

# Questions & Answers from Treaty Information Session



CANADA, BC & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND PORT ESSINGTON | MAY 25, 2022

Thank you to the Kitselas members who joined us for our twelfth Treaty Information Session community meeting in-person and via Zoom on May 25, 2022. Everyone is welcome at the Treaty Information Sessions.

## The next community meeting is on Wednesday, June 22, 2022.

There was an error in downloading the recording of the May 25 community meeting, and it is unfortunately not available in the MEMBERS' AREA of the [kitselastreaty.ca](http://kitselastreaty.ca) website. Please register to access resources this area.

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Below, please find questions and answers from the May 25 community meeting.

**Q: The graveyard at Port Essington – I was wondering about the graveyard maintenance and if this is part of the Treaty, because there are community members who would like to have access to it to go and pay their respects.**

**A:** No, graveyard maintenance is not explicitly addressed in the Treaty. This is something that could be addressed by Kitselas Administration as an operational question, noting that Kitselas also has at least two other cemeteries in Gitaus (IR-1) and Endudoon (IR-4). You might also raise this issue with Chief and Council.

**Q: What happens to Port Essington should we not vote for the Treaty? Will we lose the land if we don't go with Treaty?**

**A:** If we don't vote for Treaty, Kitselas and Kitsumkalum would continue to retain joint ownership of the shared IR on Port Essington. Without Treaty, the additional land around the Port Essington IR will remain crown land / conservancy land. Interestingly, the church property that is in the middle of the shared reserve has been split in two and we will own half of this land outright (i.e., not as IR or Treaty Settlement Lands) whether Treaty passes or not.

***Comments:** a) As I've attended different meetings, we have heard what will be offered after Treaty, but there have been questions that have been asked that relate to departments that exist now. It seems that we are hearing the Treaty "wish list"; yet, on the ground, it would be good if we could link what's happening now to what will happen after Treaty. It's almost like the Kitselas departments and the Treaty department are not in sync. For example, the cost of a boat that would be needed for the Lands and Resources Department.*

*b) For Port Essington, maybe we could plan a trip, even joint with Kitsumkalum to see the land. If a service or connection can be made with the programs and services that exist now, it would be helpful to have people understand what will happen in the future.*

*c) Another example is when you talked about becoming part of the Regional District. I think it's interesting that Kitselas will join the Regional District Board to address lands that were originally Kitselas lands. Building these relationships now with departments and boards like the Regional District could be explored now, which could help everyone prepare for the Treaty and better understand what will happen after Treaty.*

**A:** a) After Treaty all departments, programs and services that currently exist, will continue. As Director of Treaty, I meet with the Chief Administrative Officer and all other Directors every Tuesday morning to keep each other informed. I think these meetings are very helpful. After Treaty, Kitselas will be able to establish new programs and services. It will be our choice about where to spend the additional funding that Treaty will provide to Kitselas.

I'm also aware that when we have the land we will have to police the lands. Research on these questions is being addressed now within the Enforcement Treaty Related Measures project. When we have a legal answer, we will present it to the community. This work is very active and ongoing, but we don't have anything to report yet.

b) The church wants to have a celebration when they give the land at Port Essington back to Kitselas and Kitsumkalum. The Kitselas Treaty Team will participate and help to arrange this. When this happens, we think we could hire a larger boat, so community members can go and attend the ceremony. It would be wonderful to have community members celebrate the return of the Traditional Territory by the church. As soon as we have a date, we'll let everyone know.

c) Relationship building with Regional District is not new and continues! We meet with the Regional District monthly to explore how Treaty could impact each of us. Both the Regional District and KitseLas representatives are eager for KitseLas to have a seat on the Board.

**Comment:** *You talked about making the trip to Port Essington; that's a good thing to do. Why not get a group of young people to go over to Port Essington and clean the land? Kitsumkalum has done this before. When you go over now, you have to watch the tide; you have to go over with experienced boat people. There are boulders and weather conditions that you must be aware of.*

*To clean up the cemetery there was a group of Kitsumkalum people who went over and cleaned up some of the land. I think a good idea would be to go to the Provincial Archives and see if we could find a map and list from the funeral homes that were at Port Essington to identify who they are and where they are buried, and then to mark the graves so that they are not forgotten again as the land takes over. This is only one project that I have been thinking about.*

**A:** Thank you for the information and suggestions.

**Comment:** *I understand that KitseLas Treaty staff are doing Treaty information sessions for community members in cities around BC. I do oppose Treaty going out to people. But, I think it would be more beneficial to have community members come back to Terrace. I know it may have been costly to organize the Elders' Gathering a few years ago, but with the age of the Elders, there are not many left and a trip during the summer would be great to have Elders and other people come home to KitseLas.*

**A:** Treaty is planning a tour in early June to share Treaty information with KitseLas members not living in community or nearby. These KitseLas members have a vote, too. While they are always invited to information sessions via Zoom, we thought it would be respectful to go to them, make a brief presentation, and answer any questions they may have.

Treaty does not have a plan to bring everyone to community in 2022: this does take a lot of planning. This would be most appropriate once negotiations are complete, and we can present and explain KitseLas's final Treaty to the people. We do everything on Zoom now to avoid excluding anybody-near or far. Our next community engagement session on June 22 will be in Terrace.

The Gathering the Elder conference costs were approximately \$300,000. Frankly, this is beyond the financial resources of Treaty. Our annual budget from the BC Treaty Society is \$720,000.

**Q: When are we going to start to see Kitselas's proposals of how we're going to run our programs and funding after Treaty? What percentage of funds do we need to run our programs? Because Kitselas is taking this over, I'm wondering how this will look.**

**A:** All programs will continue exactly as they are right now. For example, we have a program for new mothers, and we will continue to receive that funding after Treaty. We will also be able to apply for any new Aboriginal or First Nation programs offered by Canada or BC. Some programs will remain with Canada, especially health services. As health costs increase rapidly, Canada is unlikely to increase program funding fast enough to cover these rising costs. It makes better sense to continue to have these programs and services provided by Canada and top up funding for anything we wish to address. Something that will change is that we will have greatly increased revenue, which we can opt to spend wherever we choose. We will be able to, for example, give a monthly pension to each Elder.

**Q: That was my question, about financing. Using Nisga'a as an example, are they using the taxes they collect for their programs? I'm just wondering what the proposal is for Kitselas on how to continue funding.**

**A:** Program funding will not change. Revenue for program expenditures will continue to flow as it does now. Treaty does not exclude or exempt us from qualifying for new First Nations programs in Canada. In terms of various tax exemptions, we're negotiating a treaty 25 years after Nisga'a. Even though the negotiations are still active and not completed, it appears highly likely that tax exemptions for Kitselas Members will continue after Treaty, pretty much as they do right now. We will do a community information session on taxes late in 2022.