



January 27, 2023

LAKE BABINE NATION CELEBRATES LAND TRANSFER AGREEMENT

Agreement is a legal instrument to regain 20,000 hectares of territory

At a recent meeting in Prince George BC and Lake Babine Nation (LBN) took an important step in the transfer of 20,000 hectares of land back to the LBN.

On Tuesday January 16, 2023 Chief Murphy Abraham and Minister Murray Rankin completed the *Land Transfer Agreement*. The Province of BC uses this type of agreement when returning so called “crown lands” to First Nations. The *Land Transfer Agreement* sets out the steps, terms and conditions for the Initial Land Transfers that are happening under section 6.2 of the *Foundation Agreement*.

The lands include parcels of waterfront and prime forestry lands. The transfer is the third largest in the history of B.C. An attached map shows the boundaries of the selected lands which represents only a portion of lands that LBN is pursuing through reconciliation talks with B.C. The lands selected are valued at \$150 million dollars (2020).

“This is just the beginning,” said Chief Murphy Abraham of the land transfer. “Our ancestors fought hard to protect our territory, and the land transfer agreement is the first step in bringing these lands back to Lake Babine control and decision-making. This is a historic moment for us, and I look forward to expanding our land base as we negotiate additional parcels.”

Land surveys started in the summer of 2022, and the first surveyed parcels are being transferred back to Lake Babine in 2023, starting with Parcel A. To transfer the land each parcel must be surveyed on foot which can make the process lengthy but is very important for LBN due diligence. Lake Babine and BC finalized the location of 5 parcels after signing the Foundation Agreement. The parcels include some new areas not originally identified in Schedule D, which replace lands originally selected that were later damaged by the Torkelson Fire.

The province’s process for returning Crown lands to Indigenous peoples is time consuming, and it is normal for such land transfers to take several years. Nevertheless, the Initial Land Transfers are intended to be an immediate benefit under the Foundation Agreement and LBN is urging the province to move as quickly as possible in completing the land transfers.

Key facts about Foundation Agreement and Land Transfers

- The estimated value of the Initial Land Transfers is \$150 million.
- Lake Babine chose the Initial Land Transfers primarily for their forestry value, as well as to secure more lands along the shore of Babine Lake.
- The Foundation Agreement confirms that BC and Lake Babine will negotiate additional land transfers (section 6.7). Lake Babine Nation will identify the lands it wants back through an evidence and community-driven process. That internal work has not yet started.
- Lake Babine will acquire the Initial Land Transfer parcels as “fee simple” or private lands. The Foundation Agreement states that Lake Babine and the Province will work to implement Lake Babine’s Aboriginal title, including through a new “Aboriginal title” land designation to replace “fee simple” status (section 6.8). In time LBN will work to change the status of the Initial Land Transfers in BC law from “fee simple” to “Aboriginal title” lands.