

Christ Church, Alert Bay

Prepared by Jesse Robertson (August 7, 2023; updated April 24, 2024)

Property Acquisition

Address	103 Front Street, Alert Bay, BC
Legal description	LOT C, SECTION 4, CORMORANT ISLAND, RUPERT DISTRICT, PLAN VIP54028
First private landholder	Church Missionary Society priest applies to purchase land around 1880; receives Crown Grant in 1884.
Diocesan Acquisition	Diocese purchases for nominal price of \$1.00 in 1922.

Narrative Overview

Christ Church is located in 'Yalis (Alert Bay, Cormorant Island) off the northeastern coast of Vancouver Island in the territory of the 'N̄amgis Nation (Figure 1). Reverend Alfred James Hall applied to purchase the land around 1880 and received a Crown Grant for 140 acres in 1884.¹ In 1889, Rev. Hall conveyed the property to the Bishop of Caledonia in the Bishop's capacity as Chairman of the Board of the Church Missionary Society in British Columbia (CMS).² The Bishop of Caledonia and CMS sold a few small lots, and conveyed the remaining 130 acres to the Diocese of BC in 1922 for the nominal cost of \$1.00, on trust that the land be used to support "Mission work among native Indians."³

The Diocese of BC subdivided and sold some of the land beginning in the 1930s.⁴ In 1984, the Diocese signed a letter of intent to transfer most of the remaining land to the Nimpkish Band Council (known today as 'N̄amgis Nation) while retaining sufficient land for Christ Church to continue its ministry.⁵ The land transfer was fulfilled by 1995.⁶

Interpretive Summary

Decisions regarding future land-use should bear the following considerations in mind:

⇒ The early date of Rev. Hall's land purchase likely contributed to the cumulative dispossession of the 'N̄amgis from their land. Oral testimonies suggest the 'N̄amgis used all of Cormorant Island for food, firewood, burials, and other purposes. The delineation of the island into private property through

¹ Letter, Crease & Crease to Bishop du Vernet (Diocese of Caledonia), 13 Jul 1911, 98-03, Archives of the Diocese of BC, Victoria, BC (hereafter ADBC); Leslie A. Robertson, *Standing up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 223.

² Letter, Crease & Crease to Bishop du Vernet (Diocese of Caledonia), 13 Jul 1911, 98-03, ADBC; Unsigned letter to Crease & Crease, 28 Jul 1913, 98-03, ADBC.

³ Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and Church Missionary Society (CMS) to Anglican Synod of the Diocese of BC (ASDBC), 22 May 1922, file 3, box 1, text 374.

⁴ Letter, D.A.M. Patterson, Esq. to J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC), 29 Apr 1976, 2001-08-01, ADBC.

⁵ Letter of Intent between the Nimpkish Band Council and ASDBC, BC, 26 Jun 1984, file 2, box 1, text 680.

⁶ Memorandum of Understanding, 23 September 1995, Synod office files, Anglican Synod of the Diocese of BC, Victoria, BC.

surveys, legal pronouncements, and physical barriers gradually restricted 'N̄amgis people's ability to access parts of their territory for such purposes.⁷

⇒ The alienation of land from the Crown has been a central factor limiting Indigenous access to land. Indian Reserve commissioners deferred to settler property rights and interests when determining reserve boundaries and generally considered private land exempt from their considerations.⁸ The land where Christ Church stands was excluded from the initial reserve allocated to the 'N̄amgis in 1880, and continued to be withheld when reserve boundaries were redrawn (and substantially reduced) in 1884. Today, private property is considered "off the table" for Aboriginal treaty negotiations.

⇒ In acquiring title to the land, the Anglican Church benefited from colonial administrators' perception that religious missions near or on reserves would facilitate the assimilation of Indigenous communities. Land for a mission was excluded from the initial 'N̄amgis reserve even though Rev. Hall had yet to formally apply for his pre-emption.

⇒ In acquiring title to the land, the Diocese benefited from discriminatory policies that preferentially encouraged White settlers like Rev. Hall to acquire land through pre-emption. In 1866, Indigenous people were explicitly banned from pre-empting land without the consent of the Governor.

⇒ Contemporary efforts by the 'N̄amgis to regain land are consistent with a historical pattern of advocacy. In 1913, community leaders asked the Bishop to help them acquire compensation for lands occupied by settlers. By the mid-1970s, some 'N̄amgis people were seeking the return of church land. The following decade, Nimpkish Band Council advocacy produced agreements to return parcels of land held by the Diocese and Columbia Coast Mission.

⇒ The Anglican Church was sometimes regarded as a potential ally in securing land rights on Cormorant Island. In 1908, Indigenous Christians asked the Bishop for assistance opposing industrial use of the foreshore. In 1913, community leaders sought episcopal assistance securing compensation for occupied land. In 1980, 'N̄amgis council leadership appealed to the church to demonstrate its commitment to the just resolution of Indigenous land claims by returning Anglican lands to the band.

⇒ The property may present an opportunity to advance Indigenous access to burial sites. Previously recorded archaeological site EdSr-7 is located within the southern half of the parcel and consists of ancestral remains.

Historical Context

Christ Church's relationship to the 'N̄amgis and other Kwakwaka'wakw peoples was informed by the religious orientation of its founder, Rev. James Alfred Hall and the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The CMS was formed in 1799 as an alternative to the Society to the Propagation of the Faith in Foreign Parts (SPG). The CMS was more evangelical and low church than the establishment SPG and regarded "civilization" and conversion as intimately bound. CMS missionaries encouraged converts to assimilate by settling in permanent locations, speaking English, adopting European dress and names, and

⁷ Indian Claims Commission, 'Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim of the 'N̄amgis First Nation', March 1996, 36, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2009/indianclaims/RC31-77-1996E.pdf.

⁸ See Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 112, 170–73, 230–31, 244.

conforming to British norms of order, discipline, and relationships.⁹ Like other CMS missionaries, Rev. Hall saw conformity with European culture as component of spiritual progress. Accordingly, historian Leslie Robertson describes his letters as “punctuated with a nineteenth-century racism” that conflated spiritual and “temporal” salvation.¹⁰

The earliest CMS missionary in British Columbia was layman William Duncan. Working among the Tsimshian people, Duncan founded a settlement at Metlakatla in 1862 in which converts could more easily be isolated from traditional cultural practices. The mission drew praise and emulation across the missionary world.¹¹

Duncan’s example and personal guidance influenced the location of Rev. Hall’s mission among the Kwakwaka’wakw. Rev. Hall arrived on the coast in 1877 and spent several months working alongside Duncan before transferring to Fort Rupert on northern Vancouver Island.¹² Several factors ultimately led him to establish his mission elsewhere. Land was scarce in the immediate vicinity as the Hudson Bay Company had claimed all the land around the fort for itself. Rev. Hall evidently wished for the new settlement to be entirely in ecclesiastical hands. The priest met strong opposition from Fort Rupert chiefs and found their people frequently away potlaching. Hall was therefore inclined follow Duncan’s instructions to draw converts to a new settlement, as he had done at Metlakatla.¹³

Rev. Hall visited ‘Yalis (Alert Bay) in August 1878. By then he had become proficient enough in Kwakwaka’wakw to impress the local ‘Namgis. Taking this as a sign of welcome, Hall began to consider establishing his mission among them. This notion became more attractive when Hall received information that several Kwakwaka’wakw tribes wished to move to the village. The missionary returned to the village in April 1879 with Bishop William Ridley (Diocese of Caledonia), who affirmed the location’s suitability and began arrangements for the establishment of a new mission.¹⁴

Rev. Hall’s acquisition of property for the mission intertwined with the creation of Indian Reserves on Cormorant Island. Evidently, the missionary felt that it would be easier to determine the mission’s location once the Joint Indian Reserve Commission (1876-1878) had determined where local reserves would be established.¹⁵ The Commission visited Kwakwaka’wakw territories in 1879 and subsequently allocated almost all of Cormorant Island as a reserve, excepting 160 acres that Rev. Hall proposed to purchase, and a further 160 acres on which settler A.W. Huson had improvements (Figure 2).¹⁶

Indian Reserve Commissioner Gilbert Sproat’s decision to set aside land for a mission was likely guided by the perception that Rev. Hall’s presence would encourage the Kwakwaka’wakw to abandon seasonal migrations and adopt European behaviours. Such thinking is captured in a correspondence

⁹ Alan Lauffer Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada: Controversies and Identity in Historical Perspective*, Studies in Anglican History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 16–17, 20.

¹⁰ Robertson, *Standing up with Ga’axsta’las*, 109.

¹¹ Jean Friesen, ‘DUNCAN, WILLIAM’, in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/duncan_william_14E.html.

¹² Barry Gough, ‘A Priest Versus the Potlach: The Reverend Alfred James Hall and the Fort Rupert Kwakiutl, 1878-1880’, *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 24, no. 2 (October 1982): 77.

¹³ Robertson, *Standing up with Ga’axsta’las*, 118, 113; Gough, ‘A Priest Versus the Potlach’, 81, 83–84, 88n32.

¹⁴ Gough, ‘A Priest Versus the Potlach’, 81, 83–84.

¹⁵ Gough, 83.

¹⁶ Minutes of Decision, 2 Aug 1880, number 775/80, file 1, box 2, GR-2982 Minutes of decision of Joint Indian Reserve Commission, BC Archives, Victoria, BC: <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/letter-from-powell-enclosing-minutes-of-decision-of-coast-work-1879-and-1880-with-dates-of-decision-2>; Robertson, *Standing up with Ga’axsta’las*, 138.

from the Surveyor General to the Department of the Interior's Land Office: "The practical value, in their civilizing influences, of religious Missions, is most strongly in favour of such establishments... it would greatly strengthen the hands of the Government in administering Indian Affairs generally..."¹⁷ While written of a different context, the statement reveals how certain government administrators regarded religious and reserve lands as having a complimentary effect on Indigenous populations.

In any case, Sproat's allocation was soon disallowed by BC's Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works on the grounds that the entire island had been leased to a group of white settlers since 1870.¹⁸ In 1884, Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly reallocated reserve borders to include the 'N̄amgis village (Indian Reserve 1) and a burial site (IR 2) (Figure 3). The two reserves totaled around 50 acres, some 1200 acres less than Sproat's earlier allocation.¹⁹ Rev. Hall received his Crown land grant the same year: 140-acres that bisected the island, with a 2.5-acre "postage stamp" carved from the southeast corner and reserved to the 'N̄amgis so they could access part of a stream for washing (Figures 3, 4).²⁰

In 1914, the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs in the Province of BC held a hearing with the 'N̄amgis to determine whether adjustments to Indian Reserves were required. Alf Lageuse's testimony shows how 'N̄amgis people contested white "ownership" of Cormorant Island and found existing reserves inadequate to the needs of their growing population:

I know that the whiteman only borrowed the little pieces that they made their homes and their business places on. It belonged to the Tribes that lived on this Island. I and my people did not know that these whitemen were not true to us that they were claiming the land because the Island belonged to the whole of us [...]

At the present time, under the circumstances, the people cannot make their living on this land because it is not big enough for the use of my people and myself. The whole Island is not for us. If we have more children this land would not be enough to hold them.²¹

Though Rev. Hall was among the first white landowners on Cormorant Island, the 'N̄amgis sometimes turned to the Anglican Church for political support. In 1913, an unsigned letter "from the Kwakwarla [sic] Tribes" asked the Bishop of Columbia to help them secure compensation for lands taken by settlers:

¹⁷ Quoted in Robertson, 138.

¹⁸ The Indian Superintendent for BC, I.W. Powell, ultimately accepted the province's position regarding the reserve allocation after consulting Joseph Trutch, former Chief Commissioner of Lands and Lieutenant Governor. In 1996, the Indian Claims Commission found that Canada acted wrongly in reallocating the reserves without referring the matter to a Justice of the Supreme Court. Indian Claims Commission, 'Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim', 25–30.

¹⁹ Peter O'Reilly was an Anglican and served as a Trustee for the Christ Church Estate from 1876 to his death in 1905, as is described in the Christ Church Cathedral Precinct Property History. Minutes of Decision, 20 Oct 1884, number 3139/84, file 37, box 3, GR-2982 Minutes of decision of Joint Indian Reserve Commission, BC Archives: <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/letter-from-powell-enclosing-minutes-of-decision-of-coast-work-1879-and-1880-with-dates-of-decision-2>; 30.

²⁰ Letter, Crease & Crease to Bishop du Vernet (Diocese of Caledonia), 13 Jul 1911, 98-03, ADBC; "Field Notes of AJ Hall's Preemption, Lot 4, Cormorant Island," page 4, FB 52/1884, PH1, Rupert Land District, Land Title and Survey Authority of BC, Victoria, BC.

²¹ "Meeting with the Nimpkish Band," Kwawkwalth Agency, page 138, Agency Testimonies from the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-1916, Our Homes are Bleeding – Digital Collection, Union of BC Indian Chiefs: <https://ourhomesarebleeding.ubcic.bc.ca/Testimonies2/index.html>

they have taken our Lands away from us without making proper payment to our Forefathers [...] we can see how White Man and other races are coming into our Country [and?] are given all kinds of Rights. But we who have owned these Lands from Time Immorial [sic] are not allowed to have any rights at all, in the Land of our Birth [...]

There are good men that are helping us in this. But we would feel more confidence In you who are the Head of Christianity in this Country. We feel our cause is just and we do not want to impose on anybody. But we want our rights, as the proper owners of this Country that God Gave to us and our forefathers [...] will your Lordship look into our cause and if you see that it is just, will you use your Influence for us.²²

Rev. Hall's parcel changed hands or was subdivided several times in the decades following the initial land grant. In 1889, Hall conveyed the entire parcel to the Bishop of Caledonia in the Bishop's capacity as Chairman of the Board of the Church Missionary Society in British Columbia.²³ The CMS sold 4 acres of this land to Indian Agent William May Halliday in 1911, and a further 4 acres to local 'Namgis man Stephen Cook in 1912 (Figure 5).²⁴ The Diocese of BC received 2 acres of the property for cemetery purposes in 1914.²⁵

By this time, the CMS was in the process of withdrawing from the country in favour of Canadian-led missionary work.²⁶ In 1922, the CMS and Bishop of Caledonia conveyed its remaining unsold property (130 acres) to the Diocese of BC for \$1.00, on trust that the land be used to support "Mission work among native Indians."²⁷ In 1932, the Diocese subdivided and leased 13 small lots on the property (Figure 6). All but two of these had been sold by the mid-1970s, when the Diocese began discussing a possible land transfer with the Nimpkish Band Council.²⁸ An undated letter from the period describes the sentiment among younger people "that the Church should return that land to us [...] that's our land and the Church has kept our land from us."²⁹ A letter of intent to transfer this land was signed in 1984, setting aside sufficient property in the Diocese's name to permit the ongoing work of Christ Church.³⁰

²² Historian Leslie Robertson notes the letter appears to be in the handwriting of 'Namgis woman Ga'axsta'las (Jane Constance Cook). Kwakwaka'wakw Tribes to the Bishop of Columbia, 11 Jan 1913, text 277, ADBC; Robertson, *Standing up with Ga'axsta'las*, 194?

²³ Letter, Crease & Crease to Bishop du Vernet (Diocese of Caledonia), 13 Jul 1911, 98-03, ADBC; Unsigned letter to Crease & Crease, 28 Jul 1913, 98-03, ADBC.

²⁴ Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and CMS to ASDBC, 22 May 1922, file 3, box 1, text 374.

²⁵ Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and CMS to ASDBC, 22 May 1922, file 3, box 1, text 374; Memo re: Alert Bay Property, undated [circa 1920?], file 3, box 1, text 374.

²⁶ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 22.

²⁷ Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and CMS to ASDBC, 22 May 1922, file 3, box 1, text 374.

²⁸ Letter, D.A.M. Patterson, Esq. to J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC), 29 Apr 1976, 2001-08-01, ADBC.

²⁹ Notes from meeting at Alert Bay, n.d., 2001-08-01, ADBC.

³⁰ Letter of Intent between the Nimpkish Band Council and ASDBC, 26 Jun 1984, 2001-08-01.

Indigenous Presence and Land Use

Languages	Kwakwala
Governance	‘N̄amgis Nation (formerly known as the Nimpkish Band); Whe-La-La-U Area Council; Kwakwaka’wakw peoples
Land use	An 1884 survey field book shows a shoreline trail through the parcel, and a stream marked as an “Indian Pool Washing place” emptying onto the property near Christ Church. ³¹ Oral testimonies gathered in 1995 suggests the ‘N̄amgis used all of Cormorant Island for food, firewood, burials, and other purposes. ³² Historically, Cormorant Island was also used on a seasonal basis by the Mamalilikulla, Kwakiutl, and Tlowitsis nations. ³³
Archaeological data	Previously recorded archaeological site EdSr-7 is located within the southern half of the parcel and the site consists of ancestral remains.
Historic treaties	None. Treaties were signed nearby with the “Queacker” and “Quakeolth” tribes in 1851 but applied only to Vancouver Island. ³⁴
Modern treaties	The ‘N̄amgis Nation has reached Stage 4 of the BC Treaty Process (Agreement in Principal negotiations) but is currently not negotiating. ³⁵

Associated Properties

Relationships respecting Christ Church and the ‘N̄amgis have been shaped by the presence of other Anglican entities on Cormorant Island.

Lot 1957, Industrial School Reserve: In 1891, the BC Chief Commissioner of Lands designated 410 acres to the Department of Indian Affairs as an Industrial School Reserve (Figure 7).³⁶ A residential school opened on the site in 1894, replaced by a new building in 1929. Survivors have shared numerous accounts of neglect, abuse, humiliation, and cultural repression at the hands of school staff and officials.³⁷ Fifteen students are known to have died at St. Michael’s Residential School between 1902 and 1965.³⁸ The Industrial School Reserve was set apart for the Nimpkish Band (Reserve 1A) in

³¹ “Field Notes of AJ Hall’s Preemption, Lot 4, Cormorant Island,” pages 4 and 10, FB 52/1884, PH1, Rupert Land District, Land Title and Survey Authority of BC, Victoria, BC.

³² Indian Claims Commission, ‘Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim’, 36.

³³ Robert Galois, *Kwakwaka’wakw Settlements, 1775-1920: A Geographical Analysis and Gazetteer* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 309.

³⁴ “Register of land purchases from Indians,” MS-0772, BC Archives: <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/register-of-land-purchases-from-indians>

³⁵ “N̄amgis Nation”, BC Treaty Commission, accessed 29 May 2023, <https://bctreaty.ca/namgis-nation/>.

³⁶ Letter, Peter O’Reilly to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 7 Aug 1889, page 209; Letter, Peter O’Reilly to Lawrence Vankoughnet, 10 Mar 1891, pages 359-360, Indian Reserve Commission Letterbook, vol. 1277, reel C-13900, RG10 Department of Indian Affairs, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, ON (hereafter LAC), available on Heritage Canadiana: https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c13900/1144; Galois, *Kwakwaka’wakw Settlements, 1775-1920*, 315.

³⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *The Survivors Speak: A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2015, 42, 49–50, 59–60, 62, 67, 72, 79, 91–92, 141, 167, <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>.

³⁸ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, ‘St. Michael’s (Alert Bay)’, 28 January 2021, <https://nctr.ca/residential-schools/british-columbia/st-michaels-alert-bay/>.

1960, with 60 acres remaining in use as a residential school.³⁹ St. Michael's Residential School closed in 1974.⁴⁰ A subdivision the following year set aside a portion of land where the Whe-le-le-u Area Council has its offices today (Figure 8).⁴¹

Section 53, Columbia Coast Mission: The Columbia Coast Mission (CCM), also conducted activities on the island. The CCM was an Anglican ministry incorporated in 1907 to provide medical care and education to logging camps and coastal settlements.⁴² The BC Fishing & Packing Company conveyed 3 acres to the CCM in 1933, from which the mission society could provide education and medical services.⁴³ In 1947, the CCM leased the property to St. George's Hospital Society for fifty years at \$1.00 per year.⁴⁴

Technically a distinct organization, the CCM had the same mailing address and Secretary-Treasurer as the office of the Diocese of BC.⁴⁵ The thin separation between Anglican entities caused frustration in 1980 when the Nimpkish Band Council learned that the CCM's Board of Trustees considered selling its land to St. George's Hospital. Nimpkish Band Council objected on the grounds that Bishop Frederick Gartrell had committed not to transfer any land without giving the Nimpkish Band a right of first refusal.⁴⁶ Diocesan administrators felt the commitment pertained only to the Christ Church parcel, but attempts to defend this distinction to Nimpkish Band Council "were not well received."⁴⁷ In any case, the CCM's Board of Trustees resolved not to sell the property.⁴⁸ The Bishop recommended its transfer to the Nimpkish Band in 1983.⁴⁹ A Memorandum of Understanding dated 23 September 1995 acknowledged that this transfer had been completed.⁵⁰

³⁹ "Personal Notes – A&F Director," 20 Apr 1976, 2001-08-01, ADBC.

⁴⁰ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 'St. Michael's (Alert Bay)'.

⁴¹ A portion of this land was further subdivided in 1992 to provide for a cemetery. "L.2 IN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL #875," 1975, 59964 CLSR BC; "L.'s 10 TO 25 & ROAD," 1992, 2408 RSBC BC; and annotations on "BDY OF IR's 1A & SCHOOL SITE," 1891, BC134 CLSR BC, Canada Land Surveys: <https://cls.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/>

⁴² Michael L. Hadley, *God's Little Ships: A History of the Columbia Coast Mission* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1995), 30–31.

⁴³ Indenture, BC Fishing & Packing Company Ltd. to CCM, file 2, text 653, ASDBC.

⁴⁴ Lease, CCM and St. George's Hospital Society, 31 Dec 1946, file 2, text 653.

⁴⁵ Letter, J.W.B. McPherrin to J. Quigley, 15 Dec 1977, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁴⁶ Bishop Gartrell is remembered as making this commitment in a meeting that took place sometime after 3 Apr 1979. Letter, Nimpkish Band Council to J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC), 12 Jun 1980, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁴⁷ Letter, J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC) to Executive Council, 24 Jul 1980, 2000-12, ADBC; Letter, J.W.B. McPherrin (Secretary-Treasurer, CCM) to R.B. Wilkinson (Administrator, St. George's Hospital), 10 Feb 1981, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁴⁸ Letter, J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC) to R.B. Wilkinson (Administrator, St. George's Hospital), 12 Dec 1980, 2000-12, ADBC; "Personal notes – A&F Director," 21 Jan 1981, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁴⁹ Letter, fBarry Davidson (Administrator, St. George's Hospital) to Bishop Jones (CCM), 22 Jun 1983, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁵⁰ Memorandum of Understanding, 23 September 1995, Synod office files, ASDBC.

Timeline

Italicized text indicates contextual information. **Bold** text indicates information specific to the property.

Date	Details
1799	Church Missionary Society (CMS) founded by Anglican clergy and laypeople to facilitate the conversion of Indigenous peoples in territories controlled by the British. ⁵¹
1837-1863	Disease reduces the 'Namgis population by as much as half. ⁵²
12 Jan 1859	Diocese of British Columbia established amidst global expansion of British Empire and Church of England (38 new dioceses established between 1814-1859). The Letters Patent creating the Diocese give the Bishop power to hold property on behalf of the church. ⁵³
31 Mar 1866	Legislature of British Columbia removes Indigenous peoples' right to pre-empt land without the permission of the Governor. The prohibition would remain in effect until 1953. ⁵⁴
3 Aug 1870	Group of settlers obtain a 21-year renewable lease covering all of Cormorant Island. One of these, A.W. Huson, later purchases others' interests in the lease. ⁵⁵
15 Jul 1877	Rev. Alfred James Hall arrives in Victoria in the service of the CMS. ⁵⁶
12 Mar 1878	Rev. Hall transfers mission activities from Metlakatla to Fort Rupert (near present-day Port Hardy). ⁵⁷
Aug 1878	Rev. Hall visits 'Yalis. Impressed by the apparent welcome, Hall considers establishing a mission among the Nimpkish. ⁵⁸
Oct 1879	Indian Reserve Commission visits northern Vancouver Island to determine reserve borders. ⁵⁹
2 Jan 1880	Indian Reserve Commissioner Gilbert Sproat allocates almost all of Cormorant Island (approximately 1250 acres) as an Indian Reserve. Reserve allocation excludes

⁵¹ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 16–17.

⁵² Galois, *Kwakwaka'wakw Settlements, 1775-1920*, 309–12.

⁵³ "Letters Patent of the Bishop of Columbia, 1859" (copy), 85.36, ADBC.; G. Hollis Slater, 'New Light on Herbert Beaver', *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (January 1942): 14.

⁵⁴ Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 41–42, 121.

⁵⁵ The lease describes the area in question as 600 acres, less than half the area of Cormorant Island, but included the whole island in an annexed plan. Indian Claims Commission, 'Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim', 22, 24.

⁵⁶ Gough, 'A Priest Versus the Potlach', 76–77.

⁵⁷ Gough, 77.

⁵⁸ Gough, 81.

⁵⁹ Indian Claims Commission, 'Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim', 23.

	160 acres that Rev. Hall proposed to purchase, and a further 160 acres where A.W. Huson had improvements. ⁶⁰
Apr 1880	Rev. Hall closes Fort Rupert mission following opposition from local chiefs, and visits 'Yalis with Bishop William Ridley (Diocese of Caledonia) to evaluate its potential as a mission site. ⁶¹
29 Apr 1880	Bishop Ridley signs agreement to purchase mission site from A.W. Huson at a nominal cost. ⁶²
20 Aug 1880	Rev. Hall describes erecting a small school and applying to purchase land at 'Yalis: "Acting also upon the Bishop's instructions an application has been made to purchase 160 acres of land at Alert Bay (4/per acre) for the [Church Missionary Society]. As soon as the purchase is complete it is proposed that our Mission House be built." ⁶³
4 Jan 1881	A.W. Huson writes to the Chief Commission of Lands and Works approving Rev. Hall's application for a portion of land northwest of 'Namgis village. ⁶⁴
10 Mar 1881	Rev. Hall makes formal application to pre-empt 160 acres of Cormorant Island. ⁶⁵
<i>28 Jan 1882</i>	Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works for BC disallows earlier designation of Cormorant Island as Indian Reserve on grounds that the entire island had been leased to a group of white settlers since 1870. ⁶⁶
<i>1882</i>	Indian Girls' and Boys' Mission schools operated by Alfred and Elizabeth Hall. ⁶⁷
15 Aug 1884	Crown grants 140 acres to Rev. Hall. ⁶⁸
<i>20 Oct 1884</i>	Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly reallocates two reserves on Cormorant Island to set aside Nimpkish village (Indian Reserve 1) and burial site (IR 2). The two reserves total around 50 acres, some 1200 acres less than Sproat's earlier allocation (1880). ⁶⁹
<i>6 Apr 1889</i>	Anglican Synod of the Diocese of British Columbia (ASDBC) incorporated by Act of Provincial Legislature and empowered to acquire, hold, and sell property.

⁶⁰ Minutes of Decision, 2 Aug 1880, number 775/80, file 1, box 2, GR-2982 Minutes of decision of Joint Indian Reserve Commission, BC Archives: <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/letter-from-powell-enclosing-minutes-of-decision-of-coast-work-1879-and-1880-with-dates-of-decision-2>

⁶¹ Gough, 'A Priest Versus the Potlach', 83–84.

⁶² Enclosed in "Bishop Ridley's request for church land," number 379/80, file 32, box 4, GR-0868 Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works correspondence inward, BC Archives.

⁶³ Robertson, *Standing up with Ga'axsta'las*, 223.

⁶⁴ Indian Claims Commission, 'Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim', 24.

⁶⁵ Indian Claims Commission, 24.

⁶⁶ Indian Claims Commission, 25–30.

⁶⁷ Robertson, *Standing up with Ga'axsta'las*, 148.

⁶⁸ Letter, Crease & Crease to Bishop du Vernet (Diocese of Caledonia), 13 Jul 1911, 98-03, ADBC.

⁶⁹ Minutes of Decision, 20 Oct 1884, number 3139/84, file 37, box 3, GR-2982 Minutes of decision of Joint Indian Reserve Commission, BC Archives: <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/letter-from-powell-enclosing-minutes-of-decision-of-coast-work-1879-and-1880-with-dates-of-decision-2>; 'Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim', 30.

15 May 1889	Rev. Hall conveys 140 acres in trust to the Bishop of Caledonia in Bishop's capacity as Chairman of the Board of the Church Missionary Society in BC. ⁷⁰
1891	With the expiration of the Huson lease, the BC Chief Commissioner of Lands sets apart Lot 1957 (approximately 410 acres) as an Industrial School Reserve. ⁷¹
1892	Christ Church built. ⁷²
1894	Industrial school established on Lot 1957. Survivors have shared numerous accounts of neglect, abuse, humiliation, and cultural repression at the hands of school staff and officials. Fifteen students are known to have died at the school and its successor, St. Michael's, between 1902 and 1965. ⁷³
1900s	CMS adopts a policy of gradual withdrawal from Canada in favour of Canadian-led mission work. ⁷⁴
1901	Original deed to CMS property thought to have been among the papers of the Bishop of Caledonia that were destroyed in fire at Metlakatla, BC. ⁷⁵
1908	Christians living on the Industrial School Reserve appeal to the Bishop in opposing a private lease on their foreshore. Anglican leaders comply by writing letters to the Deputy Commissioner of Lands and Works (1908) and local Indian Agent (1911). ⁷⁶
4 Jul 1911	CMS sells 4 acres to William May Halliday (Indian Agent, Alert Bay). ⁷⁷
4 Jun 1912	CMS accepts Rev. Hall's resignation. ⁷⁸
14 Jul 1912	CMS conveys 4 acres to Stephen Cook of Alert Bay. ⁷⁹
11 Jan 1913	Letter from the "Kwakarla Tribes" requests Bishop of Columbia's assistance in securing compensation for lands taken by settlers: "we who have owned these Lands from Time Immorial [sic] are not allowed to have any rights at all, in the Land of our Birth." ⁸⁰

⁷⁰ Letter, Crease & Crease to Bishop du Vernet (Diocese of Caledonia), 13 Jul 1911, 98-03, ADBC; Unsigned letter to Crease & Crease, 28 Jul 1913, 98-03, ADBC.

⁷¹ Letter, Peter O'Reilly to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 7 Aug 1889, page 209; Letter, Peter O'Reilly to Lawrence Vankoughnet, 10 Mar 1891, pages 359-360, Indian Reserve Commission Letterbook, vol. 1277, reel C-13900, RG10 Department of Indian Affairs, LAC, available on Heritage Canadiana: https://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c13900/1144; Galois, *Kwakwaka'wakw Settlements, 1775-1920*, 315.

⁷² Liz Bryan, *Pioneer Churches of Vancouver Island and the Salish Sea: An Explorer's Guide* (Nanose Bay, BC: Heritage House, 2020), 195.

⁷³ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 'St. Michael's (Alert Bay)'; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *The Survivors Speak*, 42, 49-50, 59-60, 62, 67, 72, 79, 91-92, 141, 167.

⁷⁴ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 22.

⁷⁵ Declaration, Right Rev. Frederick Herbert du Vernet re: Section 4, Rupert District, Cormorant Island, Jun 1909, 91-11, ADBC.

⁷⁶ Copy of letter, Lindley Crease to Deputy Commissioner of Lands and Works, 5 Dec [1908]; Letter, A.W. Corker to the Bishop, 18 Dec 1908; letter, A.J. Hall to Bishop, 11 Feb 1911; letter, Bishop Perrin to M. Halliday, 3 Mar 1911, 91-11, ADBC.

⁷⁷ Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and CMS to ASDBC, 22 May 1922, 91-11.

⁷⁸ Gough, 'A Priest Versus the Potlach', 85.

⁷⁹ Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and CMS to ASDBC, 22 May 1922, file 3, box 1, text 374.

⁸⁰ Robertson, *Standing up with Ga'axsta'las*, 194?

2 Jun 1914	A Royal Commission holds hearings on reserve allotments with the 'N̄amgis. Alf Lageuse testifies: "the people cannot make their living on this land because it is not big enough for the use of my people and myself. The whole Island is not for us." ⁸¹
30 Oct 1914	CMS conveys 2 acres to the Diocese of BC for cemetery purposes. ⁸²
1920	CMS ends its support of the Canadian church at the end of 1920. ⁸³
9 May 1922	Church Missionary Society and Bishop of Caledonia convey unsold property (130 acres) to the Diocese of BC for \$1.00, on trust that the land be used to support "Mission work among native Indians." ⁸⁴
1929	St. Michael's Indian Residential School opens in a new building on Lot 1957. Students from over 30 nations, reserves, and communities are known to have attended the residential school, one of the largest in the country. ⁸⁵
9 May 1932	Diocese of BC subdivides property into 13 lots. ⁸⁶
1949	Two dozen children stage a mass escape from St. Michael's Residential School. The resulting investigation reveals substandard conditions and leads to the resignation of the principal and vice-principal. ⁸⁷
7 Mar 1950	Lot 1957 (Industrial School Reserve) set apart for Nimpkish Band (Reserve 1A), with a balance of 60.44 acres remaining in use as Industrial School Site. ⁸⁸
1969	Federal government assumes administration of St. Michael's Residential School. ⁸⁹
Circa 1974	St. Michael's Residential School closes. ⁹⁰
1975	Nimpkish Band Council conveys to Bishop Frederick Gartrell "the nature of our claim to Church land on Cormorant Island, based on Aboriginal title." The Council urges the Bishop not to dispose of the land in any way that would impede its ultimate

⁸¹ "Meeting with the Nimpkish Band," Kwawkwalth Agency, page 138, Agency Testimonies from the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913-1916, Our Homes are Bleeding – Digital Collection, Union of BC Indian Chiefs: <https://ourhomesarebleeding.ubcic.bc.ca/Testimonies2/index.html>

⁸² Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and CMS to ASDBC, 22 May 1922, file 3, box 1, text 374; Memo re: Alert Bay Property, undated [circa 1920?], file 3, box 1, text 374.

⁸³ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 22.

⁸⁴ Trust deed, Right Reverend Frederick Herbert (Bishop of Caledonia) and CMS to ASDBC, 22 May 1922, file 3, box 1, text 374.

⁸⁵ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 'St. Michael's (Alert Bay)'; Anglican Diocese of BC, 'Our Residential Schools History', accessed 26 June 2023, <https://bc.anglican.ca/diocesan-ministries/reconciliation-beyond/pages/our-residential-schools-history>.

⁸⁶ Letter, D.A.M. Patterson, Esq. to J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC), 29 Apr 1976, 2001-08-01, ADBC.

⁸⁷ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 'St. Michael's (Alert Bay)'.

⁸⁸ "Personal Notes – A&F Director," 20 Apr 1976, 2001-08-01, ADBC.

⁸⁹ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, 'St. Michael's (Alert Bay)'.

⁹⁰ National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

	return to the Indigenous people of Alert Bay, and, so doing, demonstrate its support for the just resolution of Indigenous land claims. ⁹¹
1975	Subdivision of Lot 1957 sets aside a portion of land where the Whe-le-le-u Area Council has its offices today. ⁹²
12 Jun 1980	Nimpkish Band Council objects to proposed sale of Columbia Coast Mission (CCM) land to St. George's Hospital on the basis that Bishop Gartrell had recently committed "that no transfer of Church land would take place without giving the right of first refusal to the Indian people of Alert Bay." ⁹³
4 Dec 1980	CCM Board of Trustees resolves not to sell property to St. George's Hospital following objections from the Nimpkish Band Council. ⁹⁴
1983	Bishop recommends transfer of hospital land from the CCM to the Nimpkish Band. ⁹⁵
26 Jun 1984	ASDBC and Nimpkish Band Council sign letter of intent to transfer former CMS lands to the Nimpkish Band, with sufficient property retained in the name of the Diocese to permit the ongoing work of Christ Church, Alert Bay. ⁹⁶
23 Sep 1995	Memorandum of Understanding acknowledges the fulfillment of a land transfer between from the Diocese to the Nimpkish, pertaining to property previously associated with Christ Church and the CCM (St. George's Hospital) has been fulfilled. ⁹⁷
Mar 1996	Indian Claims Commission finds that Canada acted wrongfully by failing refer the 1884 reduction and reallocation of Cormorant Island Indian Reserves to a Justice of the Supreme Court. ⁹⁸
Mar 2015	St. Michael's Residential School building demolished with Bishop Logan McMenamie in attendance. ⁹⁹

⁹¹ Letter, Nimpkish Band Council to J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC), 12 Jun 1980, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁹² "L.2 IN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL #875," 1975, 59964 CLSR BC; "L.'s 10 TO 25 & ROAD," 1992, 2408 RSBC BC; and annotations on "BDY OF IR's 1A & SCHOOL SITE," 1891, BC134 CLSR BC, Canada Land Surveys: <https://clss.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/>

⁹³ Letter, Nimpkish Band Council to J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC), 12 Jun 1980, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁹⁴ Letter, J.W.B. McPherrin (Administration and Finance Director, ASDBC) to R.B. Wilkinson (Administrator, St. George's Hospital), 12 Dec 1980, 2000-12, ADBC; "Personal notes – A&F Director," 21 Jan 1981, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁹⁵ Letter, Barry Davidson (Administrator, St. George's Hospital) to Bishop Jones (CCM), 22 Jun 1983, 2000-12, ADBC.

⁹⁶ Letter of Intent between the Nimpkish Band Council and ASDBC, 26 Jun 1984, file 2, box 1, text 680.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Understanding, 23 September 1995, Synod office files, ASDBC.

⁹⁸ Indian Claims Commission, 'Inquiry into the Cormorant Island Claim'.

⁹⁹ Anglican Diocese of BC, 'Our Residential Schools History'.

Figures

Figure 1. Map showing current extent of Christ Church, Alert Bay.

PMBC Parcel Cadastre 017733421, iMapBC, Province of British Columbia.

Figure 2. Sketch map showing Nimpkish reserve lands allocated by Indian Reserve Commissioner Gilbert Sproat in 1879-80. Land applied for by Rev. Hall are marked and excluded from the reserve.

Enclosed in Minutes of Decision, 2 Aug 1880, number 775/80, file 1, box 2, GR-2982 Minutes of decision of Joint Indian Reserve Commission, BC Archives, Victoria, BC: <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/letter-from-powell-enclosing-minutes-of-decision-of-coast-work-1879-and-1880-with-dates-of-decision-2>

Figure 3. Sketch map showing reduced Nimpkish reserve lands allocated by Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly in 1884.

Enclosed in Minutes of Decision, 20 Oct 1884, number 3139/84, file 37, box 3, GR-2982 Minutes of decision of Joint Indian Reserve Commission, BC Archives: <https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/letter-from-oreilly-to-chief-commissioner-of-lands-and-works-enclosing-minutes-of-decision-dated-october-20-1884-allotting-two-reserves-for-nimkeesh-indians-of-cormorant-island-and-burial-ground>

Figure 4. Crown Grant showing Rev. Hall's preemption with a small, "postage stamp" carve-out reserved to the 'Namqis so they could access part of a stream for washing.

Crown Grant Image G00230219002, Section 4, Cormorant Island, Rupert District, Government Access tool for Online Retrieval (GATOR): [https://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/pls/gator/gator\\$queryforms.menu](https://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/pls/gator/gator$queryforms.menu)

Figure 5. Sketch map showing subdivision and lease of lands within Church Missionary Society land (Lot 4), circa 1914. Two plots on the south border have been subdivided and sold to Indian Agent Halliday and Stephen Cook, respectively. The 2-acre cemetery conveyed to the Diocese of BC in 1914 is shown on the western border of the lot.

"Sketch of Cormorant Island shewing The I.M.A.S. Property," undated [1914 or later], file 4, text 653, Archives of the Diocese of BC, Victoria, BC.

Figure 6. Plan showing lands subdivided by the Diocese of BC in 1932. All but two of these lots were sold by the mid-1970s.

"Plan – Subdivision of Port of Section 4, Cormorant Island, Rupert District," Dec 1931, file 13, box 12, text 63, Archives of the Diocese of BC.

Figure 7. Coloured map showing lands designated as an Indian Industrial School Reserve in 1891.

"REFERENCE SKETCH OF IR's 1, 1A, 2 & SCHOOL," 1891, BC196 CLSR BC, Canada Land Surveys: <https://clss.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/clss/plan/detail?id=BC196%20CLSR%20BC>

Figure 8. Plan showing subdivision of Lot 1957 (Industrial School Reserve) as surveyed in 1975. This is the area where the Whe-La-La-U Area Council has its offices today.

“L.2 IN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL #875,” 1975, 59964 CLSR BC, Canada Land Surveys: <https://clss.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/clss/plan/detail?id=59964%20CLSR%20BC>

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