

Witsuwit'en Language and Culture Society
Constitution & Bylaws
(Last updated: November 2016)

1. The name of the society is:

Witsuwit'en Language and Culture Society

2. The purposes of the society are:

1. To support and encourage the revitalization of the Witsuwit'en language and culture.
 - a) To ensure Witsuwit'en peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop our cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of our sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. We also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop our intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.
 - b) To create fluent Witsuwit'en language speakers and writers.
 - c) To undertake Nation-based, high-quality research and education projects and develop information management and record keeping systems, which support the advancement of the Witsuwit'en language and culture that is accessible and representative of all clan and house members.
 - d) To support the integration, implementation, and understanding of Witsuwit'en language and culture within the Witsuwit'en traditional territories and amongst the non-Witsuwit'en population that lives within and visits the territories.
 - e) To be representative of all five clans of the Witsuwit'en peoples.
 - f) To support Witsuwit'en peoples outside of the territories to strengthen and maintain their connections to Witsuwit'en language and culture.
 - g) To focus on the integration of language policies, programs and curriculums with public schools and Witsuwit'en operated schools within the territory and advocate for the integration of language and cultural programs at a provincial level.
 - h) To standardize and implement the Distinctly Witsuwit'en orthography.
 - i) To support and implement Witsuwit'en Hereditary law, customs, and beliefs into all programs and services.
 - j) To create and support the development of physical infrastructure that supports the celebration of Witsuwit'en language and culture.
 - k) To fundraise and raise revenue to support the purposes of the society.
2. The society shall be carried on exclusively for charitable purposes, without purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other accretions to the organization shall be used solely to promote its objectives, and this clause shall not be altered.
3. In the event of dissolution of the organization, all its remaining assets, after payment of liabilities, shall be distributed to one or more recognizable charitable organization in Canada, and this clause shall not be altered

Bylaws of the Witsuwit'en Language and Culture Society

Part 1 — Interpretation

1 (1) In these bylaws, unless the context otherwise requires:

"**directors**" means the directors of the society for the time being;

"**Society Act**" means the *Society Act of British Columbia* from time to time in force and all amendments to it;

"**registered address**" of a member means the member's address as recorded in the register of members.

(2) The definitions in the *Society Act* on the date these bylaws become effective apply to these bylaws.

2 Words importing the singular include the plural and vice versa, and words importing a male person include a female person and a corporation.

Part 2 — Membership

3 The members of the society are the applicants for incorporation of the society, and those persons who subsequently become members, in accordance with these bylaws and, in either case, have not ceased to be members.

4 A person may apply to the directors for membership in the society and on acceptance by the directors is a member.

5 Every member must uphold the constitution and comply with these bylaws.

6 The amount of the first annual membership dues must be determined by the directors and after that the annual membership dues must be determined at the annual general meeting of the society.

7 A person ceases to be a member of the society

- (a) by delivering his or her resignation in writing to the secretary of the society or by mailing or delivering it to the address of the society,
- (b) on his or her death or, in the case of a corporation, on dissolution,
- (c) on being expelled, or
- (d) on having been a member not in good standing for 12 consecutive months.

- 8 (1) A member may be expelled by a special resolution of the members passed at a general meeting.
- (2) The notice of special resolution for expulsion must be accompanied by a brief statement of the reasons for the proposed expulsion.
- (3) The person who is the subject of the proposed resolution for expulsion must be given an opportunity to be heard at the general meeting before the special resolution is put to a vote.
- 9 All members are in good standing except a member who has failed to pay his or her current annual membership fee, or any other subscription or debt due and owing by the member to the society, and the member is not in good standing so long as the debt remains unpaid.

Part 3 — Meetings of Members

- 10 General meetings of the society must be held at the time and place, in accordance with the *Society Act*, that the directors decide.
- 11 Every general meeting, other than an annual general meeting, is an extraordinary general meeting.
- 12 The directors may, when they think fit, convene an extraordinary general meeting.
- 13 (1) Notice of a general meeting must specify the place, day and hour of the meeting, and, in case of special business, the general nature of that business.
- (2) The accidental omission to give notice of a meeting to, or the non-receipt of a notice by, any of the members entitled to receive notice does not invalidate proceedings at that meeting.
- 14 The first annual general meeting of the society must be held not more than 15 months after the date of incorporation and after that an annual general meeting must be held at least once in every calendar year and not more than 15 months after the holding of the last preceding annual general meeting.

Part 4 — Proceedings at General Meetings

- 15 Special business is
 - (ε) all business at an extraordinary general meeting except the adoption of rules of order, and
 - (t) all business conducted at an annual general meeting, except the following:
 - (i) the adoption of rules of order;
 - (ii) the consideration of the financial statements;
 - (iii) the report of the directors;
 - (iv) the report of the auditor, if any;

- (v) the election of directors;
 - (vi) the appointment of the auditor, if required;
 - (vii) the other business that, under these bylaws, ought to be conducted at an annual general meeting, or business that is brought under consideration by the report of the directors issued with the notice convening the meeting.
- 16 (1) Business, other than the election of a chair and the adjournment or termination of the meeting, must not be conducted at a general meeting at a time when a quorum is not present.
- (2) If at any time during a general meeting there ceases to be a quorum present, business then in progress must be suspended until there is a quorum present or until the meeting is adjourned or terminated.
- (3) A quorum is 3 members present or a greater number that the members may determine at a general meeting.
- 17 If within 30 minutes from the time appointed for a general meeting a quorum is not present, the meeting, if convened on the requisition of members, must be terminated, but in any other case, it must stand adjourned to the same day in the next week, at the same time and place, and if, at the adjourned meeting, a quorum is not present within 30 minutes from the time appointed for the meeting, the members present constitute a quorum.
- 18 Subject to bylaw 19, the president of the society, the vice president or, in the absence of both, one of the other directors present, must preside as chair of a general meeting.
- 19 If at a general meeting
- (a) there is no president, vice president or other director present within 15 minutes after the time appointed for holding the meeting, or
 - (b) the president and all the other directors present are unwilling to act as the chair,
- the members present must choose one of their number to be the chair.
- 20 (1) A general meeting may be adjourned from time to time and from place to place, but business must not be conducted at an adjourned meeting other than the business left unfinished at the meeting from which the adjournment took place.
- (2) When a meeting is adjourned for 5 days or more, notice of the adjourned meeting must be given as in the case of the original meeting.
- (3) Except as provided in this bylaw, it is not necessary to give notice of an adjournment or of the business to be conducted at an adjourned general meeting.

- 21 (1) A resolution proposed at a meeting need not be seconded, and the chair of a meeting may move or propose a resolution.
- (2) In the case of a tie vote, the chair does not have a casting or second vote in addition to the vote to which he or she may be entitled as a member, and the proposed resolution does not pass.
- 22 (1) A member in good standing present at a meeting of members is entitled to one vote.
- (2) Voting is by show of hands.
- (3) Voting by proxy is not permitted.
- 23 A corporate member may vote by its authorized representative, who is entitled to speak and vote, and in all other respects exercise the rights of a member, and that representative must be considered as a member for all purposes with respect to a meeting of the society.

Part 5 — Directors and Officers

- 24 (1) The directors may exercise all the powers and do all the acts and things that the society may exercise and do, and that are not by these bylaws or by statute or otherwise lawfully directed or required to be exercised or done by the society in a general meeting, but subject, nevertheless, to
- (a) all laws affecting the society,
 - (b) these bylaws, and
 - (c) rules, not being inconsistent with these bylaws, that are made from time to time by the society in a general meeting.
 - (d) to be consistent with the hereditary laws, customs, and constitution of the Witsuwit'en and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- (2) A rule, made by the society in a general meeting, does not invalidate a prior act of the directors that would have been valid if that rule had not been made.
- 25 (1) The president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, off-yintah representative, elder representative, and youth representative.
- (2) The number of directors must be 5 or a greater number determined from time to time at a general meeting.
- (3) The Executive (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary) should be representative of at least three of the five clans of the Witsuwit'en Peoples. The board shall be representative of all five Witsuwit'en clans.
- 26 (1) The directors must retire from office at each annual general meeting when their successors are elected.
- (2) Separate elections must be held for each office to be filled.

- (3) An election may be by acclamation, otherwise it must be by ballot.
- (4) If a successor is not elected, the person previously elected or appointed continues to hold office.

- 27 (1) The directors may at any time and from time to time appoint a member as a director to fill a vacancy in the directors.
- (2) A director so appointed holds office only until the conclusion of the next annual general meeting of the society, but is eligible for re-election at the meeting.
- 28 (1) If a director resigns his or her office or otherwise ceases to hold office, the remaining directors must appoint a member to take the place of the former director.
- (2) An act or proceeding of the directors is not invalid merely because there are less than the prescribed number of directors in office.
- 29 The members may, by special resolution, remove a director, before the expiration of his or her term of office, and may elect a successor to complete the term of office.
- 30 A director must not be remunerated for being or acting as a director but a director must be reimbursed for all expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by the director while engaged in the affairs of the society.

Part 6 — Proceedings of Directors

- 31 (1) The directors may meet at the places they think fit to conduct business, adjourn and otherwise regulate their meetings and proceedings, as they see fit.
- (2) The directors may from time to time set the quorum necessary to conduct business, and unless so set the quorum is a majority of the directors then in office.
- (3) The president is the chair of all meetings of the directors, but if at a meeting the president is not present within 30 minutes after the time appointed for holding the meeting, the vice president must act as chair, but if neither is present the directors present may choose one of their number to be the chair at that meeting.
- (4) A director may at any time, and the secretary, on the request of a director, must, convene a meeting of the directors.
- (5) A director may attend meetings and vote by teleconference or videoconference when not able to attend in person.
- (6) A director (appointer) may by notice of writing received by the society appoint any person (appointee) who is qualified to act as a director to be his or her alternate to act in his or her place at meetings of the directors or committees of the directors at which the appointer is not present unless (in the case of an appointee who is not a director) the directors have reasonably disapproved the appointment of such person as an alternate director and have given notice to that effect to his or her appointer within a reasonable time after the notice of appointment is received by the society.
- (i) every alternate director so appointed is entitled to notice of meetings of the directors and of committees of the directors of which his or her appointer is a member and to attend and vote as a director at any such meetings at which his or her appointer is not present.

- (ii) Every alternate director, if authorized by the notice appointing him or her, may sign in place of his or her appointor any resolutions to be consented to in writing.
 - (iii) Every alternate director is deemed not to be an agent of his or her appointer.
 - (iv) An appointer may at any time, by notice in writing received by the Society, revoke the appointment of an alternate director appointed by him or her.
 - (v) The appointment of an alternate director ceases when:
 - (a) his or her appointer ceases to be a director and is not promptly re-elected or re-appointed;
 - (b) the alternate director dies;
 - (c) the alternate director resigns as an alternate director by notice in writing provided to the Society or a lawyer for the Society
 - (d) the alternate director ceases to be qualified to act as a director; or;
 - (e) his or her appointer revokes the appointment of the alternate director.
- (1) The directors may delegate any, but not all, of their powers to committees consisting of the director or directors as they think fit.
- (2) A committee so formed in the exercise of the powers so delegated must conform to any rules imposed on it by the directors, and must report every act or thing done in exercise of those powers to the earliest meeting of the directors held after the act or thing has been done.
- 33 A committee must elect a chair of its meetings, but if no chair is elected, or if at a meeting the chair is not present within 30 minutes after the time appointed for holding the meeting, the directors present who are members of the committee must choose one of their number to be the chair of the meeting.
- 34 The members of a committee may meet and adjourn as they think proper.
- 35 For a first meeting of directors held immediately following the appointment or election of a director or directors at an annual or other general meeting of members, or for a meeting of

the directors at which a director is appointed to fill a vacancy in the directors, it is not necessary to give notice of the meeting to the newly elected or appointed director or directors for the meeting to be constituted, if a quorum of the directors is present.

36 A director who may be absent temporarily from British Columbia may send or deliver to the address of the society a waiver of notice, which may be by letter, telegram, telex or cable, of any meeting of the directors and may at any time withdraw the waiver, and until the waiver is withdrawn,

- (a) a notice of meeting of directors is not required to be sent to that director, and
- (b) any and all meetings of the directors of the society, notice of which has not been given to that director, if a quorum of the directors is present, are valid and effective.

37 (1) Questions arising at a meeting of the directors and committee of directors must be decided by consensus, whereas consensus means:

- (a) a full debate of the matter at issue at which all Directors and/or members who wish to do so have the opportunity to speak on the manner.
 - (b) Further discussion to accommodate divergent opinions and interests regarding the matter;
 - (c) After completion of the activities described in (a) and (b), a canvassing of the position of all Witsuwit'en who choose to participate in the decision regarding the matter at issue (all the Witsuwit'en, where it is a decision of membership) and all of the Directors (where it is a decision of the Directors) so that the members of Directors can reach a decision as a whole on the matter;
 - (d) Upon the conclusion of the activity described in (c), the Directors (where it is a Director's decision) and the membership (where it is a membership decision) shall abide by the decision that has been arrived at through the consensus process.
- (2) In the case of a tie vote, the chair does not have a second or casting vote.

(3) All efforts to achieve consensus prior to voting should be made including a roundtable discussion where all directors have a chance to make an informed decision. Once everyone has been fully informed a vote will take place.

38 A resolution proposed at a meeting of directors or committee of directors need not be seconded, and the chair of a meeting may move or propose a resolution.

39 A resolution in writing, signed by all the directors and placed with the minutes of the directors, is as valid and effective as if regularly passed at a meeting of directors.

Part 7 — Duties of Officers

40 (1) The president presides at all meetings of the society and of the directors.

(2) The president is the chief executive officer of the society and must supervise the other officers in the execution of their duties.

- (3) The president should be a descendant of one of the five Witsuwit'en clans.
- 41 The vice president must carry out the duties of the president during the president's absence.
- (1) The vice president should be a descendant of one of the five Witsuwit'en clans.
- 42 The secretary must do the following:
- (a) conduct the correspondence of the society;
 - (b) issue notices of meetings of the society and directors;
 - (c) keep minutes of all meetings of the society and directors;
 - (d) have custody of all records and documents of the society except those required to be kept by the treasurer;
 - (e) have custody of the common seal of the society;
 - (f) maintain the register of members.
- (g) the vice president should be a descendant of one of the five Witsuwit'en clans.

43 The treasurer must

- (a) keep the financial records, including books of account, necessary to comply with the *Society Act*, and
 - (b) render financial statements to the directors, members and others when required.
- (C) The treasurer should be a descendant of one of the five Witsuwit'en clans.

- 44 (1) The offices of secretary and treasurer may be held by one person who is to be known as the secretary treasurer.
- (2) If a secretary treasurer holds office, the total number of directors must not be less than 5 or the greater number that may have been determined under bylaw 25 (2).
- (3) The secretary a
- 45 In the absence of the secretary from a meeting, the directors must appoint another person to act as secretary at the meeting.
- (1) The Off-Yintah, Elder, and Youth representative positions will represent their respective focus groups to encourage participation and communications to advocate their meaningful involvement in the society.

Part 8 — Seal

- 46 The directors may provide a common seal for the society and may destroy a seal and substitute a new seal in its place.
- 47 The common seal must be affixed only when authorized by a resolution of the directors and then only in the presence of the persons specified in the resolution, or if no persons are specified, in the presence of the president and secretary or president and secretary treasurer.

Part 9 — Borrowing

- 48 In order to carry out the purposes of the society the directors may, on behalf of and in the name of the society, raise or secure the payment or repayment of money in the manner they decide, and, in particular but without limiting that power, by the issue of debentures.
- 49 A debenture must not be issued without the authorization of a special resolution.
- 50 The members may, by special resolution, restrict the borrowing powers of the directors, but a restriction imposed expires at the next annual general meeting.

Part 10 — Auditor

- 51 This Part applies only if the society is required or has resolved to have an auditor.
- 52 The first auditor must be appointed by the directors who must also fill all vacancies occurring in the office of auditor.
- 53 At each annual general meeting the society must appoint an auditor to hold office until the auditor is re-elected or a successor is elected at the next annual general meeting.
- 54 An auditor may be removed by ordinary resolution.

- 55 An auditor must be promptly informed in writing of the auditor's appointment or removal.
- 56 A director or employee of the society must not be its auditor.
- 57 The auditor may attend general meetings.

Part 11 — Notices to Members

58 A notice may be given to a member, either personally, by email, or mail to a member's registered address.

59 A notice sent by mail is deemed to have been given on the second day following the day on which the notice is posted, and in proving that notice has been given, it is sufficient to prove the notice was properly addressed and put in a Canadian post office receptacle.

60 (1) Notice of a general meeting must be given to

(a) every member shown on the register of members on the day notice is given, and

(b) the auditor, if Part 10 applies.

(2) No other person is entitled to receive a notice of a general meeting.

Part 12 — Bylaws

61 On being admitted to membership, each member is entitled to, and the society must give the member without charge, a copy of the constitution and bylaws of the society.

62 These bylaws must not be altered or added to except by special resolution.

