



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
Coast Salish Peoples

B.C., COAST SALISH NATIONS, TRIBES HONOUR SALISH SEA

VICTORIA – Coast Salish leaders welcomed Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point and Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation George Abbott to the Songhees waterfront for a colourful and lively ceremony to celebrate the official naming of the Salish Sea.

“Coast Salish peoples have traversed these waters for thousands of years and this name pays homage to our collective history,” said Point. “Today’s celebration reflects the growing understanding and appreciation of our cultures. It is another step in the bridge of reconciliation.”

The Salish Sea encompasses inland waterways stretching from the south end of Puget Sound in Washington State to Desolation Sound at the northern end of the Strait of Georgia in B.C., including the Juan de Fuca Strait. Similar to the Great Lakes, adding Salish Sea as the umbrella-name for the larger body of water will not change names already in place.

“In the throne speech, the Province committed to adopt the name Salish Sea as an act of reconciliation honouring the Coast Salish Nations and this rich and diverse marine ecosystem,” said Abbott. “Today we celebrate these waters, the Coast Salish people and our enduring commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal people.”

“The designation of the name Salish Sea is an historic acknowledgement of our peoples’ connection to our lands and waterways since time immemorial,” said Squamish Nation Chief Gibby Jacob on behalf of the member tribes of the Coast Salish of British Columbia. “Our ancestors have left us a legacy to be good stewards for the protection and enhancement of our natural surroundings that is the Salish Sea ecosystem and regions. It is the duty of each of us to celebrate this historic day for all peoples, ensuring we sustain and protect this legacy for innumerable generations.”

“The naming of the Salish Sea is a timely response to the need for the governing bodies of the region to recognize their common responsibility for protecting the health of this precious ecosystem,” said Swinomish Chairman Brian Cladoosby, on behalf of the member tribes of the Coast Salish of Western Washington.

As part of the celebrations, Coast Salish chiefs, elders and dancers gave the name Salish Sea to a canoe, which was hand-carved and painted by the Lieutenant-Governor and master-carver KwaGulth Hereditary Chief Tony Hunt, and then presented to the Canadian Navy in honour of its centennial.

One hundred singers with the Victoria Good News Choir also delighted event participants by performing a song composed by the Lieutenant-Governor in celebration of the Salish Sea and all British Columbians.

Coast Salish chiefs, Abbott and event participants also recognized the efforts of Prof. Bert Webber, an ecologist and long-time advocate for the name Salish Sea.

Following the event, Songhees First Nation welcomed almost 20 canoes participating in 2010 Tribal Journeys – an annual event involving Indigenous people from Canada and the U.S. that pays tribute to Aboriginal canoe culture.

In March 2009, B.C. joined the Geographical Names Board of Canada, the Washington State Geographical Names Board, and the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in endorsement of the addition of the Salish Sea name.

All four jurisdictions worked together and followed long-standing protocols for the naming of trans-boundary features. This included consultation with local governments, B.C. First Nations and U.S. Tribes and interested parties neighbouring the Juan de Fuca Strait, Strait of Georgia and Puget Sound. One hundred and ninety-four consultation packages were distributed and the feedback was largely positive.

To see a map of the Salish Sea, go to <http://bit.ly/a1RbI3>.

To learn more about British Columbia's New Relationship with Aboriginal people, visit www.gov.bc.ca/arr.

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