

# Re-Elect John Alan Jack for HUU-ay-aht First Nations Council

## Unlocking the Value of Our Lands and People for All HUU-ay-aht

In the time before contact with European explorers and traders, the HUU-ay-aht economy was based on harvesting natural resources from our lands and waters. They were controlled by our hereditary leaders based on traditional practices of conservation. Those resources were collectively managed for the good of all HUU-ay-aht. While food and material for clothing, housing, fuel and transportation were relatively plentiful over the long term, variations due to weather, intertribal conflict and other concerns often created serious shortfalls in vital resources. These challenges had to be managed on a larger scale, creating the need for mutually-beneficial trade agreements with other Nations up and down the coasts of the Island and the Mainland.

When contact was made with European explorers and traders, our people had been living in our territories for thousands of years. We numbered in the multiples of thousands because we had relatively stable and plentiful resources and we enjoyed relative peace and stability. One would imagine HUU-ay-aht leaders were not unlike leaders today. They wanted to ensure their people were safe, healthy and had a bright future. Unfortunately, a deficit of empathy and a surplus of ambition made those explorers and traders into colonizers who cared little for our traditional politics, economics and society. Indigenous peoples everywhere lost their lands and resources. HUU-ay-aht leaders lost their lands and their control of the resources that fed, clothed and housed our people for generations upon generations. The wealth of our people was harvested by others and taken out of our territory. Weakened by disease and overwhelmed by the might of the European powers, indigenous peoples like us lost their lands, and they very nearly lost their identity.

We did not lose our identity, however, and our leaders came together to do what they could to get back what was lost and taken away. Whether through negotiation, court cases or business development, HUU-ay-aht leaders worked together to pursue a better life for all HUU-ay-aht. We won back control and influence over our resources. We finally received a share of the wealth that had been taken off our lands without our benefit for generations. And with the treaty, we won back control over our own lives, our own lands and our own resources.



*Please Turn Over →*

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Now that we are self-governing, now that we are in control of our individual and collective destinies, it is up to us to ensure that we move into the future in a way that makes us safer, healthier, smarter and stronger. The challenge before us is daunting and serious, we need to improve: (1) the opportunities available to our people to make their individual lives better in the ways they see fit; and (2) in concrete terms, improve the actual conditions in which our people collectively live. In other words, we must do what we can do ensure that a Huu-ay-aht child born today has all the same opportunities for success in life, and that our people can count on the foundations of a dignified existence.

### **The Ha'wiih Must Be Respected**

In the past, our hereditary leaders – the Ha'wiih – were in control over all the resources under their domain. If a fisherman brought in a load of fish, he would first have to visit his ha'wiih for it to be distributed fairly amongst the people. This was a foundation of our way of life, it helped maintain harmony and control individual ambitions. Today, we don't largely barter individual commodities like fish or timber, but rather convert it all to currency for ease of accounting. The idea of reconciling our traditional economic practices with the means and methods of today is one that should be central to our thoughts and actions. We have done several things to bridge our rich past and our bright future...

First, we have businesses that we operate to help generate revenue for the Nation to use in programs and services to help our people. Second, we reinvest the wealth generated by our businesses to create job opportunities for our people to make a living. Third, we retain overall strategic direction of our economic activities while maintaining a separation between political motives and business operations. Fourth, that overall strategic operation of our businesses directly involves the duly-appointed representative of the Ha'wiih Council in government as a matter of law. And finally, we have used the moneys received from our businesses' profit-sharing to bolster the budget of our traditional leaders.

That final point is critical. In the past, the Ha'wiih Council – our hereditary leaders – were only resourced as a mere committee of government. In true fact, they are a full branch of the Huu-ay-aht government and just as important as the Elected Government, the Tribunal and the People's Assembly. We need to do what we can to ensure that they are not only involved, but have the capacity to be meaningfully involved on their terms.

In this past budget, I introduced a measure to link the profit received from our businesses directly to the budget of our Ha'wiih Council to more adequately reflect their stature in our community. With a significantly increased budget, our hereditary leaders will be able to conduct their affairs with the dignity and support they deserve. I will work to continue and expand this practice and hope to see a renewed vibrancy in our understanding and practice of the traditional roles and responsibilities of our Ha'wiih. I cannot claim to understand the full nuance of our hereditary leaders' authorities, responsibilities and protocols, but I can do what I can to ensure they have the resources to rediscover, reassert and restore the greater house of Huu-ay-aht in all our hearts and minds.

*Chuu.*

**Klecko, klecko!**