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# Laich-Kwil-Tach Treaty Society Newsletter

March 2019



## Important Dates

### Meet with the treaty team

Victoria meeting rescheduled:  
April 10, 6:30 PM  
Coast Hotel, 146 Kingston St.  
Victoria



Topaze Harbour Petroglyph

## Canada Includes Treaty Loan Forgiveness in the 2019 Budget Announcement

On March 19, Canada announced in its 2019 Budget that all treaty loans will be forgiven and that Nations who have repaid the loans will be reimbursed. This is the result of a long-fought battle. Nations have insisted that treaty negotiations are part of a government-to-government process and that First Nations should not incur a debt in order to complete negotiations. Canada has finally agreed with this position and the 2019 Budget will make it happen. It is expected that the loans will be erased by the end of this week. This follows on Canada's previous announcement in 2018 that all treaty negotiation funding going forward will be funded through grants.

This means that We Wai Kai can continue to negotiate a full treaty package for the community to consider without the risk of incurring a debt.

See the attached CBC News article for more information.



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# Budget 2019: \$1.4B in loans to be forgiven or reimbursed to Indigenous groups for treaty negotiations



\$938 million will be forgiven or reimbursed in 2018-19 fiscal year

Chantelle Bellrichard · CBC News ·

Posted: Mar 19, 2019 7:25 PM ET | Last Updated: March 19



Grand Chief Ed John said First Nations are 'ecstatic' to learn about treaty loans being forgiven or reimbursed. (CBC)

Indigenous groups across Canada carrying millions in dollars of debt from negotiating treaty claims with Ottawa will soon have that

debt erased.

The federal government announced in its 2019 budget it will be forgiving loans to Indigenous groups who have taken on debt to negotiate comprehensive claims and treaties.

Groups that have already repaid the government for such loans will get their money back, Ottawa says.

The total amount being repaid or forgiven: \$1.4 billion. Of that, \$938 million will be dealt with in the current fiscal year — by the end of March.

According to the 2019 budget, tabled by Finance Minister Bill Morneau in Ottawa on Tuesday, 200 Indigenous communities across Canada will benefit from this loan forgiveness and reimbursement. A large percentage of those groups are First Nations in B.C., where there have been few treaties in comparison to the rest of Canada.

- [\*\*Budget 2019: Highlights of Bill Morneau's fourth federal budget\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Liberals table a pre-election budget designed to ease Canadians' anxieties\*\*](#)

The B.C. Treaty Commission's Chief Commissioner Celeste Haldane said in a statement that the group "has long advocated for the elimination of loans in treaty negotiations. It is encouraging to see this issue finally being addressed and demonstrates real

progress towards reconciliation."

The commission reported in its 2018 annual report roughly \$550 million in outstanding negotiation loans to First Nations. Since the commission started negotiations in the early 1990s, it has loaned money to 60 First Nations.

## 'Ecstatic' reactions

Grand Chief Ed John, an elected member of the First Nations Summit in B.C., said he personally asked the prime minister to forgive the loans at an event for Canada 150.

"As I read it, the loans will be forgiven in this fiscal year, at the end of March 2019," he said.

John said he's already starting to hear from "pretty ecstatic" First Nations who are realizing they'll be free of this debt in the near future.

John said his own nation, Tl'azt'en, stands to see about \$2 million in loans forgiven. He said freeing up this kind of debt will allow Indigenous groups to access more capital.

When asked about the symbolic significance of this move from Ottawa, John said it's further confirmation that the process to resolve the land question in Canada has been flawed.

- [Federal government says it'll pay for Indigenous groups to negotiate land](#)

## claims: budget 2018

"It was wrong in the first place to take our lands without sitting down and talking with us," he said.

"So we've been in this process trying to resolve this matter with both Canada and British Columbia but in doing so we've been put in this situation having to borrow money from the very governments who took our land in the first place."

The federal budget marked this financial commitment under the category of "redressing past wrongs and advancing self-determination."

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