

GITXSAN HUWILP GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE GITXSAN HEREDITARY CHIEFS

Crisis Management Team
and
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
December 20, 2022

THE COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN FOR GITXSAN LAND ISSUES

Introduction

The best way to manage a crisis is to prevent it through active issues management and plan for it with a Crisis Planning Playbook.

In 2022 the Gitxsan Huwilp Government (GHG) assigned six Head Chiefs to comprise the Crisis Management Team. Their goal is to create a Community Safety Plan to deal with the burgeoning safety crises between the RCMP and members of the Gitxsan people on their lands.

The RCMP are obligated to act as Ordered by a BC Supreme Court Justice but have discretion as to how and when an Order is enforced.

Of particular concern to the Gitxsan people are RCMP activities at blockades that have been set up on First Nations lands and on the Laxyip (traditional lands owned by the Wilp) where trespassers are asked to vacate Gitxsan jurisdiction. The Gitxsan do and will continue to defend their ownership and interests in their lands which cover 35,000 sq. kilometers in Northern British Columbia.

The two parties have come together to ensure that the lives of people are a priority, and it is the **Gitxsan mission to ensure that no life is lost** in the event of a militarized RCMP escalation on First Nation lands.

At this time, the Parties are not deciding on WHAT to do but HOW to do what everyone knows is the RIGHT thing. Save lives.

Preparation

It isn't if a crisis will hit but when.

The Head Chiefs and the RCMP are able to forecast scenarios and make contingency plans to mitigate downsides and maximize upside through a joint Community Safety Plan. We will stress-test this plan - through a tabletop exercise annually - as we know crises will happen to all organizations and governments throughout their lifespan. Though hindsight is 20/20, with proper planning the severity and subsequent fallout of a crisis can be minimized.

For example: there are failed Consultation Processes in most forestry, mining and pipeline developments, and highly unlikely closures of the railway and highways.

Stress-testing on multiple fronts can reveal patterns across various scenarios that the Chiefs and RCMP can use to create timely and effective Crisis management and communication response. Each crisis is unique; however, they tend to share 70 to 80 percent of the same characteristics. Crisis Management Playbooks work and can be tailored to specific situations.

The Crisis Management Playbook

1. Develop Leadership protocols:

- Chair,
- Head Chiefs,
- Local Commander,
- Superintendent of RCMP,
- Communication Liaisons (RCMP /Gitxsan)
- Community relations coordinators

2. War room configuration.

Head Chiefs and RCMP choose a neutral room to meet. This room should be pre-stocked with Wi-Fi, Projector, Television, Crisis Management Playbook and Crisis Management Checklists.

3. Develop Responsibility and Action Plan Matrix

What are the roles of local commander, roles of Head Chiefs (mother and father clans), roles of proponents of resource development? We will need to build out these responsibilities.

We will work with the:

- manager of Laxyip Management Office,
- Gitxsan Huwilp Crisis Team, and
- Gitxsan Chiefs' office,

Proponents provide general updates and visits to proposed sites.

4. Crisis Communication Planning: Parties will pre-identify problems including but not limited to: Consultation processes, reasons for Blockades, and awareness of legal processes in application for Injunctions.

5. Create a forecasting methodology to predict the future. Develop early response monitoring. Define and measure the leading indicators of an escalating threat with:

1. Problems in the consultation process,
2. Setting up a blockade,
3. Application to Supreme Court for Injunction (Urgency; judicial notice),
4. Court Ordered Injunction,
5. Police discretion on how and when to enforce Injunction,

6. Escalation by the Provincial Minister of Public Safety.

For the Playbook to stay relevant, parties should table-top the Crisis Management Process and Playbook in annual simulations to prepare all parties in the event of a real crisis situation emerging. This will help strengthen governance and communication structures. Even if no crisis arises, regular stress-testing reveals opportunities to make Gitxsan, the RCMP, and potentially government relationships more resilient. Resilience helps all parties communicate openly and address issues as they emerge.

Stress-testing through table-top exercises also shines the light on outside stakeholders (public, service providers, motels, transportation, trucking companies, etc.) It can build goodwill with all direct and indirect stakeholders. Our team can build trust and credibility before the crisis by being transparent. If we build goodwill, it is more likely our communication will be seen as transparent and that our reputations can flourish instead of becoming damaged during a crisis

Actions During the Crisis

Planning isn't everything. Mike Tyson says, "everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth".

When a crisis hits, there can be serious damage to community, livelihoods and/or the environment. Workers and government ministries can get caught up in games of popularity, regulators may look to assign blame. Antagonists (including police psychologists) may take advantage of a situation for their own gain, activists may mobilize with or without good intention. At the same time, facts on the ground can be few and far between, opinions and rumours may fly about the severity of the crisis and levels of complicity by proponents and the Gitksan. How do we mitigate these potential damages?

1. Immediately activate a cross-functional Community Safety Crisis

Management Team that is empowered to tackle

a. primary:

- legal,
- technical and operational,
- safety, and
- communication.

b. secondary: monitoring reactions and to measure threat assessments on all sides

- key stakeholders,
- media,
- community
- governments
- industry.

2. **Assign the team with a full-time senior leader** and match this with appropriate levels of funding and adequate decision-making authority to make and implement decisions within minutes and hours - not days.
3. **Designate a Command Centre** to bring the team physically together to manage the crisis in a timely fashion and coordinate factual communication internally and externally. There should be pre-established leads for communications for both the RCMP and the Gitxsan. These communication professionals will ideally work together or on their own (if required) to craft appropriate and timely messaging and dissemination to all relevant stakeholders.
4. **Design Crisis Management Checklists** to ensure that no part of crisis protocols is missed, for operations, stakeholder engagement, stakeholder communication should be pre-designed for ease of use by all members of the cross-functional team.

Key Benefits of a cross-functional team dedicated to crisis management includes but are not limited to:

1. providing the best possible understanding of the magnitude, scope, and facts behind the crisis,
2. helping leaders guard against biases and provide a sober appraisal of how long resolving the crisis will take,
3. ensuring that promises aren't made that could erode credibility and reputation of the Gitxsan and RCMP.
4. Calming the extreme reactions of stakeholders through timely, transparent communication.
5. Managing planning time for threat to be best understood and addressed,
6. Urgently responding to regulators as necessary
7. Allowing RCMP Commanders and Head Chiefs *not to become* all-consumed by the crisis.

If the above protocols, responsibilities, actions and checklists are not in place, dysfunction, poor information management, lack of central decision-making, misinformation or disinformation sharing will result. Turf wars, finger pointing, poor reputation management, poor community relations and critically potential loss of lives should be put to rest with ethical, cross-functional crisis management and communication planning.

Suggestions to GHG Head Chiefs and the RCMP

1. Do not Chair or Lead your crisis team. Let them report out to you. This gives you space and time to oversee all the elements on Gitxsan territory, multiple agendas - not only the immediate crisis.
2. Show confidence in your Wilp and Detachment – show that you are in control, that you know what you're doing, that you will keep people on all sides safe and out of danger.
3. Think of what's next even when the storm (crisis) is still around you, because there'll be opportunities and other situations you have to manage as a consequence of the crisis that you might not have thought about. However, your checklists can be your guide in identifying multiple stakeholder agendas.
4. Take the opportunity to build partnerships, trust and rapport with public.
5. Chiefs should ensure all Head Chiefs understand the context of decisions and communications liaisons should monitor and evaluate media and social media coverage.
6. Head Chiefs and RCMP Commanders are the faces to the media and other lawmakers and should be properly coached, prepared and trained.

When Crisis Recedes

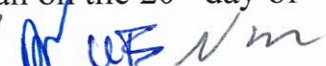
1. **Always take the time to debrief with your Crisis Team.** All proponents should report during the debrief and a debrief checklist, which is pre-designed will assist in ensuring that nothing is missed including but not limited to:
 - a. the root cause.
 - b. people issues
 - c. culture
 - d. decisions
 - e. rights
 - f. capabilities and capacity
 - g. processes: risk governance
 - h. Wilp accountability,
 - i. proponent/government accountability,
 - j. implementation of decisions
 - k. management in the Consultation process,
 - l. standard setting.

2. **Be accountable** in the Consultation and Treaty process. Gitxsan must be accountable as well for matters not resolved in the Consultation process

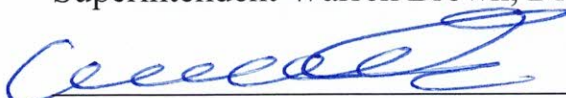
3. **Review and learn**

This is also an opportunity to improve on the Crisis Management Playbook for future issues.

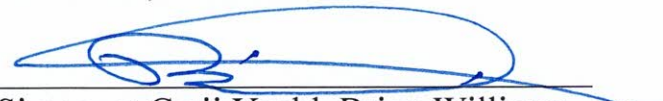
This Community Safety Plan and Crisis Communication Playbook could lead to more peaceful coexistence between our Gitxsan Community, Head Chiefs, the Province and the RCMP. Implementing this plan will reduce taxpayer costs on enforcement of injunctions, RCMP arrests, court backlog and costs – benefiting the reputation of all parties and increasing trust in all of our communities.

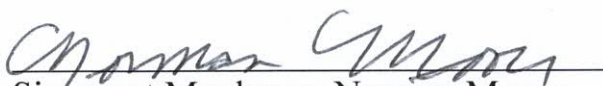
In Witness Whereof the Parties have executed this crisis plan on the 20th day of December, 2022. *with intent to move it forward* 

Signed of behalf of THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE by Chief Superintendent Warren Brown, District Commander, “E” Division North District:


Chief Superintendent Warren Brown

Signed on behalf of THE HEAD CHIEFS OF THE GITXSAN HUWILP GOVERNMENT by Simogyat Gwii Yeehl, Brian Williams and Simogyat Moolaxan, Norman Moore:


Simogyat Gwii Yeehl, Brian Williams


Simogyat Moolaxan, Norman Moore