



Message from the Executive Director



Delivering on Excellence

Gitksan Summit 2007 marks the 30th anniversary of the Gitksan Declaration that “we own this land.” (see back cover). During this period the Gitksan strategy has been immortalized in the Canadian Justice System, the liligit (feast hall) and the northern economy.

On December 11, 1997 the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the Gitksan Hereditary System. 12,000 men, women and children were recognized as a society and that their rights and title to the lands were never extinguished! This was a strong step forward for the people of Canada.

We have entered a new path for the Gitksan people. Since August 4, 2006 we have joined in very significant partnership arrangements. First, we partnered with the Ministry of Forests in two forestry agreements with a focus of revitalizing the forest industry on Gitksan territory. This resulted in the purchase of a major forest license and the unprecedented pilot project of joint decision making between the partners.

Secondly, we partnered with both the federal and provincial governments in a process review the environmental impact of the Kemess North Project. This resulted in an unprecedented decision in all of Canada that a pristine lake not be used as a tailings pond!

We move forward into joint ventures with industry. Active discussions are occurring with Black Goose (Oil & Gas), West Hawk (coal), BC Transmission Corporation (Hydro) and forestry initiatives world wide.

For 30 years the Gitksan negotiate from a position of strength. We are now defined by our powerful and strong beliefs – our beliefs in Freedom to be Ourselves (Gitksan as opposed to Indians), Political Freedom and Economic Freedom. It is these very principles and the opportunities these principles give to the Gitksan that create a better life for us and our families – on our lands.

Our freedom threatens the Canadian society because it gives us a foothold that will eventually take away the power from the greedy. Acceptance of us will surely improve the chances for our resources and lands to be more sustainable.

Government mandates are insufficient to negotiate with the Gitksan. Fortunately, in the law of trespass, the governments cannot show better title than we, the Gitksan, have. We have recognized *prima facie* rights and title to 33,000 sq. km. of land. This means we have a proprietary right in the resources and the land.

The result is the cost of doing business for companies in northern British Columbia is finally including the costs of consultation and accommodation that must occur. Unfortunately the contempt of government bureaucrats unnecessarily inflates these costs further. Joint partnerships and shared revenue resources will ensure a healthy economy for northern British Columbia. It is as simple as that.

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