

***talalsámkin siyám Chief* Bill Williams** is a Hereditary Chief of Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Nation, a Knowledge Keeper, and a valued member of the Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society’s Our Circle is Strong/ Elders and Cultural Program. A former elected band manager, council member, and negotiator for Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Nation, Chief Williams brings more than 40 years of political experience and a lifetime of cultural knowledge to this position. His work with VAHS is grounded in his conviction that passing on traditional, cultural knowledge and spiritual values is critical to Indigenous wellness. At VAHS, he provides one-on-one support and leads in ceremony and cultural activities.

A highly skilled negotiator with a background in business administration and marketing, Chief Williams is renowned for his ability to balance business and conservation efforts for First Nations. For more than four decades, he has helped craft agreements that ensure the protection of land within Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Nation’s traditional territory, including Wild Spirit Places, village, and cultural sites, for future generations. Chief Williams work was key in establishing Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Nation’s traditional Territory and developing the nation’s Strategic Land Use Plan, the first Indigenous land use plan to be accepted by a Canadian government.

Over a 10-year period starting in the early 1990s, he brought thousands of people onto Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Nation’s traditional territory to learn about the land and its integral role in Indigenous wellbeing. In 2005, he was awarded the Eugene Rogers Award for Leading Conservation Efforts by Western Canada Wilderness Committee. That same year, *Business in Vancouver* named him one of the “10 Leaders of Big Business in British Columbia.” He has also twice been recognized by the Provincial Government Premier’s Awards for leading negotiating deals that benefited his community.

President of the Provincial Forest Board for Native Communities, Chief Williams was formerly the president of Northwest Squamish Forestry and the Four Host First Nations Society, the body that worked to ensure appropriate representation, participation, and compensation for the four First Nations on whose land the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games were held. As part of this work, which included negotiating historic land deals, he was instrumental in the development of the world-class Sk̲wx̲wú7mesh Lil̓wat7úl Cultural Centre in Whistler.

He is also co-author of the book *Picturing Transformation*, a remarkable story of how a First Nations chief, an artist and a mountaineer evolved a new form of environmental and cultural activism and saved 50,000 hectares of forest in the process.

The father of two adult sons, Chief Williams lives on Squamish Nation traditional territory in West Vancouver. He continues to consult in the area of Coast Salish Rights & Title Negotiation. He is currently assisting with an opera about the lifelong friendship between Group of Seven painter Emily Carr and his great aunt Sophie Frank.

Chief Williams is currently the only Coast Salish member of the Our Circle is Strong team.

For More Information

For more information, or to arrange an interview with Chief Bill Williams, please contact:

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