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Gitxsan Newsletter

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NEWSLETTER DATE

Declaration to Work together

The Gitxsan, Gitanyow and Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs meeting on January 11th and 12th at Moricetown was a sharing of ideas. This gathering marks the first time since the Delgamuukw, Gisdaway Decision (1994) that all three groups sat down for a strategic planning session. The Chiefs agreed on the signing of a Declaration to work together. The enthusiasm shown by the Hereditary Chiefs from all three parties has not been seen since the Delgamuukw Decision (1997).



Hereditary Chiefs preparing to enter opening ceremony at Moricetown "Of One Heart Gathering".

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Women's Day a success

The fifth annual Gitxsan Women's Day celebration hosted by the community of Gitsegukla was an huge success. With over one hundred and ninety women in attendance. Included in the celebration was a tribute to "Hanamuuxw" Joan Ryan for her lifetime contribution to the Gitxsan.



"Hanamuuxw" addressing the crowd during her acceptance speech.

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DelgamUukw (Earl Muldon) and Gisday wa (Alfred Joseph).



The Gitksan, Gitanyow and Wet'suwet'en are poised to achieve cooperation with the government.



**Communications Officer
Richard Sampson.**

Declaration to work Together cont.

Topics included: Protecting our water; fish farms and the implications to wild stocks; the two new documents just released by the Federal and Provincial governments that will effect all First Nations in British Columbia

and their decision making power . The Gitksan, Gitanyow and Wet'suwet'en are poised to achieve cooperation with the government "including practical and workable arrangements for land and resource decision-

making and sustainable development.

The next meeting date is still in the planning stage.



From: The Editor

Hello my name is Richard Sampson. I belong to the Frog Clan and I come from the house of Djogaslee.

I have recently graduated from the University of Northern British Columbia with a Bachelor of

Arts degree, majoring in First Nations Studies.

The Gitksan Treaty office has recently hired me as the Communications Officer. I realize the importance of building an effective communications infrastructure that

lends itself to the sharing of information that is generated on a day to day basis.

My goal is not to persuade you in any particular direction, but to inform you, so you can make informed decisions on issues that effect you.

Gitxsan Maintable



Opening ceremony: David Blackwater, Alvin Weget, Sadie Mowatt, and Bill Star.

The Gitxsan Maintable held on February 14, 2006 in Kispiox was an all inclusive event .

Spokes person for the houses of Gyologyet (Bridie O'Brien) commended Barb Huson, Gimlitzwit Coordinator, for including all Gimlitzwit members.

The seating arrangement with the Gimlitzwit Surrounding the Negotiating teams made Canada's Chief Negotiator Uncomfortable as mentioned in his opening remarks,

but he also stated: "it is about time that the Federal and Provincial governments were put in an uncomfortable position."

The session included the public release of the following three chapters: 1) Approval of Agreement in Principal 2) Dispute Resolution 3) Indian Act Transition.

It is important to note that these chapters were not signed off on, but only publicly released; there are still key points to be negotiated in each of the three chap-

ters.

The voice of the Gimlitzwit was strong and clear with their concerns brought forth.

The two resonating issues in the discussion were : that the government continues to pillage the land and resources while the Gitxsan "the owners of the land" see no benefits; the second issue is that the Gitxsan have no interest in signing a Treaty that deals with the Land Selection model.

In Chief commissioner Steven Points closing comments he states: "the Gitxsan are not unique in their quest to protect

their land", all the First Nations in British Columbia have the same concern and he believes this issue is not insurmountable. Point states: "this is the first time in my thirty years in the treaty business that he has heard the British Columbia Government say First Nations have Rights to the land; and that BC is willing to entertain revenue sharing".

"it is about time that the Federal and provincial governments were put in an uncomfortable position."



BCTC Chief Commissioner Steven Point.

All three Negotiating teams surrounded by the Gimlitzwit.



Women's Day 2

Miss Ludwig's
Gitxsan Class
From the Gitse-
gukla Elementary
school.



Hanamuuxw states:
"I don't believe I
have done anything
extraordinary, I was
just fulfilling my ob-
ligations as Chief
Hanamuuxw"



**Hana
Joan**

*Sarah (originally
from the Yukon)
and Claire Weget.*



Miss Gitxsan and Junior Miss Gitxsan

Amanda Vick
(Junior Miss
Gitxsan) and
Megan Danes
(Miss Gitxsan)
at the Gitx-
san Woman's
Day.



**Katie Ludwig and
niece Mia Stevens**



2006 Gitsegukla



**muuwx
Ryan**

**Muut (Rena
Benson)
House of
Nii Gyap**



Speech Presented by: Amada Vick.

It's no secret that woman are Physically, emotionally an spiritually stronger then men. I mean Come on! Women can pass an entire human through their body. And men cannot . But my speech today is not to compare, but to acknowledge. Acknowledge Gitxsan women, the elderly; the middle aged; the teenaged; we are all unique.

Through time women in our communities have gone though trials. People, men, even

society saying "No". "No" you cannot go to college, no you can't marry him or no, you cannot get a divorce. Through the mid and early 19th century and through out time this was the reality for women. That is why I want to acknowledge the elderly women in our society. Not that I would know but, but it must have taken a lot of Patience and tolerance to let someone tell you that your "place is at home" .

I would like to take my grandmother Sadie Mowatt for example: She has lived in Gitanmaax for over fifty years. In that time she has raised six children and kept a home. Not once have I heard her complain. This was the same story for many women in Gitanmaax during this time. It is no different in modern times. I would again, like



**"We are All
Unique"**

to take my aunt Bonnie Mowatt as an example she has raised two children while working a fulltime job and two part-time jobs to support her family. Again, I do not hear complaining.

It was not an option to speak up or defend yourself. Men were superior to women. The poem by Maya Angelou states: A bird Doesn't sing because it has the answer, it sings because it has a song.

This special day is meant to honor, and acknowledge Gitxsan Women. To take advantage of the pride that we have earned to celebrate the difficult tasks Gitxsan women have accomplished. Leadership as a Gitxsan woman is about pride. To enjoy life as a women. To look at yourself and smile and say, I am beautiful. Hamiiya.

Thank-You



Dimdiigibuu (Doris Wilson) enjoying herself at the Gitxsan Women's day.

Persistence paves the way to the Premiers Office



Miluulak presenting Premier Gordon Campbell with Gifts

After the development and endorsement of the “Siiwii Sa”(A Brand New Day) Proposal by the chiefs of the Sustat, Upper Skeena and Babine Watersheds. Miluulak began trying to set up a meeting with Premier Campbell in order to submit the proposal in person. After numerous failed attempts to set up a meeting with Campbell through Indian Affairs Minister Tom Christianson; Miluulak phoned long

time friend Iona Campanola to see if she could assist in setting up a meeting with the Premier. Iona said that she could not directly assist but, instead gave Alice direction on how she could set up the meeting. In following Iona’s direction Alice was able to secure a meeting with the Premier in Vancouver. So Alice was off to present the watershed proposal to the Premier early in the month of February. She showed up at the Trade Center where the Premier’s Vancouver office is located. Passing through the security was an ordeal in itself once she was in she was made to feel welcome by his secretaries. Then it was discovered that Miluulak was not on Premier Campbell’s agenda for the day. So she ask the secretary to phone his Victoria Office to try straighten out the problem. But they told her she could not meet with the Premier.

So Miluulak told his secretary to give the gift an proposal to the premier for her. Just then Premier Campbell walked in, the secretary told him the circumstance and he agreed to speak to her prior to his other commitments.

Miluulak made her proposal presentation and gave the premier gifts from the land. She also ask him to give Minister Christianson a can of fish as well. With gratitude the Premier excepted the gift and told her he would reply to her in person.

Maluulak, Premier Campbell and Gunther Jeffery

Prince Rupert All-Native Tournament



Bud Smith inducted into the Prince Rupert Basketball hall of Fame.

On February 10/2006 in front of over a thousand spectators Bud Smith was inducted into the Hall of Fame, only one year after team mate Jamie Sterritt achieved the same Honor. Bud’s first All Native appearance was in 1963 when Hazelton won the first of two back to back titles in the Intermediate division. While Bud won his first of three straight division all-star

Selections.

According to former team mate Art Sterritt, Buddy was one of the purest shooters that he has ever seen. In Bud’s All native career he was named to the All-star team five times, three in the Intermediate division and twice in the Seniors division.

Buddy and fellow Hall of Fame member Jamie Sterritt.



Negotiations Update



**Negotiator
Gwaans (Beverly
Clifton Percival).**

By Gwaans
March 2006
This fall we have been very busy with adding new language to the chapters . One of the key issues was the development of a tripartite work plan that all three sides agree to. This entailed the setting out of discussion topics for each working group session as well as, agreeing on dates and locations for the sessions . We have tried to make the majority of the sessions here on Gitxsan Land.

We have also found it beneficial to bring the teams out to the territories for sessions . This year we went to the Kuldo, Kisegas and in to the Babine Watershed. This allows the Federal & Provincial Teams to see our lax yip and we have discussions around our connection to the land and our values as they pertain to it.

The “Inside the Gitxsan” has been instrumental in the implementation of Gitxsan Terminology in the chap-

ters . The use our language is important to reflect the meaning of various topics from our view. For example in the fish chapter the use of our fishing sites is determined by which Wilp you belong to. Further our eligibility and enrollment puts for our social structure by virtue of our birth into Gitxsan society. These are sometimes difficult for the Government to understand and it requires that they acknowledge and support our structure within this process.

We continue to raise our policies with respect to activity on the lax yip and we are also supporting the watershed tables to articulate their interests as given by the Huwilp. We need to make serious efforts at the creating sustainable economic opportunities within the Huwilp and support their efforts. The Policies provide a baseline for protection of the land and our decision making on our own territories.

We have submitted a proposal to the New Relationship fund on behalf of the watersheds and if successful we could receive monies to give directly to the watershed for sustainable watershed planning.

We have spoken with Grand Chief Doug Kelly from the B.C. First Nations Leadership Council, and we will stay in touch with this proposal. They created Legislation to oversee the \$100 million dollar fund so it may be approximately 8 more months before these funds are open for application. The Gitxsan were the first to submit a proposal, so now we wait and see.

We continue to get feedback from Wilp and Huwilp and I would like to thank those of you that give this guidance and for those that ask questions, it is only through this dialogue that we are able to understand each other and make the work meaningful from the Huwilp’s perspective.

Hamiya’a!



Gimlitzwit watching a presentation by Allen Gotesfeld on proposed fish farm development at the mouth of the Skeena

Gimlitzwit Planning Session

The planning session was on March 2 and 3 in Prince George. With Henry Michel as the Facilitator.

The session was productive with all the chiefs actively participating.

The main focus was the 3 part Gitxsan strategy: Negotiation, Litigation and occupation of the land. The Facilitator’s final report outlines nine key issues that need to be addressed over the next year .

The report can be viewed at Gitxsan.com



Duobisxw addressing the Gimlitzwit



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The Gitxsan traditional territories cover 32,000 square kilometers of land in northwest British Columbia, Canada.

The Gitxsan Treaty Office's vision statement is Dim Lipgyathl huwiphl Gitxsan (freedom to be ourselves). Overall the Gitxsan continue to undertake in sustainable activities on the traditional territories. These activities can cause difficulties because the relationship between the Crown and the Gitxsan on the land is unresolved.

The Gitxsan Treaty Office is in negotiations with the Federal and Provincial governments to ensure with Wilp is recognized as the decision makers in regards to the land base. This strategy reinforces the strength of Gitxsan Daxgyet an increases the scope of sustainable economic activities.

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