



## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

For the **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING** of Council to be held on Monday, June 29, 2026, at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 424 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue West, Prince Rupert, B.C.

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

### **2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

#### **Recommendation:**

THAT the Agenda for the Committee of the Whole Meeting of Monday, June 29, 2026, be adopted as circulated.

### **3. PRESENTATIONS**

- I. Presentation from Nika Collison, Haida Gwaii Museum Re: Yahguudangang: To Pay Respect – Gwaii Haanas Repatriation Ceremonies Project;**
- II. Presentation from Rayne Dowell Re: Policy and procedure for responding to an item brought before City Council; Alternative water source solution.**

### **4. QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL**

### **5. ADJOURNMENT to Regular Council Meeting**

## **YAHGUUDANGANG TO PAY RESPECT: GWAII HAANAS REPATRIATION CEREMONIES**

Project Description for City of Prince Rupert

Prepared by Nika Collison, Haida Gwaii Museum

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### **OVERVIEW**

The goal of *Yahguudangang: To Pay Respect ~ Gwaii Haanas Repatriation Ceremonies* project is to return seven historic Haida poles removed from Haida Gwaii in the 1930s back to their villages of origin:

- **SGang Gwaay:** 4 House Frontal Poles, 1 Mortuary Pole
- **T'aanuu:** 1 House Frontal Pole
- **K'uuna:** 1 House Frontal Pole

The project is being led by the Haida Gwaii Museum in partnership with Gwaii Haanas/Parks Canada, and under the guidance and supervision of the Hereditary Chiefs Council of the Council of the Haida Nation, and the Skidegate Repatriation Committee (sub-committee of the greater Haida Repatriation Committee).

### ***History of the poles***

Six of the seven poles at the centre of this project were removed from Haida Gwaii in the 1930s to be stood in the City of Prince Rupert. (Note: a few other poles, not part of our current project, were also removed and stood in Prince Rupert).

We continue to research the full history of the six poles at the centre of our Gwaii Haanas repatriation project – their removal from Haida Gwaii, their journeys off-island, and their subsequent return. To date we understand from various anthropological records and publications; the Prince Rupert Daily News archives; and personal communications that:

- The 1930s pole removal and subsequent re-erection in Prince Rupert was led by the City of Prince Rupert and Indian Affairs, the goal being to create a tourism attraction and for city beautification.
- The poles were transported from Haida Gwaii to Prince Rupert by Canadian National Steamships and Canadian National Railway (CNR).
- The poles were re-erected with the help of CNR, with their representative, T.B. Campbell listed as the totem pole preservation engineer that would lead the renovation and preparation of the poles for erection.
- Circa 1965, some of the poles were re-created by William Jeffrey, of Tsimshian descent; they were erected in Prince Rupert. This pole recreation project was an

initiative of the Prince Rupert Chamber of Commerce and CNR, with the City of Prince Rupert providing the spaces where they continue to stand today.

- The original, historic Haida poles were taken down and moved to the Royal BC Museum (RBCM) in the mid-late 1960s/early 1970s.
- While it was reported in the Prince Rupert Daily News that these original poles had been “free gifts” to the City of Prince Rupert, they were actually removed under duress, or, as the Royal BC Museum (RBCM) stated in a 1971 letter to the “Haida Museum,” the poles were removed illegally.
- In 1976, these six poles, along with six others, were returned our Nation by the RBCM.
- The six poles at the centre of our Gwaii Haanas repatriation project were burned when the Haida Gwaii Museum’s storage facility caught fire c. 1976. The fire report said the conservation chemicals were not the cause of the fire, and that the fire spread rapidly due to the amount of creosote on the poles’ backsides, which was applied to adhere the poles to metal braces when they were re-erected in Prince Rupert. Thankfully, the burn is not that deep, and the poles are in good shape; the carving is still visible in the charcoal and even where the charcoal has eroded to the remaining wood of the pole.

The 7<sup>th</sup> pole is a Mortuary Pole removed during a BC Pole Preservation project in 1957 (not involving City of Prince Rupert). This pole was held at the Museum of Anthropology UBC until 2019, when UBC repatriated it back to our Nation.

### ***Returning the poles to their respective villages***

All seven poles have been safekept in various storage facilities and this summer, will be returned to their villages of origin! Two re-con trips have been completed to locate the original locations of the poles in their villages; to assess surroundings for safety and environmental considerations; and, to ensure smooth transport and placement of these poles back in their respective villages.

The five SGang Gwaay poles will require a multi-day trip, as SGang Gwaay is located at the south-west tip of our islands. The poles will be moved onto the MV Haida Spirit by hi-ab on May 18 and transported May 19-20 to SGang Gwaay. From there, they will be heli-slung into their place in the village. A ceremony for their return is planned for June 24.

The poles from K’uuna and T’aanuu are also remote, reachable only by water or air, but not as far away as SGang Gwaay. The poles from these villages will be boated down and returned to their locations on day trips in mid-June (dates still tba). The K’uuna pole can be

heli-slung into place, but the T'aanuu pole is too heavy to heli-sling as it is the largest, and still has the metal brace from when it stood in Prince Rupert adhered to its back. It will be floated ashore and winched and lifted into place by hand. Ceremonies marking these pole returns will occur on the days of their respective returns.