

Access to Gisega'as Village Limited to Gisega'as Hu-wilp Descendants

FOR MEDIA RELEASE DECEMBER 17, 2009

Gisega'as Simgiigyet (Hereditary Chiefs) have always exercised their aboriginal and traditional inherent right to their Lax-yip (lands) and enforce stewardships within their traditional territory. This includes the Gisega'as Reserve which Gitanmaax Band Council claim jurisdiction (under the Indian Act). This Reserve was amalgamated in trust to the Gitanmaax Band in 1948 without proper consultation with the immediate Hereditary Chiefs of the day. The Hereditary Chiefs of Gisega'as are claiming their traditional village as they have never extinguished their rights, culture and traditional way of living, and still do hunting, fishing, trapping within their territory in Gisega'as on and off the reserve.

On December 14, 2009, the Gisega'as Hereditary Chiefs held a celebration to acknowledge their nearly completed "Watershed Building" in Gisega'as, this took place while it was -27. Soup and sandwiches and traditional food were served to all those that attended. The crew that is working on the building were acknowledged with gifts from the Chiefs. This building will be used by all the Hereditary Chiefs to do business pertaining to their Lax-yip through consultation and accommodation and partnership with other outside agencies.

Gitxsan people have always been and still are deeply embedded and rooted in their traditional territory and villages where all the communities have their own unique culture. The Gisega'as Hereditary Chiefs are very active in our feast systems and uphold their own feast system in return.

Gisega'as was one of the largest Gitxsan Village within the Skeena and Babine River. Gisega'as descendants have been alienated far too long, and they are usually the last ones on the list for any type of services.

Chief Councillor of Gitanmaax Band, Marge McRae stated that the Gitanmaax Band council had instructed the closure of the gate on the Gisega'as road. This was a huge concern since this is a public road that is used by the Hereditary Chiefs of Gisega'as for trapping and fishing for their families needs.

The involvement of the local RCMP also saddened the Hereditary Chiefs as they remembered that only about fifty feet from the new building site a young Gitxsan member was brutally shot by their squad team this summer. The RCMP's involvement was not needed as all parties, the Gisega'as Hereditary Chiefs and the Gitanmaax band have their representative lawyers and process can be followed if legal action ensues.

The Hereditary Chiefs were an organized society in 1846, compared to the bands originating in 1951.

The Gisega'as Hereditary Chiefs have an open door policy and want to deal with this issue, we would like to work on the partnership that was discussed in Chief Marge McRae's speech. We could work together as our goals and needs are almost the same. The Hereditary Chiefs have authority in and outside the reserve boundaries, whereas, the elected Chief and Council have authority (under the Indian Act) limited to reserve boundaries.

Oo'Yee stated that "Band Council cannot infringe on Hereditary Chiefs Rights to Gisega'as, nor does the Indian Act elected Chiefs have any authority over Hereditary Chiefs"

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