

Indigenous protection and conservation area created in Loughborough Inlet

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Campbell River Mirror

The Wei Wai Kum First Nation declared its intention to protect a portion of one of the most scenic inlets on the south coast and a core part of its ancestral lands by creating the Homayno Indigenous Protection and Conservation Area (IPCA).

On Indigenous Peoples Day, June 21, 2024, a ceremony was held in the Wei Wai Kum's Kwanwatsi Big House in Campbell River that involved a document creating the IPCA being signed by Chief Councillor Chris Roberts and Wei Wai Kum Traditional Chiefs.

Dancers and speeches marked the occasion and Ligwildaxw Elder and Wei Wai Kum councillor Lorraine Henderson read a declaration to the Big House.

"This declaration invites everyone to respect, support and witness us develop a sustainable and resilient future for Homayno, a future that



North Island MLA Michele Babchuk, BC Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Murray Rankin, and Wei Wai Kum First Nations traditional Chiefs participated in a ceremony Friday, June 21, 2024 held at the Kwanwatsi Big House in Campbell River to mark the signing of documents creating the Homayno Indigenous Protection and Conservation Area in Loughborough Inlet on British Columbia's central coast.

recognizes Wei Wai Kum deep connection to this area and honours our inherited rights and responsibilities to steward it for our future generations. This declaration confirms that, from this day forward, any activities that occur in Homayno must adhere to the laws, policies and protocols of Ligwildaxw

law," Henderson said. Homayno IPCA in Loughborough Inlet, a mainland fjord located north of Campbell River, is a marine region covering nearly 28 square kilometres. The IPCA incorporates a section of central Loughborough Inlet and the adjacent land surrounding Heydon Lake. It

is home to a steep mountain fjord and sensitive estuaries and contains important ecosystems for several key-stone species such as salmon, grizzly bears and eagles. Homayno has also sustained the Wei Wai Kum people for thousands of generations and this is evidenced by many former village sites and

other culturally and spiritually-significant locations.

The Loughborough Inlet marine shoreline and upland watershed areas include many recorded cultural and heritage sites such as village sites, fish traps, shell middens petroglyphs, pictographs and culturally-modified trees. There is a high likelihood more sites will be discovered.

"In our Kwak'waka language, Qominuxw means 'the people of Loughborough Inlet' and Homayno is the Lik'wala name for this area," said Wei Wai Kum Chief Councillor Chris Roberts. "Homayno is a core part of our traditional territory and this declaration reflects our responsibilities to manage and steward this region for our future generations."

A Homayno Marine Management Plan will be co-developed over the coming years in collaboration with Canada and British Columbia, blending traditional

knowledge and laws with western science and regulations to bring all parties together to co-manage this unique area, a Wei Wai Kum news release says. The management plan will layer Wei Wai Kum conservation tools along with Crown tools to facilitate a sustainable economic future while recognizing the conservation needs to protect this ecologically and culturally significant area.

The Homayno IPCA will accommodate recreational and commercial activities that are consistent with the management plan and that align with the principles of Ligwildaxw law, which includes sustainable resource management, conservation of cultural and spiritual values and ecological protection.

Also in attendance as invited guests were provincial Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Murray Rankin, and North Island MLA Michele Babchuk.

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