



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:

Gordon Sebastian

For thousands of years our people have been living harmoniously with the land, shoulder to shoulder with each other. The traditional society of our ancestors was strong and well-functioning, and our heritage is rich with a unique culture, language and a living Ayook.

Our people are known coast to coast as leaders, paving the way for indigenous peoples to assert our rights according to our rightful title in the Laxyip.

It is time to move forward together in unity to forge a new chapter of our proud history where our nation will grow stronger and meet the demands of the future with pride and vision.

The traditional Huwilp system of governance has provided us the tools to create a path forward – one that respects the diversity of our people and the autonomy of our wilps.

Please join our Simgiigyat, as we continue to move forward together. Prosperity is possible and the time is now.



Purpose of the Newsletter

These newsletters will provide updates for members about Gitxsan Huwilp Government activity including:

Important meetings and news updates

Tracking ongoing conversations and issues

Historical facts and education about Gitxsan history

Interesting stories about Gitxsan members and initiatives in the laxyip and beyond

Opportunities for you to get involved

If you have an idea or a question, please email us at communications@gitxsan.ca.
We would love to hear from you.

A STRONG WAY FORWARD:

Gitxsan Huwilp Government

Your Simgiligyet are establishing a modern government model, built on the foundation and principles of our hereditary system. Seeing our people continuing to live a prosperous life as our ancestors did in the days before is the foundation of this modern government model.

VISION

For our Huwilp to remain autonomous while having a unified Gitxsan Huwilp Government that will make decisions on issues such as protecting our Gitxsan individual right to fish within Gitxsan Fisheries Tenure, informed by our Ayook (law).

MISSION

To respect the diversity of our people, culture and traditions within the Canadian constitution with a balanced approach that serves to advance the interests of all. To bring clarity and understanding about the purpose and intent of the Gitxsan Huwilp Government with tools for effective communication among members.

THE WILPHL GITXSAN

The Most Fundamental Entity of Gitxsan Society.

Gitxsan Society is matrilineal, that is, citizenship and inherency flow through the mother's side.

What is this? Snapshot of the Gitxsan people as a Nation.

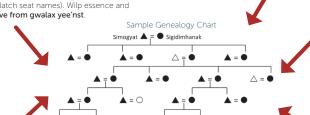
■ Members of same colour denote they are members in the wilphl Gitxsan.

GWALAX YEE'NST

Each wilphl Gitxsan has its treasure; its inherency, assets that are real and not real, handed down from generation to generation, held in perpetuity, never extinguished. Assets include: its wilnaatahl (close relatives), lax yiphl wilp (lands and resources therein), adaawx (ancient oral history), ayook (laws that dictate behaviour), limx oo'ii (time immemorial songs that link the wilp to its lax yip), waaim taa (ancient potlatch seat names). Wilp essence and identity derive from gwalax yee'nst.

LAX YIP

Each wilphl Gitxsan hold rights and title to and thus have jurisdiction over their territory and resources therein, surface and sub-surface.



PDEEK

Each wilphl Gitxsan is also associated to a pdek (aka phratry, clans). Each wilphl Gitxsan is also one of four pdeks: Gistkaast (Fireweed), Lax Seel (Frog), Lax Gibuu (Wolf), or Lax Skiik (Eagle)

ADAAWX

Each wilphl Gitxsan has an oral history. The adaawx identifies the wilphl Gitxsan as a Gitxsan entity with associated assets. It may include their creation and migration since the ice age, associated animal crests, symbols, limx oo'y (time immemorial songs), limx sinaahl (breath songs) and limx nox nok (spirit songs).

The liligit, the feast, is the most significant venue where the very essence of gwaltx ye'insxw is formerly given cadence. It is a gathering of high ranking guests of other pdek (phratries) to witness the inner workings of the hosting wilp and its pdek.

DAXGYAT

Each wilphl Gitxsan has the daxgyat, authority and power to manifest their essence as they see fit for the best good of the wilp.

AYOOKIM GITXSAN

Each wilphl Gitxsan and its citizens are required to behave in accordance to Gitxsan Law. They include citizenship, adoption, marriage, property, use of resources, conduct at potlatches, etc.

YUUHLIMX

This term refers to ancient Gitxsan teachings that shape and define the behaviour and posture of the Gitxsan especially expected of the Simogyat. Typically, maternal uncles and aunts are charged with teaching, shaping, and defining heirs to a chieftainship.

Credit: Gary Patsey

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Develop sound communication and engagement processes to ensure all Gitxsan are informed and included on important decisions that impact our Nation.

Our path forward will be based on the following principles rooted in the Gitxsan way:

Reflective of Gitxsan culture and language, incorporating Adaawk (oral history) and Ayook (law)

Respect for autonomy and diversity of house groups (Wilps)

Kinship between members, house groups and clans based on our shared history in the Laxyip (territory)

Transparency that builds trust and relationships. A sense of obligation to the community.

Gitxsan governing in the traditional way of life for future generations

Enforce the Gitxsan Fisheries tenure to protect our Anaat.

Create additional policies, procedures and controls that eliminate or reduce the negative impacts of development on the land and water.

Watch for more details about the fishing ban activity (and your rights and privileges as Gitxsan) in upcoming newsletters

GITXSAN HISTORICAL TIMELINE



1867

Canada constitution act created

1932

Five chiefs charged

1982

Gitxsan and Wetseweten Chiefs sue BC and Canada for ownership and jurisdiction over our laxyip

1986

Dropped the colonial system (band councils) and went fully into the hereditary system

1996

BC left the treaty negotiations

2000

Trilateral negotiations begin again between Gitxsan, Canada and BC

2009-2010

Gitxsan Development Corporation created to build the local economy from the ground up 1846

First contact between colonialists and Gitxsan people

1925

Canada outlawed the feast (Liligit)

1972

Gitxsan Carrier Tribal Council established and run by 8 elected chiefs (but jurisdiction was only reserves)

1984

Trial starts (Created Chiefs Advisory Team (CAT) with 3 members from each clan and a Litigation Team). Advisory team organized witnesses and organized testimony as well as raised funds for litigation.

1994

Gitxsan Treaty Society is formed from the CAT team members

1997

The landmark Supreme Court of Canada decision (The Delgamuukw Decision) was handed down Dec. 11, 1997. Since then,other First Nations in BC, across Canada and around the world are using the Delgamuukw decision to seek justice on aboriginal title through the courts and through negotiations.

2003

Interim forest agreement reached, resulting in forest licensing.

2018

Present Gitxsan Huwilp Government structure established by Simogyet (Hereditary Chiefs), organized into downriver chiefs and upriver chiefs. First objective is to address the salmon crisis with an overarching goal to protect and preserve the Gitxsan way of life.

A Government Model that Reflects Who We Are, and Who We Always Have Been

The Huwilp Government will allow the Gitxsan to be fully included, and protected by Canada's constitution, as described in Sections 91 & 92 of Canada's constitution act. The Hereditary Chiefs will provide the vision, mission and direction of the Gitxsan Wilp Government.

The Huwilp Government is currently represented by 19 Gigeenix Simgiigyat (up river hereditary chiefs) and 19 Gyeets Simgiigyat (down river hereditary chiefs) who are working through some of the basic operational and decision making pathways for the government structure.



A PROGRESSIVE SOCIETY, AHEAD OF ITS TIME

In Gitxsan society, since the beginning of time, a well-functioning government has been built into the house groups (Huwilp) through the matrilineal system.

The Wilp determines:

Which members are in each Wilp and in each Clan The clear rules about the authority and the responsibility of each wilp

The designation of the laxyip boundaries

A process to resolve disputes between members according to Ayook

The assets of the Wilp are:

Wilnaatahl (family)

Lax yip (lands & resources)

Anaat (historical fishing site)

Adaawkx (ancient oral history)

Ayook (laws that dictate behaviour)

Limx Oo'ii/xSinaahlxw (Ancient Songs)

Tsaan (Totem Pole)

Gwalla (Chief's blanket)

Aap'in taa (Sim'oogyat seat in the liligit)

The Gitxsan Huwilp Government is moving forward to advance and assert the rights and title of our people guided by this foundation.

WHAT IS EXPECTED TO CHANGE WITH A GITXSAN HUWILP GOVERNMENT?

Increase of government to government relations with both the Province and Canada.

Simogiigyet are the government for their wilp and the coming together of all Simogiigyets together form the unified Gitxsan Huwilp Government that will be recognized in Canada's constitution act under section 91 and section 92.

Creating a system to enforce the fisheries tenure of each Wilp and respective Anaat(s).

Informed decision making based on all available information from our hereditary leaders and subject matter experts.

Increase of communication and transparency.

The Gitxsan Huwilp Government will become the organized system that is included in the Canada Constitution Act which will be led by the Simogiigyets.

WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME?

Ayook (which guides all activity)

The autonomy of our wilps.

The roles and the responsibilities of the Simgiigyet

The contributions of Wilp members in the Feast Hall

The individual rights of the Gitxsan

This past November, a number of Gitxsan Simogiigyets participated in a session called Gitxsan 101, a series of presentations about the Gitxsan culture and Ayook for government officials and local media. Watch the whole session online at https://vimeo.com/302210204.

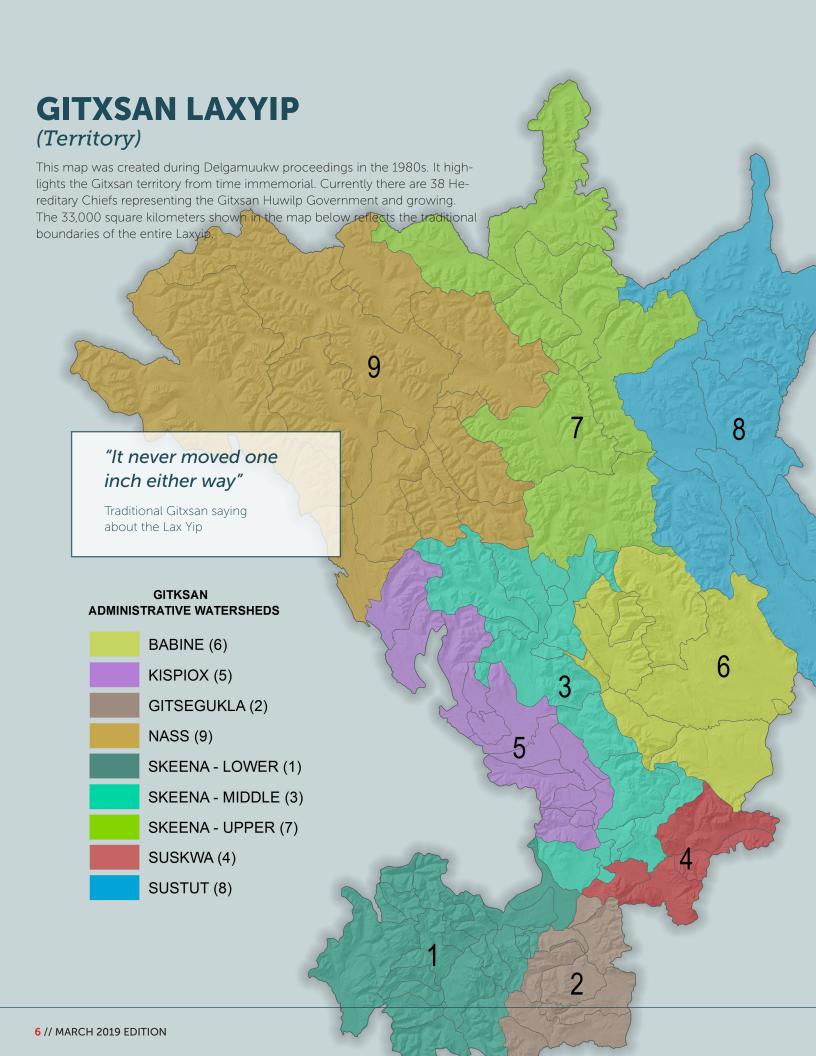
The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted internationally in 2007 and adopted by Canada in 2016. It states what governments must do (or not do) with respect to indigenous peoples.

UNDRIP (Article 4): Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

What does this mean? Your Simogiigyets will make decisions affecting your wilp and utilizing the Ayook.

Want to learn more about the Canada's constitution and how it will impact us? Watch for details in upcoming newsletter.





CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Protecting the Salmon Habitat



"The Skeena holds us together – it flows through our veins. We owe it to the mighty Skeena river to fight together,"

- February 7 meeting participant

Initiated and led by Gitxsan Simgiigyat, the Crisis Management Team is an advisory group to the Gitxsan Huwilp Government. The crisis at-hand is the issue of protecting the fisheries tenure along the Skeena. The Ayook dictates the Anaat boundaries for each Wilp. According to our law, one Wilp cannot enter another Wilp's Anaat to hunt or fish without permission.

However, the province and the federal government provide access to outsiders through various permits through the permitting process, which is trespass-

The Crisis Management Team is also representing the Gitxsan in broader efforts to address the salmon crisis.

ing. The Crisis team will address issues like how to enforce the fishing ban and deal with access and trespass on our territory.

The Simgiigyat have invited other Skeena Nations as well as officials from both provincial and federal governments to participate on the team.

The Crisis Management Team is also representing the Gitxsan in broader efforts to address the salmon crisis. On February 7, multiple Skeena Nations (Kitsumkalum, Kitselas Gitanyow and Gitxsan) met to discuss recreational fishing closures for the 2019 season as a unified response to the salmon crisis.

Together, the Skeena Nations, in a show of solidarity and strength, voted to continue to work together for the protection of the Skeena Salmon and the Skeena Watershed,

through the structure of the Skeena Nations Fish Forum Protocol. Watch for updates as they are available.

WHY THE FISHING BAN?

To be clear, the fishing ban is for recreational anonly, not for Gitxsan, who are entitled to fish in the Anaat (fishing site) accord-

ing to our fisheries tenure.

The purpose of the ban is to take decisive action to protect declining salmon stocks in the Skeena and its tributaries. Our nation is not alone in our concern about the salmon populations and their habitat, and our desire to protect our way of life for our grandchildren.

We need to protect the individual right to our fisheries tenure from corporate control within the recreationfishing industry.

The Simogiigyet and Chiefs from other Skeena Nations are taking action to preserve the indigenous way of life along the Skeena river and its tributaries, as they have for thousands of years from time immemorial.

Please stay tuned for more updates about this ongoing issue and the Huwilp Government's action.



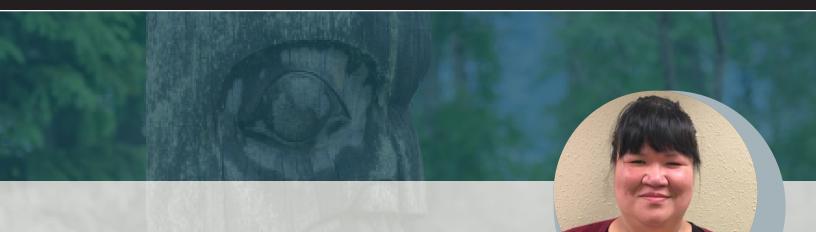
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HAVE A PHOTO WE CAN SHARE?

Send us a copy at communications@gitxsan.com with your name and contact information and every submission will be entered for a chance to win a \$50.00 gift card to the Gitanmaax Market. Draw takes place on APRIL 5 at 1 pm. Follow our facebook page to see the winner!



Meet our new Communications Coordinator!

Q&A WITH KARLA GREEN

Karla Green will be joining the team to help support the communication efforts for the Gitx-san Huwilp Government. Karla is from Wilp Djogaslee and her Gitxsan name is Haaxlh ba'aal. She is originally from Gitanmaax and moved to Kamploops to pursue education in Business Administration and has now relocated back. From collecting photos, member addresses, updating the website to tracking and responding to all your questions, she will be busy ensuring information is available to community members. See what she has to say about herself in a recent Q&A.

What attracted you to the role?

I wanted to freshen up on my writing skills and understanding how to effectively engage our community with the information about our government.

What do you hope to learn?

I want to learn to become a better writer, a better presenter and how to use channels like social media and the website.

Best piece of advice?

Pursue your dreams no matter what the challenges may be.

What is your favourite show?

The Walking Dead

What is your favourite food?

Butter Chicken

How to get involved

REGISTER FOR UPDATES ONLINE AT:

www.gitxsan.ca

OR PHONE AND ASK FOR KARLA GREEN 1-866-842-6780

FOLLOW US

Facebook.com/gitxsanhuwilpgov

ATTEND AN EVENT

Watch for details, including live streaming, in the weeks to come

HAVE A QUESTION?

Email communications@gitxsan.ca or stop by the Gitxsan Government's Office.