



Nisga'a Lisims Government



National
Museums
Scotland

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nisga'a pole returns to the Nass Valley after 94 years

The House of Ni'isjoohl memorial pole makes its way home from Scotland as the first totem pole repatriated from the United Kingdom

AUG. 1, 2023 (NASS VALLEY, CANADA/EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND) — The Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG) and National Museums Scotland (NMS) announce that the House of Ni'isjoohl memorial pole will return home to the Nass Valley this September, in a historic moment for reconciliation. The repatriation of the pole is the result of a year-long discussion and close collaboration between the Nisga'a Nation and the museum.

The term “repatriation” reframes the concept of “repatriation” by grounding the process of recovering belongings in Indigenous law — and is more closely in alignment with Nisga'a matrilineal society.

Following months of preparatory work, a delegation of family members and supporters from the Nisga'a Lisims Government will travel to the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh in late August to oversee the start of the return. A closed spiritual ceremony will be held on Aug. 28 to prepare the pole for its journey home. The delegation will include: Sim'oogit Ni'isjoohl (Chief Earl Stephens), Sigidimnak' Noxs Ts'aawit (Dr. Amy Parent), Shawna Mackay, Sim'oogit Duuk (Chief William Moore), Sim'oogit Laay' (Chief Bruce Haldane), Mmihlgum Maakskwhl Gakw (Pamela Brown), and NLG Representatives Nisga'a Nation President Eva Clayton - Noxs Wil Luugaamiks Hloks, Apdii Laxha (Andrew Robinson), Theresa Schober (Nisga'a Museum Curator and Director), Laax_Yee (Bobby Clark, Director of Communications and Intergovernmental Relations).

The 37-foot, hand-carved pole will be transported to Terrace, British Columbia, and then driven in a family procession to the Nisga'a Village of Laxgalts'ap in the Nass Valley where it will be housed at Hli Goothl Wilp-Adokshl Nisga'a - the Nisga'a Museum. A public arrival ceremony will be held at Hli Goothl Wilp-Adokshl Nisga'a on Sept. 29, with the pole still enclosed within its protective box with a Nisga'a feast to follow. The pole will be raised in the following days and available for the public to view later in October.

The memorial pole belongs to the House of Ni'isjoohl from the Ganada (frog clan) in the Nisga'a Nation. In 1860, House of Ni'isjoohl Matriarch Joanna Moody commissioned the pole to be carved by Nisga'a master carver Oyee to honour her family member Ts'awit, who was next in line to be chief. Ts'awit was also a warrior who died protecting his family and nation.

Quotes

Sim'oogit Ni'isjoohl, Chief Earl Stephens: "In Nisga'a culture, we believe that this pole is alive with the spirit of our ancestors. After nearly 100 years, we are finally able to bring our dear relative home to rest on Nisga'a lands. It means so much for us to have the Ni'isjoohl memorial pole returned to us, so that we can connect our family, nation and our future generations with our living history."

Sigidimnak' Noxs Ts'aawit, Dr. Amy Parent: "We are grateful to collectively tell a new story that turns the colonial gaze onto itself by acknowledging the complexities of our pole's theft, its intergenerational absence from our community and the persistence needed to ensure that justice for our ancestors prevails. This new story also highlights the responsible commitments made by many who have demonstrated to our global community that it is possible to do the right thing by returning our ancestors, cultural treasures and belongings back to us, their rightful relatives."

Eva Clayton, President of Nisga'a Lisims Government: "Our hearts are at peace knowing that we are changing history with a precedent-setting transformational story of collaboration with the people of Scotland and Canada. It is an honour for the Nisga'a Nation to be standing beside Wilp Ni'isjoohl at this historic moment in time. We are grateful to be alongside them, while having our treaty partners next to us to unwind some of the injustices to our history as Nisga'a people."

Dr. Chris Breward, Director of National Museums Scotland: "Since the transfer of the Memorial Pole was agreed last December, our collections care teams have been planning for the complex task of carefully lowering and transporting it in what is the first return of its type by a UK institution. We are pleased to have reached the point where that work is now underway, and we look forward to welcoming the Nisga'a delegation to the Museum in August before we bid the Pole farewell."

About Nisga'a Nation

Proud British Columbians and Canadians, Nisga'a citizens are responsible for building and maintaining our own institutions. The Nisga'a Nation is represented by Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG) — a modern, forward-thinking administration based on traditional culture and values. Nisga'a Government has the authority to pass laws on a broad range of matters. At the same time, Nisga'a lawmaking authority is concurrent with federal and provincial authority. Designed to assure democracy, transparency, and accountability, Nisga'a Government is comprised of NLG, the four Nisga'a Village Governments, and three Urban Locals.

About National Museums Scotland

National Museums Scotland is one of the leading museum groups in the UK and Europe and it looks after collections of national and international importance. The organisation provides loans, partnerships, research and training in Scotland and internationally. Our individual museums are the National Museum of Scotland, the National Museum of Flight, the National

Museum of Rural Life and the National War Museum. The National Museums Collection Centre in Edinburgh houses conservation and research facilities as well as collections not currently on display. National Museums Scotland is committed to revealing and sharing the full range of stories about imperial and colonial activities associated with its collections:

[Colonial histories and legacies in our museums \(nms.ac.uk\)](http://nms.ac.uk).

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Press kit and photos

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