

## THE TALKING STICK

The Talking Stick on display in the Legislative Chamber unites First Nations' culture with parliamentary traditions. Carved by the late James Delorme of the Songhees First Nation, it is a symbolic reminder of the need for respectful dialogue in the ongoing process of reconciliation.



### A NEW TRADITION

The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia resides on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen people, today known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations. The Talking Stick is at the centre of a new tradition at the Legislative Assembly that unites First Nations' culture with parliamentary traditions.

The journey of the Talking Stick began in July 2010 when the late Chief Robert Sam of the Songhees First Nation gifted the Talking Stick to the Honourable Steven Point, then-Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, to commemorate the naming of the Salish Sea. At a dinner with First Nations leaders, the Honourable Steven Point presented the Talking Stick to his successor, the Honourable Judith Guichon, requesting that it be given to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and put on display in the Legislative Chamber.

A special blessing ceremony in May 2016 marked the presentation of the Talking Stick to the Honourable Linda Reid, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and its placement in the Legislative Chamber. The blessing was led by Elder Elmer George and Elder Mary Ann Thomas from the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations who said a prayer in the traditional Lekwungen language. Several South Island First Nations Chiefs including Chief Ron Sam of the Songhees First Nation, Chief Gord Planes of the T'Sou-ke First Nation, and Chief Jeff Jones of the Pacheedaht First Nation joined the Elders and all Members on the floor of the Chamber to participate in this historic blessing and presentation ceremony.

The Talking Stick remains on display in the Chamber to serve as a reminder that First Nations and reconciliation should be a consideration in all debates and discussions in the Legislative Assembly.

### THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF TALKING STICKS

Talking Sticks play a significant role in the traditions and ceremonies of many Indigenous peoples.

On the west coast of British Columbia, Talking Sticks are traditionally used during potlatch ceremonies. While the history and design of each Talking Stick is unique, they often take the form of a carved wooden staff that resembles a small totem pole.

Talking Sticks are a powerful symbol and communication tool used to foster an atmosphere of active listening and respect. Only the bearer of the Talking Stick has the right to speak, and those present must listen quietly to what is being said. The Talking Stick is then passed on to other speakers in turn.

The Lieutenant Governor, Speaker, Members of the Executive Council and Official Opposition, South Island First Nation Leaders, Elders and guests pictured with the Talking Stick on May 11, 2016.

