and cared for by those with rightful title and rights to these lands.

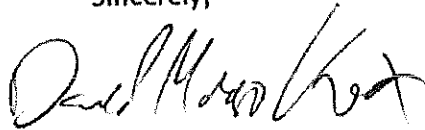
Three of seven elected councillors have resigned due to the secrecy of this deal and the breach of fiduciary duty the deal represents to the community they serve as elected officials. At a duly convened meeting on March 18, 2023, a successful vote of non-confidence was carried by a quorum of Kwakiutl membership to remove the remaining

four elected members of Council. The four remaining Council members are responsible for signing the logging deal. Therefore, we also want you to be aware that the four individuals responsible for this forestry deal no longer speak for Kwakiutl.

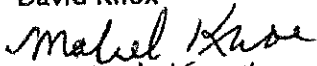
We will endure no further destruction of our old growth of which there is less than 3% in our homeland. The cumulative impact of forestry approvals by your Ministry has left us with almost no old growth cedar for our homes, cultural traditions, canoe building, and carving. The current deal if allowed to continue their path of destruction will leave nothing for our children's future.

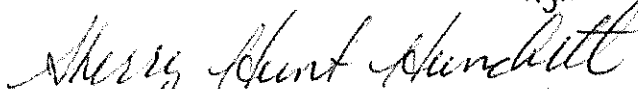
Failure to act at this time will result in Kwakiutl families and their allies occupying the homeland through the enforcement of the Douglas Treaties and the manifestation of our fundamental human rights as Indigenous People - right to land, right to water, right to forests, right to village sites and enclosed fields, and the right to respect and dignity. No one wants this outcome. We urgently implore you to help us remedy this situation immediately. As we write this letter the logging equipment and road building crews are encroaching on one of the last remaining stands of old growth in our territory and as we have seen they move rapidly, and it is only a matter of days before it will be gone.


Sincerely,

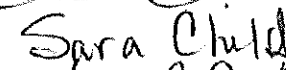
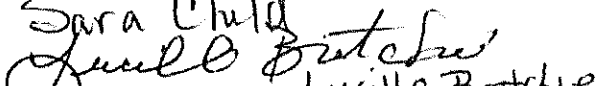


Hereditary Chief Walas Namugwis  
David Knox

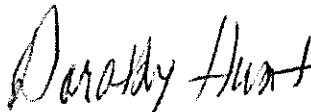
  
Mabel Knox

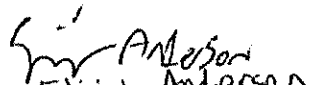
  
Sherry Hunt Humchitt

  
Ema Sheena

  
Sara Child  
  
Lucille Brotchie  
Robin Hunt  
Robin Hunt


  
Mildred Child

  
Dorothy Hunt

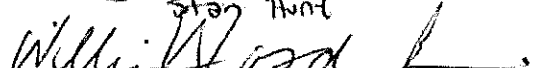
  
Elijah Anderson

CARRINE HUNT

  
Marie Hunt

  
Chief Calvin Hunt

  
Stan Hunt

  
Waxawidi Namgis  
Robin Pasborough Kiditame

Maggie Sedgemore  
Maggie Sedgemore  
Winnie Anderson

  
Colette Child