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June 23, 2021

Islands Trust Council Executive
C/o Mr. Peter Luckham pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca

Dear Islands Trust Executive,

Regarding First Reading of the Proposed Revision of the Islands Trust Policy Statement

As an indigenous person and resident of the Gulf Islands, I was pleased to see the following statements in the *Islands Trust News Release* of June 18, 2021. (Note: all caps are mine and provided only to highlight your text.)

“We are thankful for all the engagement and input from members of the public over the last 18 months and for the **meaningful and collaborative relationships with First Nations** as we worked towards developing a new draft of the Policy Statement.”

It is now widely understood that local governments must hold meaningful consultations with all affected First Nation communities before actions are taken on First Nation lands altering major directives on governance. Currently, you have prepared a draft *Islands Trust Policy Statement* that contains significant changes to governance on First Nations lands and are proceeding to first reading with it on July 8th.

Regarding First Nations consultation on this document, the June 15, 2021 *Trust Programs Committee Agenda* states:

“The project is now completing Stage Four of its timeline, which has been dedicated to analyzing, synthesizing, and integrating **18 months of First Nations and public engagement feedback...** It is important to note that **First Nations have been working within the timelines outlined below and have an expectation that the new Policy Statement bylaw will be considered for adoption during this term of office.**”

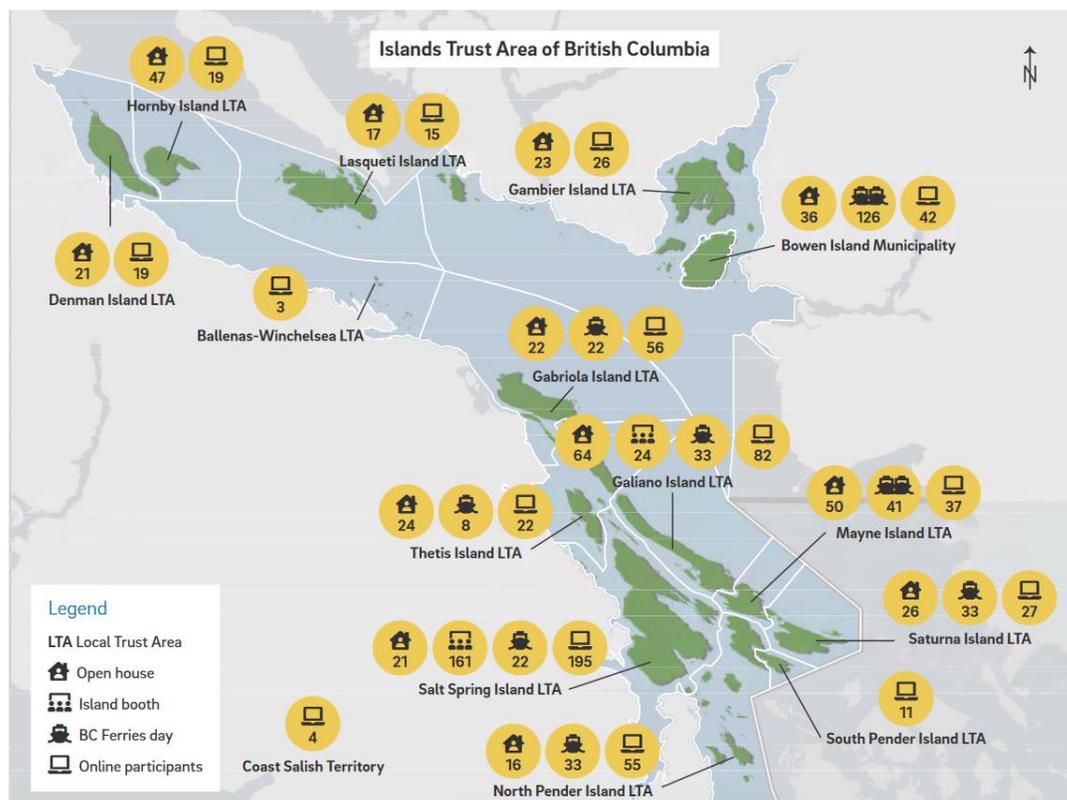
Also, in your *First Nations Engagement Status Report* of June 9, 2021, you report that this 18 months of consultation was carried out with the following 30 Nations:

BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin) First Nation	Snuneymuxw First Nation
Cowichan Tribes	Skw̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation
Halalt First Nation	Snaw-naw-as (Nanoose) First Nation
Homalco First Nation	SṪÁUTW̓ (Tsawout) First Nation
Klahoose First Nation	Stz'uminus First Nation
K'ómoks First Nation	SXIMELEL (Esquimalt) Nation
Lake Cowichan First Nation	Tla'amin (Sliammon) Nation
Lekwungen (Songhees) Nation	Tsawwassen First Nation
Lyackson First Nation	Tsleil-Waututh Nation
MÁLEXEL (Malahat) Nation	T'Sou-ke Nation
Penelakut Tribe	Wei Wai Kum (Campbell River) First Nation
Qualicum First Nation	We Wai Kai (Cape Mudge) First Nation
Scia'new (Beecher Bay) First Nation	W̓JOLELP (Tsartlip) First Nation
SEMYOME (Semiahmoo) First Nation	W̓SIKEM (Tseycum) First Nation
shíshálh First Nation	x̓m̓əθk̓w̓əyəm (Musqueam)

The same report claims that, in forming the proposed policy, the Trust had over 160 “engagements” with First Nations yet it must also be noted (in your report) that:

- these “160 engagements” included innumerable e-mail messages and phone calls as part of that number
- there is no public record of the actual meetings held, attendees, agendas or resolutions achieved,
- apparently all of these “engagements” preceded the preparation of the current draft document,
- only 7 of the 30 First Nation communities participated in the process and their representatives were limited to viewing a copy of the *2003 Islands Trust Policy Statement* for consideration, and
- by your own admission, these “engagements” dealt largely with “*implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*”

It appears that there has been precious little First Nations dialogue that can be elevated to the status of “engagement” in regards to the current draft Policy. In all related documents posted on your website (for example, stakeholder comments), there is no indication that the content of the current draft document was ever viewed by the indigenous communities that you “engaged”. In addition, there are no records to show what comments the First Nation participants may have made about it. For example, on the following map, you display the number of stakeholder comments resulting from the public dissemination of the document: (367) from open houses, (161) from community booths, (318) on BC ferries & (613) online. This map is supported by the Islands Trust’s postings of the actual letters and e-mail received. Missing from this research and public consultation process are the actual comments from the participants in your “160 engagements” with First Nations.



This negligent attitude towards the actual voice of First Nation members suggests a tone of paternalism by the Trust towards these communities. It signals an entrenched belief that they must be isolated, and “protected” from having open dialogue with other communities. In effect, they are being treated by the Trust as just another natural feature of the islands requiring Trust protection, like a wetland or shoreline. This unacceptable colonial attitude does nothing to show the Trust’s acceptance of First Nations as active participants and responsible stakeholders in the process.

In addition to this slight of First Nations, it is reasonable to expect that other stakeholders may wish to review ALL the comments collected regarding the proposed policy statement to get a broad perspective of other sentiments. For many, this may help them form their own views. As a resident of a Trust island, my views will be shaped not only by the comments of the participants shown on your map but also by what I would read or hear from First Nations people. To proceed with a Policy amendment that radically alters governance on First Nations lands while editing the statements of those very same First Nations and then “interpreting” them for others is nothing short of colonial paternalism and a step backwards from your claim of “**meaningful and collaborative relationships with First Nations**”.

This raises an important question that is obvious outside of the Islands Trust milieu. In light of this paternalistic role the Trust has undertaken, what trustee(s) or staff member(s) would have the knowledge and ability needed to assume this mantle - i.e., “interpreter” of First Nations cognition, sentiments and life views for non-indigenous people? I see no one within the Trust who has these necessary qualifications.

I am therefore asking for you to provide complete data on the “160 encounters” you claim to have had with the 30 aforementioned First Nations and the resulting comments returned by them. Apparently, one trustee stated that the Islands Trust chooses not to post First Nation information due to privacy concerns. I’m suggesting that perhaps, you should actually ask First Nations participants if they all hold this view rather than acting paternally on their behalf. If that privacy concern actually originated within the Trust, I have stated the public’s repugnance for this colonial attitude and, to quote Greta Thunberg, “Shame on you”. However, if it truly was requested by the acknowledged representatives of the First Nations you have identified, then please post your record of these requests as support for your claim.

Thank you for regarding my concerns. I look forward to your response.

Dennis Perch



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P.S. Although I AM an indigenous person, I see nothing wrong with my views being made public and ask that you amend your indigenous secrecy policy in my case and post this letter on-line with other public comments.

Cc Premier, John Hogan – john.horgan.mla@leg.bc.ca
Minister of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation, Murray Rankin – IRR.Minister@leg.bc.ca
MLA Saanich North & the Islands, Adam Olsen - adam.olsen.MLA@leg.bc.ca
Southern Gulf Islands, Capital Regional District Director, Dave Howe – directorsgi@crd.bc.ca
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