

## MEDIA RELEASE

December 10, 2018

### **Preservation and Prosperity the Goals of New Agreement** *Beecher Bay (Sc'ianew) First Nation, District of Metchosin and Pearson College UWC Sign MOU*

**Metchosin** – The Beecher Bay (Sc'ianew) First Nation, the District of Metchosin and Pearson College UWC today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will see the parties work together to develop a common vision for the lands near the College campus on Pedder Bay.

These areas, known as Mary Hill and the 74 acres of “Pearson Lands” on which the College is situated, are within the unceded traditional territories of the Beecher Bay First Nation. The First Nation is negotiating with the Government of Canada a modern land claim agreement under the British Columbia Treaty Process through the Te'mexw Treaty Association. As part of this process, Beecher Bay is identifying lands that may be included in its treaty settlement lands and is currently negotiating with Canada about the disposition of Mary Hill and its potential inclusion in Beecher Bay's treaty package.

Under the MOU, the parties will work collaboratively on land use planning based on their respective interests in the area. This includes maintaining green zones and protected areas while also providing the foundation for furthering Beecher Bay's economic interests. The specific locations and land uses are to be developed in a working group, which will report to their respective governing bodies.

Beecher Bay Chief Russ Chipps emphasized that the MOU demonstrates Beecher Bay's commitment to working with its neighbouring communities now and in the future. “This MOU is a significant milestone in our relationship with our neighbours, Metchosin and Pearson College UWC. It will lay the foundation for strategic planning based on community input and, importantly, reconciliation.”

Désirée McGraw, Pearson President and Head of College, echoed Chief Chipps' sentiments. “The goodwill and spirit of collaboration by all parties to this agreement demonstrates our mutual desire to honour the land on which we all live and, in our case, on which our students from across Canada and around the world learn. We believe actions like establishing this MOU

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are important lessons that show reconciliation with Canada's First Nations in action at a local - and a neighbourly -- level."

Metchosin Mayor John Ranns emphasized the District's commitment to this working relationship. "We have a continuing and vital interest in preserving the rural character of Metchosin. We are very pleased to work with our colleagues on the Beecher Bay First Nation and our neighbours at Pearson College UWC to help maintain not only the character, but also the natural environment of our community.

The Mary Hill lands are currently held by the Department of National Defense, which has declared the land surplus to its needs. The Pearson College Lands are owned by the College "for so long as the said lands and every part thereof are used for College purposes."

The text of the MOU and relevant maps will be available for viewing at the Beecher Bay First Nation Council Office, the District of Metchosin Office and at Pearson College UWC and will be posted to the respective organizational websites.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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