

# **Update to Lake Babine Membership On Negotiations with the Provincial Government**

Over many decades our people have fought to re-establish our proper relationship with the lands, resources, and waters of our Territory, and to have our Lake Babine culture, laws, and Title and Rights recognized and respected. Crown governments have always resisted this, ignoring our ownership of our Territory and taking the wealth of our homeland without compensating us or receiving our consent.

Our People's efforts for justice has been on the ground, in the courts, and through negotiations. While we have had many accomplishments, progress has been too slow. The need to speed up action for real change is something our communities have made increasingly clear in recent times.

In response to the need for real change to happen real soon, Chief and Council communicated to the Provincial politicians that we were not going to engage in slow and endless reconciliation negotiations any longer. Our People and communities need to see real change now, and concrete steps by government that demonstrates the Province is serious about recognizing and implementing our Title and Rights.

We told the Province:

- An agreement must be done by the end of the calendar year
- The agreement must include immediate and real lands and benefits to our communities
- The agreement must set us on a path of real change, and out of the patterns where the government and companies take the wealth of our Territory while we are shut out.

After much advocacy by Chief and Council the Province agreed. On September 7, 2016, Chief Wilf Adam and Minister John Rustad signed a Letter of Understanding stating their commitment to complete an agreement by the end of the year that accomplishes all of these things through a 25-Year Foundation Agreement. It is being called a Foundation Agreement because it will establish a new basis for the relationship between Lake Babine and the Province based on our Title and Rights. This was achieved after a three day intensive negotiation session that included

Chief and Council, elder Damien Pierre, youth Ethan Michell, staff members Barbra Tom and Betty Patrick, key LBN advisors, Minister Rustad, and twenty of his officials. Our Hereditary Chiefs opened the session in a powerful and moving way that made it clear that success and action were the only options.

It will still take a few months of hard work, and pushing by all of us, to ensure the Foundation Agreement is completed on the terms Lake Babine needs. Certain details are already confirmed:

- The Agreement will set out a joint vision for the next 25 years with joint short term, medium term, and long term milestones for achieving the different aspects of the Vision
- It will include a joint LBN-BC implementation structure to achieve the Agreement targets and implement the Vision
- It will provide LBN with immediate benefits as initial steps toward implementing the Vision, including
  - new land transfers for LBN economic development,
  - new forestry tenure,
  - increased forestry revenue sharing, and
  - funding to support cultural infrastructure improvements in the LBN communities.

The Foundation Agreement will be the first of its kind. It will not be a project agreement or a modern treaty. The goal is to substantially shift, improve and strengthen the LBN-BC relationship through implementation of our Title and Rights in a collaborative and progressive way, and lay the foundation for LBN's long term success, the well-being of LBN members, and LBN's contribution to the prosperity of the entire region.

As a community we need to have dialogue about these developments. Members are invited to receive an update and share input on the progress of the Foundation Agreement negotiations at the October Annual General Assembly.

