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## **Mayor Maja Tait Inaugural Address**

Good evening and welcome to the inaugural meeting of the new District of Sooke Council. It's wonderful to have you all join us here tonight to support as we commence this new Term for Sooke. Let us begin this Term by formally recognizing the traditional territory of the T'Souke Nation, upon which we gather, live and do business.

A sincere thank you to outgoing mayor Wendal Milne for his service and commitment to our community throughout his Term, as well as outgoing councillor Herb Haldane for his time and dedication for the last two Terms.

This year's election saw just over 40% turnout at the polls, which speaks to the passion and engagement that our residents have for our local government. This passion and commitment is shared by those that campaigned for office, as well as our dedicated District employees and community organizations.

I would like to thank all of the candidates that campaigned in the past election, and lets take a moment to congratulate those that were successfully elected.

Every member of Council brings their individual perspective, talents and expertise to the table. Collectively we will bring our experience, fresh ideas and collaborative spirit forward to successfully achieve goals and objectives for the betterment of our community over the next four years and beyond.

Where the rainforest meets the sea, Sooke is a strong, caring community with a unique history and a bright future. As we continue to grow and evolve, we will be faced with both challenges and opportunities. We will meet these head on with a spirit of openness and inclusivity.

During the election, there was a strong desire to:

- Actualize our vision of a vibrant town centre and economic revitalization;
- For our residents to be healthy and active, with access to our hills and harbour, with sidewalks, trails and pathways

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- To promote our tourism potential and for Sooke to be a recognized leader as the South Island destination for outdoor recreation, culture and arts
- To encourage local food security and community resilience
- And to support our protective/ emergency services and volunteers.

Our ballot questions received strong support for community facilities and a commitment by Council to support gathering places for our seniors, youth and volunteer organizations. The work underway will be encouraged and supported, and Council looks forward to receiving recommendations and realizing the outcomes.

A commitment to environmental stewardship is another priority. Our rugged coastlines, Harbour and Basin are strong assets to both promote and protect for residents and visitors alike to enjoy both today and for generations to come.

Re-election of councillors tells us you have confidence in the decisions we have made. A sustainable financial plan is in place, along with a commitment to infrastructure improvements, as well as citizen involvement on committees and panels to name a few. We intend to review the committee structure as well as the various Council liaisons and appointments to find ways to streamline District business while enhancing community engagement through improved communication. To ensure that both Council and staff time and energy is utilized in the most effective way possible, we continue to modernize our meeting agendas with web-casting, technology and will explore other means of engagement through web-based tools and social media.

Council will be meeting in the New Year to set priorities and objectives for the Term ahead, in the meantime staff has been tasked with summarizing projects, tasks and files so that Council may have a snapshot of the business of the day. This will enable us to wrap up old business, support what is ongoing and in place, and prepare for and set achievable new priorities.

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I look forward to Council forming a strong, working relationship with Chief Gordon Planes and the Council of the T'Souke Nation as well as Juan De Fuca Regional Director Mike Hicks. To further our relationships with our local service associations, volunteer organizations and community partners that together make Sooke the wonderful community we are proud to call home.

Success can be achieved through the relationships that we form and by engaging the enthusiasm and talent of all that live here, from the seasoned old timer, and the innovative new arrival. By seeking out the wisdom of our elders and obtaining fresh ideas from our children. By being mindful of those most vulnerable while promoting the talents and celebrating the excellence of other community leaders.

In closing, I would like to thank the community for placing their confidence in this Council to lead Sooke over the next four years. While our work will be difficult at times, with support from our staff and community partners, we embrace this responsibility with confidence. We will rise to the challenge and celebrate our milestones along the way. The future is bright for Sooke, I feel supported and encouraged by Council and as we end 2014 with the holiday season, I feel 2015 is off to a strong start. I look forward to the weeks and months to come.

Thank you all for being here with us this evening.