



Rekindling the Fire

Five year Plan - Submitted to the Four Pillars Society



tla'amin
TLA'AMIN NATION

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This plan is dedicated to the Tla'amin Elders and Ancestors who, through everything that was taken, protected our belongings, our teachings, and our stories, and left them behind on purpose so that we could find them again.

It is dedicated, too, to the knowledge keepers and the team carrying ławšəs forward today, and to the children who will meet their ancestors in this house.





About us

The Tla'amin Nation is a self-governing treaty Nation located on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia, within our traditional territory known as ʔəms giʔe. Our people have lived on and cared for these lands that the Creator has provided for us since time immemorial, maintaining deep cultural and spiritual connections to the environment, waterways, and resources.

Today, the Tla'amin Nation is home to approximately 1,200 citizens, with many members residing in Tla'amin's main village, located near present-day qathet (formerly Powell River). Others live throughout the broader region and beyond, contributing to the Nation's growing sense of community and cultural resurgence.

As a self-governing Nation, we humbly exercise law-making authority over areas essential to our well-being, including community programming, economic development, and the revitalization of language and culture (ta-ow). Through initiatives like ʔayʔəʔuθəm language preservation, immersive education, and cultural gatherings, we ensure that our traditions thrive for future generations.

Tla'amin governance is guided by our constitution, rooted in self-determination and built upon the principles of unity, accountability, and respect for our citizens.



Our Vision

At ɬawšəs, Tla'amin will share where we come from, who we are, and where we are going. We will care for the belongings, knowledge, and stories our ancestors left behind on purpose, and bring them to life to inspire future generations.





Message from the hegus

ṭawšəs means left behind on purpose

The Dog Children is a central story for Tla'amin people. In it, a young woman defies Tla'amin law and is separated from her community. Her čičyə (grandmother), risking the ire of her people, takes pity on the young woman and buries an ember in a clam shell so that her granddaughter will have the gift of fire.

ṭawšəs means left behind on purpose, and that's exactly what čičyə did to ensure her granddaughters survival.

Eventually, a dog leads the young woman to the ember hidden in a clam shell beneath the sand, and when she blows on it and wakes the fire, she restores herself in the eyes of her people. From her come the Tla'amin people of today. It was the čičyə's act of love, risk, and sacrifice that kept her granddaughter alive. We owe this ancestor our very existence.

When our grandparents were taken to residential school, they did what the čičyə did.

They protected what was precious and they hid it away for us. They put the ember in the clamshell and left it behind on purpose: our cultural belongings, our taʔaw (teachings), our language, everything that makes us who we are.

ṭawšəs, our museum, is that clamshell. It is the house where we keep what was left behind on purpose. This plan, *Rekindling the Fire*, illustrates how we will blow on the ember of what remains, sparking new life, interpretation and ultimately creation.

We are racing against time to do this work, and we are full of hope. I invite you to walk alongside us, and to help us rekindle a fire that was nearly lost.

Hegus John Hackett



"Its like welcoming back our long lost family members." - Culture and Heritage House Post Brandon Louie



Message from Housepost

ʔaʔečxʷot?

As a portfolio holder for Tla'amin culture and heritage, it is an honour to share this plan with you. For generations, many of our Tla'amin belongings and treasures have lived far from home, held in other museums and private hands. Some, thousands of miles from home.

We are now preparing to open ɬawšəs to bring our treasures home. Its like welcoming back our long lost families members. I look forward to the day where our čičøy can stand in front of a belonging made by their own great-grandparent, hear the story in ʔayʔaʔuθəm, and understand their long and proud inheritance.

Tla'amin's Comprehensive Plan directs us as leadership to carry our culture and language through everything we do, and ɬawšəs is one of the strongest ways we will keep that promise.

This plan gives us the structure to do it well: to care for our belongings properly, to tell our stories with pride, and to do it together with our Sister Nations.

Thank you for being part of this work with us.

Brandon Louie
Tla'amin Executive Councillor



"Our culture is a living culture. Far from a cabinet of curiosities, ɬawšəs will be a place to tell not only our history but who we are today and where we are going next. I'm honoured and humbled to share our plans for setting up ɬawšəs, our future house of treasures."

- Tla'amin ɬawšəs Collections Manager Sosan Blaney







Introduction

ławšəs means left behind on purpose, and it is the name of the new Tla'amin museum.

Ever since Tla'amin masks, regalia, drums, and rattles were collected and burned in front of the Roman Catholic Church in the late 1800's, Tla'amin has been fighting to collect and preserve its material culture and heritage.

Much of the foundation is already laid. In the planning phase, Tla'amin built and opened Our House ʔəms ʔayə cultural centre and the Traditional Food Processing facility, developed Standard Operating Procedures, completed planning for food and culture and hired the core team: an ʔəms ʔayə Manager, a Traditional Food Processing Coordinator, and a Museum Curator.

hohoje is the first phase of the Tla'amin service model. It means getting ready to do something. In October 2025, as part of the museum's hohoje, a Tla'amin team visited four coastal museums, U'mista in Alert Bay, the Museum at Campbell River, the Cumberland Museum and Archives, and the Courtenay and District Museum, and much of what they learned shapes this plan.

Our five year plan - Rekindling the Fire sets out five goals to guide the development and opening of ławšəs:

1. Build and care for the collection.
2. Tell our story through exhibits.
3. Training to care for our belongings
4. Embed the museum in community and daily life.
5. Collaborate with Sister Nations and coastal museums.

Together, these goals rekindle the fire and keep it burning for generations to come.



Goal 1: Build and Care for the Collection

The collection is the foundation of ʔawšəs. Our treasures hold knowledge of how they were made and used, and the people they belonged to. Before the museum can tell its stories well, it has to know what it holds and care for it properly. Collections only ever grow, and accepting a belonging is far easier than letting one go, so the work begins with a clear mandate and disciplined practice that set the team up for success.

a) Set the museum's mandate and collections policies

ʔawšəs will adopt a clear mandate and guiding principles that say what belongs in this museum and what does not, tied to the Nation's vision. We will put in place a collections management policy and acquisition, chance find, and repatriation policies, and we will educate all staff on them. Only specific people will accept belongings into the collection, and never at the front desk of any building. This protects both the belongings and the people who care for them.

b) Secure display cases, supplies, and materials

In addition to display cabinets, proper display and storage materials are a core requirement. Display cases with acrylic glazing that open easily for exhibit changeover, and house serviceable lighting for repair or replacement. Storage and conservation supplies include acid-free, lignin-free boxes and tissue, inert foam to line shelves and trolleys, rolled supports for textiles that should not be folded, and mount-making and framing materials. We will procure these to museum standard at startup and maintain replenishment as the collection grows, protecting holdings and standardizing handling.

c) Procure collections software and catalogue the collection

We will scope and purchase collections management software, with Provisio Rediscovery Elements identified as the most promising option, and begin inputting our existing collection. Every belonging will be catalogued on paper and digitally through one meticulous system, with any change to the process documented as well. This is the heart of Action 1.14 in the Nation's operational plan, and it makes the collection accessible and accountable for the years ahead.

d) Build proper storage

Storage was the single greatest challenge named by every museum visited. Some belongings, like baskets and button blankets, need purpose-built conditions: humidity and temperature control, acid-free boxes and tissue, careful placement, and a separate fire suppression system rather than sprinklers. We will install proper shelving and archival storage, label everything consistently, and secure off-site secondary storage for less delicate items.

Measurement

- Mandate, guiding principles, and collections policies adopted and staff trained on them.
- Share of the existing collection catalogued, on paper and digitally, in a single system.
- Climate-controlled primary storage built to standard, with secondary off-site storage secured.
- Display cases, archival supplies, and materials in place and replenished as the collection grows.
- Number of belongings accessioned, catalogued, and stabilized for long-term care.



Goal 2: Tell our Story through exhibits.

Belongings are the anchor, and programming and storytelling are how the stories around them come to life. ławšəs has a small footprint, so every part of the space has to earn its place and carry meaning. We will tell our story inside the museum and well beyond its walls, and ʔayʔajuθəm will run through all of it, in every label, panel, and program.

a) Develop permanent and rotating exhibits

Confirming the content of the permanent exhibit and designing the museum space around it is step 1. Interactive elements like audio, video, touchable pieces, will add depth and save space. Alongside a permanent exhibit, temporary exhibits in adjacent Tla'amin and non-Tla'amin spaces will run for six to eighteen months and feature contemporary work and community members, including pieces made at weekly craft nights and through other Tla'amin programs. Everything will follow accessibility guidance: plain language written for a wide range of readers, subtitles and print versions, plexiglass rather than glass, and clean, simple cases that let the belongings be seen.

b) Build virtual exhibits to reach members living off-lands

Many Tla'amin citizens live away from tišosəm, and a virtual exhibit lets us reach them and expand the museum without needing more floor space. Tla'amin draws inspiration from the Cumberland Museum's virtual exhibit. This is significant work, well suited to a standalone project supported by a research grant or a partnership with a university.

c) Extend the story onto the land

The deepest story ławšəs tells is the connection between Tla'amin people and Tla'amin territory, and that story belongs partly outdoors. We will develop land-based exhibits, beginning with the outdoor space around the museum, with room for petroglyph rocks, a plant garden, and a storytelling space. Over time this can grow into a self-guided walking tour through tišosəm, with trails, waterfront features, and ʔayʔajuθəm place names, supported by a small map and audio.

Measurement

- Permanent exhibit installed and opened to the public.
- Number of temporary exhibits mounted and rotated, and community pieces featured.
- Virtual exhibit launched, with reach measured among members living off-lands.
- Land-based exhibit and walking tour established, with ʔayʔajuθəm place names throughout.
- ʔayʔajuθəm present in all exhibit text.



Goal 3: Training and Certification to care for our belongings

The planning phase put a Museum Curator and an ʔams ʔaye Manager in place. Now we build their skills and grow the circle around them, creating rewarding cultural work for Tla'amin people and making sure the knowledge to run ʔawšas lives in the community for the long term.

a) Train staff in collections care, conservation, and curation

Caring for belongings well takes specific knowledge, from handling and storage to cataloguing and conservation. We will invest in training including the Canadian Conservation Institute, the BC Museums Association, the Archives Association of BC, the University of Victoria's cultural resource management courses, and the Canadian Museums Association. Every museum Tla'amin has contacted was generous with its time and offered to stay in touch, and we will lean on that mentorship as our team grows.

b) Become a recognized museum and cultural heritage repository

Formal recognition is what allows ʔawšas to hold belongings of cultural and historical importance and to bring more of them home. We will work toward designation as an official museum and cultural heritage repository, including federal designation under the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, which lets a museum receive and care for certified cultural property. That status depends on meeting recognized national standards for storage, environmental control, security, and collections care, the same standards this plan is built to reach, and on upholding them year after year. Alongside standing with the BC Museums Association and the Canadian Museums Association, achieving and maintaining this designation tells other institutions, and our own people, that belongings entrusted to ʔawšas will be cared for properly, and it strengthens our position in repatriating Tla'amin belongings held elsewhere.

b) Build a dedicated volunteer base

Dedicated, long-term volunteers bring invaluable expertise and labour, especially when they hold ownership over a specific part of the museum's work. We will recruit strategically for committed volunteers rather than putting out open calls, since short-term and inexperienced help can take more work than it gives, and we will support our volunteers with the training.

Measurement

- Training completed and certifications earned by museum staff.
- Staff retention in ʔawšas roles over the life of the plan.
- Recognized museum and cultural heritage repository designation achieved and maintained to standard.
- Number of long-term volunteers engaged and hours contributed.
- Active mentorship relationships with partner museums.



Goal 4: Embed the Museum in Community and Daily Life

The first and most important job of ławšas is to make people feel welcome, included, and engaged. If they do not, they will not learn and they will not come back. Programming and engagement are how the belongings' stories come alive, and they are also how the museum carries wellness and ta-ow into everyday life.

a) Deliver education and programming, with a focus on children and youth.

Reaching children and youth early instills a lifelong connection to ta-ow. We will build age-appropriate tours and programming for every grade and for adults, the more interactive the better, and build relationships with schools and teachers, including pre-visit learning guides. Feature talks and events will bring novelty and draw the community back into the space.

b) Centre wellness and ta-ow in the space

Wellness is restored through reconnection to culture, traditions, and land. ławšas sits alongside the Traditional Food Processing facility and the Nation's food work, and it tells the story of traditional foods and healthful eating. Through weekly craft nights, gatherings, and time on the land, the museum is a place where ta-ow is practised, not just displayed, and where reconnecting to who we are is itself a kind of healing.

c) Welcome the community and seek its guidance

We will meet accessibility guidance and be transparent about any barriers, so everyone knows they are welcome. The Cultural Committee will guide what is shown and how. We will seek input through a guestbook, an ask-us-anything board, a suggestion box, and a feedback survey with a QR code, available in the space and online, and we will share what is happening through an events board, pamphlets, the website, and social media.

Measurement

- Visitors welcomed, and school and community groups hosted
- Participation in programs, feature talks, and events.
- Craft night participation and the number of community pieces exhibited.
- Cultural Committee reviews held and community feedback collected and acted on.



Goal 5: Collaborate with Sister Nations and Coastal Museums

Tla'amin shares a common culture and language with our Sister Nations, Xwémalhkwu (Homalco), Klahoose, and K'ómoks, we are one people connected through land, laws and kinship. Collaboration on material culture and heritage through ławšəs will be often and intentional. We will also advance partnerships and relationships with other museums and academic institutions to share policies, and mentorship.

a) Work with Sister Nations on shared heritage and storytelling

By sharing belongings stories, place names, and teaching, we strengthen heritage work across all of our communities and avoid duplicating effort. Shared and travelling exhibits, and storytelling tied to the 13 Moons, are natural ways to honour what we hold in common while respecting the unique strengths of each Nation. Regular gatherings, in person and virtual, will keep the momentum.

b) Sustain partnerships with coastal museums and post-secondary institutions

We will keep the doors open with U'mista, the Museum at Campbell River, the Cumberland Museum and Archives, and the Courtenay and District Museum, drawing on their policies, supplies, and mentorship. University partnerships can support the virtual exhibit and other research-based projects. Over time, flexible funding from educational programming, partnerships, and grant portals can help sustain ławšəs the way it sustains the museums we visited.

Measurement

- Collaborative meetings and resource exchanges with Sister Nations.
- Joint or travelling exhibits developed and shared.
- Active partnerships with coastal museums and post-secondary institutions.
- Additional flexible funding secured to sustain operations.



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