

GITXSAN GOVERNANCE
OFFICE OF THE GITXSAN HEREDITARY CHIEFS

CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM
SKEENA WATERSHED SALMON

November 1, 2018

Terms of Reference
(amended April 9, 2019)

Introduction

The Gitxsan Government fills a gap in the Skeena Watershed by protecting the individual rights of the Gitxsan which are otherwise unprotected in the Constitution of Canada and establishes this Crisis Management Team to proceed with a shared objective for the 2020 Fishing Season.

Issue

The current Salmon Crisis in the Skeena Watershed is exacerbated by government agents opening fisheries to Recreational Fisheries and its industry. In addition public Fishing Permits and Licenses issued by government agents in the Recreational Fisheries trespass on both the Indigenous individual rights to the fisheries and on Gitxsan Fisheries Tenures.

Purpose

Protect salmon and habitat in the Gitxsan Fisheries Tenure and to understand that the salmon is vital to the public interest, including the diet and culture of Indigenous peoples in the Skeena Watershed.

Team

The Crisis Management Team holds an advisory role to Gitxsan Government, Federal Government and Provincial Government and is jointly established by the parties.

The initial members shall be Appointed Gitxsan Chiefs and representatives from Canada and Province of BC and as appointed, representatives of Skeena First Nations leadership, Hereditary Chiefs, Commercial Fishermen, Recreational Fishermen, government ministries and from both Municipal and Band Councils.

The Team shall hold one orientation meeting (April 29 or May 7) and a number of working meetings to discuss matters relating to a shared objective for the 2020 Fishing season.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair of the Crisis Team, will be appointed by the Team at their first meeting, will facilitate the Team proceedings and ensure all decisions and processes are consistent with all policies, decisions and Gitxsan ayookw (including other indigenous peoples laws).

Team members are expected to attend working group meetings and participate in the process. Members are expected to attend and orientation session to learn about their mandate, roles and responsibilities and procedures of the Team and have opportunity to review to complete the final Terms of Reference of the Team.

Team members are expected to provide feedback on the initial Fish Plan and Terms of Reference of the Team.

The Team will be provided a copy of the Fish Plan

Meetings of the Team

The Team will hold at least one working group meeting per month to discuss matters related to the Salmon Crisis in the Skeena Watershed. This Team will hold additional meetings deemed necessary within each month and within timelines established by the Chair.

The Team will be deemed to be properly constituted even if all members are not in attendance. No quorum is required.

Meeting notes will be prepared and distributed to all members at the meeting.

Meeting dates will be established by the Chair in consultation with members of the Team.

Fish Plan

The protection of fish and fish habitat is integral to Gitxsan Wilp Government. To manage the Skeena River Fishery, the Gitxsan Wilp Government will collaborate and contribute to all governments in the Skeena Watershed. This collaboration will result in new management direction, updated harvest allocations and prioritize enhancement and restoration opportunities influenced by low water levels within the watershed. This action is required to ensure indigenous people in Northwest BC have fish populations which are sustainable for our grandchildren and the generations that follow. Tasks to be completed include:

- Engage necessary technical entities such as Gitxsan Watershed Authority, Skeena Fisheries Commission, Gitanyow Fisheries Authority, and may include Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition and all Skeena Watershed First Nations, etc. These entities will provide all the relevant reports to ensure the Gitxsan Wilp Government will make further informed decisions.
- Engage with and influence relevant government ministries regarding Gitxsan jurisdiction, Anaat.
- Engage with the BC Fish and Wildlife Association and BC Sports Fisherman Association to accommodate common interests in the best interest of Gitxsan Fisheries Tenure, Anaat.
- Engage the appropriate professional services such as biologists, foresters, engineers and economists.
- Collect and implement traditional knowledge regarding fishing sites – how to harvest certain species - within Gitxsan Fisheries Tenure, including preparation and processing certain species and other relevant information to ensure transmission and inheritance (gwalx yeinsxw) of this knowledge, including necessary language.
- Identify other gaps in policy and management strategies which have negative impacts on the Gitxsan Fisheries Tenure. Develop strategies and management objectives and policies including ayookw to fill these gaps protecting wild salmon and the rivers.
- Develop a fish habitat assessment and monitoring plan with each Gitxsan Wilp.
- Implement reasonable portions of the Ax (water) and Hoon (fish) policy to protect all fish stocks in the Skeena Watershed.