

For Release: Tuesday, May 1, 2018



Heiltsuk Horizon announces First Nations/industry partnership to support world-leading protection of Canada's oceans and coastal communities

VANCOUVER, BC (Embargoed to: Tuesday, May 1, 2018) – A BC First Nation and Canadian marine and offshore company announced today they have teamed up in a unique partnership to help prevent and respond to marine incidents on Canada's West Coast, and to improve marine emergency response capacity in Indigenous and coastal communities.

The newly-formed Heiltsuk Horizon Maritime Services Limited has submitted a proposal to supply two emergency towing vessels to the Canadian Coast Guard – through funding announced in November 2016 as part of the federal government's \$1.5 billion Oceans Protection Plan.

Heiltsuk Horizon brings together majority partner Heiltsuk Nation of Bella Bella, British Columbia, with Horizon Maritime Services Limited, a Canadian marine and offshore company. If successful, the company would lease two new sister ships to the Canadian Coast Guard to provide state of the art emergency towing capability for responding to ships in distress off the B.C. coast.

The new partnership will also support a Heiltsuk-led Indigenous Marine Response Centre (IMRC) at Bella Bella, B.C. to help prevent and respond more rapidly and effectively to marine incidents in the region. The company is also establishing a Heiltsuk Horizon Cadet Training Program – modelled on Horizon Maritime's current program with the Mi'kmaq Bands of Nova Scotia – to cultivate a pool of expert mariners.

"This is a huge opportunity for Canada to support an on-the-ground approach to reconciliation," said Harvey Humchitt, Hereditary Chief, Heiltsuk Nation. "Through this unique partnership, we've aligned our Heiltsuk values with the core values of Horizon Maritime to demonstrate how First Nations and industry can embark together on a bold step toward reconciliation, and in the Heiltsuk term for reconciliation, *Haitcistut*, "turn things around and make things right again."

"We're pleased to collaborate with Horizon Maritime to enhance marine safety for the ecologically-sensitive waters of the Central Coast," said Marilyn Slett, Chief Councillor, Heiltsuk Nation. "By offering world-class vessels and opportunities to build marine response capacity in our community, Heiltsuk Horizon will help propel Canada's goals to put in place world-leading ocean protection and to offer new possibilities for Indigenous and coastal communities."

"We're excited to partner with the Heiltsuk Nation and to help strengthen the ability of the Canadian Coast Guard and federal government to respond to environmental emergencies," said Steve Widmeyer, Executive Vice-President, Horizon Maritime Services Ltd. "We're committed to building the capacity of the Indigenous Marine Response Centre by sharing our experience in marine operations, and we're also looking forward to creating a pool of much-needed mariners on Canada's West Coast."

“This is a meaningful and true partnership that covers all facets of what’s important in ocean protection and brings valuable strengths from both partners. Horizon Maritime is a Canadian company with expertise operating diverse types of vessels. The Heiltsuk bring millennia of seafaring experience and the knowledge of regional tides, currents and weather needed to conduct effective prevention and to mount effective responses,” said Widmeyer.

Chief Slett, whose nation is in reconciliation discussions with Canada, said the Heiltsuk’s decision to partner with Horizon Maritime was a direct result of her community’s devastating experience with the *Nathan E. Stewart* spill near Bella Bella in October 2016, “The impact of that diesel spill made us look at what we could do to be proactive in our territory. Recent history has shown that First Nations are the first responders to marine incidents in our waters, so this was a logical next step for us.”

Quick Facts

- Heiltsuk Horizon proposes to lease two emergency towing vessels to the Canadian Coast Guard, operated by Heiltsuk Horizon crews trained in Canadian Coast Guard emergency response and search and rescue procedures.
- The vessels are highly equipped for towing large disabled ships at sea – stabilizing them or moving them to a secure area – to reduce the risk of a collision or grounding.
- The Heiltsuk Cadet Training program will be modelled on Horizon Maritime’s current program with the Mi’kmaq Bands of Nova Scotia to provide mariners with formal training and experience at sea.
- A world-leading Indigenous Marine Response Centre (IMRC) at Bella Bella, B.C. will respond within a few hours to incidents in Heiltsuk territory and beyond – with a fleet equipped to prevent disasters and a cleanup response informed by local knowledge and state of the art technology.

Associated Links

- www.heiltsuknation.ca
- Horizonmaritime.com
- Heiltsuk Reconciliation: <http://www.hirmd.ca/reconciliation.html>
- Oceans Protection Plan: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/oceans-protection-plan.html>

For information on Heiltsuk Horizon Maritime Services Ltd., visit www.HeiltsukHorizon.ca

Watch our IMRC video: <https://youtu.be/WYvD6MoiKXw>

Photos & B-roll

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/o2khllt1r1rhx2j/AABjc4JO-FRfgF1pv0PJYiUna?dl=0>

Media Contact:

Email: media@heiltsukhorizon.ca

Phone: 343 883 8224