

ALH GIKH, ALL TOGETHER

COMMUNICATIONS

Since May 14, 2020 the Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze and office administration have been planning, organizing and clarifying the work needed to move into the Negotiations for the recently signed Memorandum on the Recognition of Wet'suwet'en Rights and Title.

For decades, the safety and security of our People on the Yintah is our priority. We are working intensely with the OW, BC and Canada to advance our governance system, the wellbeing of the yintah and the wellness of our People across our Yintah and those that live away. We support Indigenous Peoples, around the globe, that are in similar place we were in not that long ago, we provide ongoing supports of the Land Defenders, especially the Mohawk and the Tiny House Warriors! We are supporting the decolonization of the Crown Negotiations' team to help advance the recognition of

our Wet'suwet'en rights and title dialogue. We hear our Clans, allies and neighbors supporting these negotiations to have the Recognition of our rights and title.

Yintah habkīts – everything comes from the land, including the Wet'suwet'en People/Houses
Cis Bighewh Dini Tse Li – Constitution; & Wet'suwet'en Elders, previous Lilukhs, Emma Michell & the previous Maxlexlex, Johnny David

In communications, a draft communications and engagement strategy with 5 main focus areas to support the MOU negotiations has been developed. Collectively we (senior management team) are working with the Title Action Committee and we support the 5 Clan Runners & Reps, to

create an engagement plan, clan by clan, as requested.

We support the family and community engagement work with the Wet'suwet'en Wellness Group. We are mapping out an engagement strategy for building relations with the external or interested parties (locals) living in the yintah, 'For the betterment of All' strategy; Overall a small team is Supporting the Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze with the MOU negotiations, Reunification dialogue with the Clans and the Elected Band Councils; BC and Canada delegates with Media and Press releases.

CĪS BIGHEWH DINĪ TSE LĪ - CONSTITUTION

Over many years the clans have been working with Allen Cummings, then Molly Wickham to map out the Inuk Nu'at'en – our laws. The many chapters include “Decision Making” which is a foundational piece. There are three consistent aspects of Wet'suwet'en Decision Making – consensus building Alh Gikh Lhiyī atdīnī (they've reached a decision all together); Collective Nature of Clan/House – Dini'ze, Tsakë'ze, skiy'ze and citizens/members (Me/We/Yintah); and Balhats ratification – a smoke feast and Balhats to follow and a dispute resolution process in case of non-consensus.

We support the **Nation Building Proposal**: Language and Culture Society, Tsakë'ze Support, Genealogy/ Database, Clans Runners Support, Youth Leadership & Mentorship.

All of our research, planning and mapping out work is based upon our Wet'suwet'en Ways, Wet'suwet'en it'ën:

- Ways of Knowing: Anuk niwh'it'ën & Kungax (oral histories);
- Ways of Being: Yinka Denii ha bi' it'ën (the ways of the people) – holistic - We are the Land, the Land is Us; Cës (peace/settlement)
- Ways of Doing: Niwh'tsi'de'ni ha bi' it'ën, following the ways of our ancestors; wellness, sustainable, strengths based

WET'SUWET'EN RIGHTS AND TITLE MOU Update

For many decades the Wet'suwet'en People have been collectively advancing for the recognition of our rights and title. We have been in the court system for decades, Kela/Hagwilneghl vs Canfor; & Delgamuukw/Gisdlay Wa.

We spent over a decade at the BC Treaty Table, seeking to have our unique governing system, connection to the yintah recognized but could not reach any agreement with BC or Canada. After accumulating significant debt to participate in the treaty process, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en has been recently notified that the debt has been '*forgiven*' and the amount wiped off the books. A total of 14\$M over 12 years, which paid for the negotiating team, meetings, research and policy analysis,

innovation & the energy of the skiy'ze as there is much work to do in the next year. This has been a significant challenge in terms of meetings, coming together as we normally would, in these Pandemic times. We don't need to wait to start this work! How can we get more youth involved?

We also took the time to support families/clans, father clans, with the many losses in the last few months, following our Wet'suwet'en Protocols to postpone formal meetings when there is a death, to honor the ceremonies that are taking place, and the feasting, family time needed to hold each other up in our grieving and mourning. This has made for a challenge in our meetings and working together as there are delays and meetings postponed.

DECOLONIZING – NIWH JUH DINII
JENA DUHNEE HENLIH' HOTS NEZ
TAH DILH (WILAT, SUE ALFRED)

governance work...& is no longer owed.

Since the clans, house members came together to decide to approve the MOU, following our decision-making process, chiefs, wing chiefs, elders, and citizens, living in and away from the Yintah. It was amazing to witness the number of *skiy'ze*, in each Clan, getting involved, sharing their gifts, and seeking to be more involved.

As part of the nation building proposal a *youth mentorship* project is in the works to connect up the



Figure 1 Nitagh Bin, Francois Lake

On a one hour Zoom call, Jody Wilson Raybould has shared her thoughts and expertise in nation building, building up institutions that reflect our Ways in a modern

world. She provided her overall support for us to do the internal work.

Witsuwit'en Territory

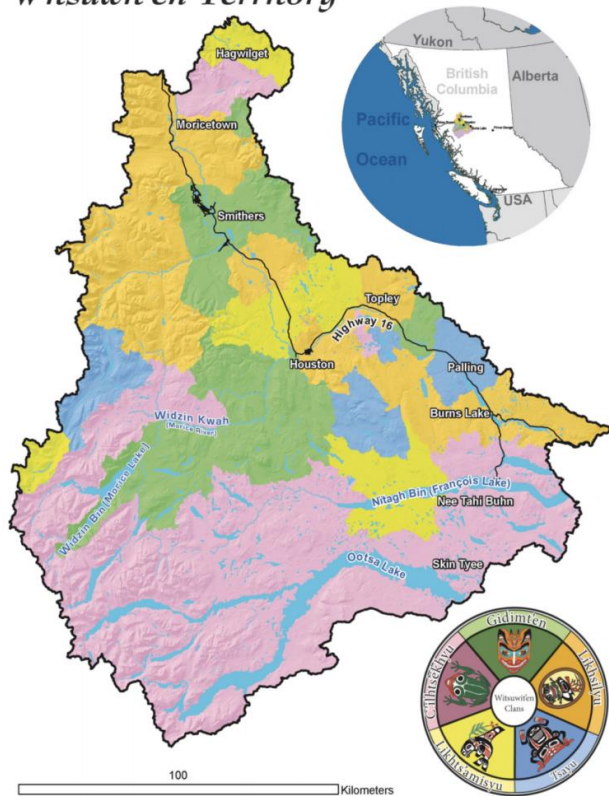


Figure 2 Witsuwit'en (Wet'suwet'en) Territory Map

The Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze would like to acknowledge the many indigenous scholars, leadership and supports from around the world, our Gitanyow and Gitxsan neighbors, over many decades to help our People make our way through the colonial systems, as whole as we can, working towards healthy people, healthy land.

We have had many questions about why we are in treaty making – so we need to share how different the treaty process is – and we are NO longer on this path. The Wet'suwet'en walked away from the BC Treaty process years ago. Tabi Misiyh Marvin George for sharing this table.

Treaty Making	Versus	MOU Recognition
Land selection model – 5% of BC "Crown"		Across the Yintah – as per house groups and

Land set aside for treaty negotiations/first nation		clans' 22,000 square km (defining exclusive and shared jurisdiction)
Release of all liabilities upon signing		No release of liabilities for past wrongs; includes Redress
Provides Certainty as 'rights' are defined in treaty (often no self-government component)		Recognize and affirm Wet'suwet'en rights and title - implementation and expression of key areas to be negotiated
Quid Pro Quo – balance between what you sign /give and what you negotiate/receive		We have not signing anything away; only for the BC/Canada government to Recognize Wet'suwet'en Rights and Title, house groups and yintah
Closing plan – developing language/laws for hunting and fishing for example		Brings forward the Constitution work; collection of our laws for informing MOU (i.e. governance, child and family/ water)
Implementation plan – obligations to be met once treaty signed		Need to get beyond silo approaches, transform systems = paradigm shift
All parts of a treaty are negotiated (often organized within the Band /First Nation specific program areas, land, ec dev, housing, health...)		Holistic approach needed – we are the land and the land is us – health & wellbeing of the People and the Land, sustainability within Wet'suwet'en it'ën, Ways;

Federal government loans \$\$ to band to negotiate treaty; no revenue sharing		Minimal funding supports provided; Revenue Sharing, Compensation & Redress included with the House Groups (collectively)
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The focus in the last two months has been to get organized, work planning, staffing up to support the MOU process, we are a small team working on many initiatives. We now have a MOU project manager, Dunen, Lucy Gagnon, Gretchen Woodman, Child and Family Development Jurisdiction & Sarah Lloyd, Human & Social Services (HSS) Manager.

Working for the betterment of all: The Wet’suwet’en, BC and Canada are committed to reach out to the local interested parties/local organizations that the Wet’suwet’en have worked with for years. A BC designate is working with the Communications Director to develop and implement a process to share information and updates from the table. We are keen not to follow the treaty advisory committee model that the Wet’suwet’en were part of years ago, as it was not a good fit in our “For the Betterment of All” vision. This initiative is respectfully giving our internal coming together work, some time and space before it starts however it will start soon.

WHERE ARE WE AT WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT(G2G) NEGOTIATIONS?

Affirmation Agreement (AA) in 3 months – a document that will define the relationships between BC, Canada and the Wet’suwet’en Houses/Clans - being clear on what the agreement does and doesn’t do; very preliminary work done and much work is still needed.

The AA affirms yihk/house groups as the inherent governing body with Inuk Nu’at’en and will not

immediately impact any existing rights and interests on the yintah.

The Wet’suwet’en has a small working group who are consistently challenging the barriers to advance indigenous governance systems with Canada and BC. We are likely not going to meet our ambitious 3-month deadline for the Affirmation Agreement, as the 5 Didikhní / clans need time to review and provide input, direction and approval.

T’oh, Water in 6 months: to engage with the Wet’suwet’en clans and house groups across the yintah and those away from home, to identify what is the most important aspects of T’oh (water - i.e. rivers, lakes, springs, wetlands) in our Yintah. These values will eventually lead to a Water Law/Policy to help inform the



Figure 3 Widzin Bin, Morice River

MOU water and watershed health negotiations. We are utilizing our Wet’suwet’en It’ën, Kungax (oral history) and C’idede (teaching stories) of Es’tace (Isdes) to help us remember our Stories, what they teach us about Life, Creation, wiggus and interdependence. We reach out, introduce the idea of water laws/principles, experiences with t’oh and to listen, observe, share and reflect back what was heard.

The first round of dialogue sessions is underway for July – two more rounds will take place this summer and fall. The Tsakë’ze & lha Nis Widilhdzilh ni has taken the lead

in helping to prepare and guide this important work, Tabi Misiyh.

Child and Family Wellness in 6 months:

supporting the decades long assertion of the Wet'suwet'en maintain our right to self-determination including our inherent right and responsibility to govern ourselves from our political, economic, and social structures, our culture and identities, language, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies'. That BC, Canada and the Anabip Wellness Working Group (Hagwilget, Witset and 5 Clans) commit to work together to improve safety and holistic wellness outcomes in the best interest of Wet'suwet'en children, youth, families and communities. Significant policy changes are needing reform or transformation for child and family development with BC and Canada. Our work, mostly with the Anabip program may include all 6 Communities if they choose and in no way takes away any community funding or ongoing delegated child welfare agency work.

Wet'suwet'en Wellness: means the ancient wisdom, laws and cultural practices exercised by the Wet'suwet'en, from time immemorial for the cultural, social, health, educational & economic well-being of all Wet'suwet'en families and communities, which the parties will seek to express in contemporary form through a Wet'suwet'en jurisdictional model & a child welfare service transformation delivery model.

The Anabip program supports Wet'suwet'en clan/house members and provides a layer of cultural supports, prevention activities, landbased sessions, language classes and has been offering culturally based services for more than a decade.

In the community-based dialogue that took place in February, many families shared the need for more healing and wellness, that the sadness, hurt of residential school, loss of Elders/Family is still here in our families. Many touching 'truths' were shared, and the need to come together, support each other, and provide love and care

for our children and families, something that wasn't provided when they were in residential school; like our Elders would, a way of life they remembered, before the harshness of Lejac, or Port Alberni (and other residential schools).



Figure 4 Wedzin Bin, Morice Lake

Reunification in 6 months: For the **reunification** work, we heard from the clan and house members that People want to be more engaged, they want to learn more about their culture, language and Wet'suwet'en Ways. This request helped fuel an interest to have some time together for Reunification, drawing on the Tsaké'ze, the elders and speakers to help us map that out.

We have reached out to the **6 elected band councils** of Witset First Nation (Morice town), Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Burns Lake Band, Nee Tahi Buhn, Skin Tye Band and Hagwilget First Nation Government for follow up to the signing. We have had one discussion with the Wet'suwet'en First Nation and Burns Lake Band. We heard the concerns for lack of consultation with the Bands, asking to clarify what role the bands play in this Rights and Title negotiations in the next year.

The elected band councils have requested a stop to the MOU negotiations so the Wet'suwet'en to find a way to come together and take care of our internal business, and for the clan and house members to have a chance to participate; To have an internal member facilitate the discussions, not an external consultant.

Self-government is not part of the MOU at this time.

Correspondence, Zoom Calls back and forth with the band councils - band councils' signed letters requesting a stop to the MOU, BCRs of non-confidence in the Hereditary Chiefs from Wet'suwet'en First Nation and Hagwilget FNG. Each community has unique needs and wishes, and the request is for these MOU negotiations first stop and then make room for all communities.

Governance Center: The Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze purchased the old Lake Kathlyn school to be a Wet'suwet'en Governance Center! This was just finalized after almost 2 years of negotiations.



Figure 5 from the Lake Kathlyn Facebook Group

NEXT STEPS:

- Visioning around Nation Rebuilding / Reunification with the Elected Band Councils
- Public Education/Relations with local parties – for the External parties/Community press release coming soon (today!)
- Clan engagement supports if needed
- Phase 2 and 3 of Water Dialogue with Youth, & all Clans
- Nation Building proposal and implementation
- Work planning to support the negotiations
- Support the Clan meetings with Updates
- 5 Clan Profiles Yintah Based and away from home
- Historical Timelines
- Genealogy database
- Wet'suwet'en It'ën – sharing our ways, digital storytelling, youth and elders
- Finalizing the Wet'suwet'en Constitution

→COMMUNICATION UPDATES ←

Information will be shared:

- on the OW Website (a new site is coming),
- the Facebook page (getting updated too)
- with the 5 Didikhní/Clan Runners and Clan Reps with the 5 Clans
- with Tsakë'ze and Elders Messenger Group

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

There are a lot of questions around money -- who is getting paid/receiving signing bonuses and what do the elected Leadership receive?

So here are a few responses:

1. Are the Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze getting paid/bonuses for this negotiations work?

No, the Dini'ze and Tsakë'ze have not received any personal funds/bonuses for the MOU work; to see how much earnings they receive follow this link http://www.wetsuweten.com/files/financial/WTOS_19.pdf (page 14) for last year's amounts (and previous years) of the 13 OW directors; the amounts range from \$4500-\$9200/year with reimbursements ranging from 0-\$17,153/year.

2. How much money do the Elected Councils receive or make in their elected role as leadership?

Each community is very different; for Hagwilget First Nation, Witset First Nation, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Burns Lake Band, Skin Tyee Band and Nee Tahi Buhn

- google First Nation Profile
- type in community name, select FNFTA, and selected Schedule of Renumeration (2019-2020)

The elected Chief Councilor's annual amounts range from \$8,361 to \$116, 511; with travel ranging from 0-\$72,407/year.

The amounts of teach Band councilor is shared as well.

3. How much money has the Office of the Wet'suwet'en received on our behalf (clans/house/citizens)?

To date the Office of the Wet'suwet'en has received 200,000\$ for the MOU work; we have put together proposals to both the federal and provincial government to further support the

extensive work needed to support the preparation and negotiations work needed.

4. Are there negotiations happening now? Who is doing it?

The negotiating team, including Peter Grant, Wet'suwet'en Negotiator, Debbie Pierre, Marvin George and legal counsel, Kris Statnyk, Judy Walton, administrative supports are meeting with BC and Canada in meetings twice a week to work on the Affirmation Agreement as agreed in the MOU to recognize Wet'suwet'en Aboriginal title as a legal interest in land and Wet'suwet'en governance.

All three governments have agreed that, due to COVID pandemic and need for Zoom negotiations sessions, it will be another few month's until Mid-October to complete the Affirmation Agreement.

At that time, the Wet'suwet'en will be reviewing it with all Wet'suwet'en people through the 5 Didikhni, at clan meetings and in Wet'suwet'en communities.

“CANADA AND BC RECOGNIZE THAT WET’SUWET’EN RIGHTS AND TITLE ARE HELD BY WET’SUWET’EN HOUSES UNDER THEIR SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE” (MOU, MAY 14TH, 2020)



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