



WET'SUWET'EN VOICE



Spring/Summer
2016

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Shared Histories: An Overview

Over the past decade, the Town of Smithers and the Wet'suwet'en people have been working to strengthen our relationship. In 2011, we formalized this relationship with a protocol agreement between the Town and the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, in which we committed to mutual respect and frequent communication. This protocol began as an annual agreement and in 2013 was extended for a five-year period.

We have also embarked together on joint initiatives. The Wetzin'kwa Community Forest is a partnership between the Village of Telkwa, Town of Smithers and Office of the Wet'suwet'en that has successfully delivered local stewardship of forest resources and provided a source of revenue for community initiatives. The Bulkley Valley Economic Development Association is another collaborative initiative. The next challenge remains: how do we deepen our relationship by gaining a shared understanding of our past? The Wet'suwet'en chiefs and elders have often expressed a desire to discuss the early relationships between First Nations and settlers within the Smithers town site. In 2015, Smithers Town Council identified a Shared Histories project as a Town priority.

Through a series of Community-to-Community forums between the Town and the Office of the Wet'suwet'en – made possible with funding from the Union of BC Municipalities – the project has taken shape. Recently, Tyler McCreary, a post-doctoral researcher with the University of British Columbia, secured funding to coordinate the project. An advisory committee with representatives from the two parties will help guide the research.

The Shared Histories project will involve interviews with elders and seniors in our community, as well as archival research. Once complete, it will be shared with the community in the spirit of understanding and reconciliation. The recent release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations make this work particularly timely.

MORE CONTACT INFO:

PHONE: (250) 847-3630

Toll Free: 1-888-296-4411

FAX: (250) 847-5381

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

3873 1ST AVENUE,

SMITHERS, B.C.

V0J 2N1

Website: www.wetsuweten.com

Facebook—Wet'suwet'en Voice

Debbie Pierre
Executive Director

Office of the Wet'suwet'en (250) 847-3630

(On behalf of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs)

Taylor Bachrach
Mayor, Town of Smithers

(250) 847-1611

BRIDGING EARLY LEARNING

Submitted by Tara McKinnon, ECDP Program Coordinator



Pre-schoolers who are heading to Kindergarten often need some extra attention. Our young learners are pretty smart about these transitions and sense the unpredictability of going to a new classroom. They wonder about making new friends and getting used to a new teacher. Such worries as will they be able to find the bathroom, where will they eat their snacks and how will they fit in.

Going to Kindergarten is an important life event. Pre-schoolers can feel excited and a bit worried too. Families have similar feelings knowing their child is going to the “big school”. Pre-school teachers want the children in their classrooms to be ready for Kindergarten.

The Wet'suwet'en Wellness Working Group has been meeting with School District #54 to find ways to collaborate on Wellness. After much discussion, it was decided to focus on Early Years—specifically the transition of pre-schoolers to Kindergarten.

In November 2015 the Early Childhood Education (ECD) program and the Strong Start program from Muheim Elementary School started a 6 week pilot project to make this transition a little easier for our pre-schoolers and their families.

Our ECD program brought 5 of the pre-k's to the Strong Start program once a week. The first week was to meet the teachers, educators and principal, tour the school and followed by child-initiated play.

The second week a few of the kindergarten class students from Muheim were brought into the Strong Start program to interact with the pre-kindergarten students.

“Hadi” Song was Amazing”

Ray Lynn (Educator Muheim School)

We would start with the hadi song (Welcome Song) and transition into child/self-initiated play. We would end the day with a good-bye song.

After a few visits to the Strong Start Program, some of our shy students who normally play alone opened up to play with other children. The kindergarten teacher noticed that a few of her shy kindergartens were leaders in free play and that was good to see.

Not only did this project benefit the pre-schoolers and kindergartens, it also benefitted the educators as we exchanged our practices with each other. We are now in PHASE 2 of the project.





GITXSAN/WET'SUWET'EN UNLOCKING ABORIGINAL JUSTICE

Submitted by: Sherry McKinnon, UAJ Justice Program Coordinator

2016 Operational Plan

The UAJ Program Coordinator has made some significant changes throughout the years based on the 2006 Internal Program Review compiled by *Nijzo Deh Consulting*. Basically, revitalizing the program from what was seen as a punitive process versus restorative and correcting the approach to be more rehabilitative. From these findings the Program Coordinator has safeguarded that confidentiality, staff availability and building positive working relationships with all sectors relating to client success has been reinforced.

However much work still needs to be done. The Program Coordinator will seek to strengthen the involvement of both Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan chiefs and the lack of public awareness to the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan communities need to be addressed, along with self-care of the staff for burnout prevention needs to happen regularly.

Based on the findings above as well as those brought forward by the public have encouraged the UAJ program to not only connect with the chiefs, but to continue to focus on identifying pathways to apply the Wellness Conceptual Framework to this fiscal's operational work plan. The Wellness Conceptual Framework looks at our connectedness via land use, cultural knowledge, respect, social responsibilities and spirituality.

UAJ has identified that the use of camps on the traditional territories used to be highlight for client rehabilitation therefore, UAJ will co-host camps with the ANABIP program. There will be a men's camp, women's camp and a youth/elder camp as well as a youth camp in the Gitksan territory.

The UAJ staff will continue to promote the program as well as the changes made to encourage more Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan people to utilize the services offered. Strategic partnerships and collaborations with local agencies will continue to happen, as well as connection to our urban members.

The UAJ Program Coordinator will be responsible within the next few months to revitalize the existing protocols with the respective agencies and upon completion will celebrate with a co-hosted year-end Feast.

UAJ will also be forgoing another program evaluation to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program and to gain an insight into its continuing effectiveness, to find opportunities that exist to improve, revise, amend or expand the parameters of this long-standing program.

GOVERNANCE UPDATE

*Submitted by Allen Cummings,
Governance Director*

Hadih! The Governance team (Allen Cummings & Judy Walton) are excited to inform that we will be embarking on another round of Clan engagements to discuss/update some changes that were made to the Constitution sections that were reviewed (e.g. Hereditary Chiefs Successorship, House Group & Clan Decision-Making) with the clans in January - March 2016.

The changes to the draft sections resulted from guidance/direction from the Wet'suwet'en Governance Advisory Committee¹ (WAGC) and Governance Team to conduct Clan engagement to ensure the constitution—which is titled, *Cis Bighëwh dinits'ën Lī* (“We live by the law”) - is built with the Wet'suwet'en peoples.

For those who may not have participated to date, the methodology in the condensation² of the constitution involves:

1. Governance Team conducts research, largely drawing from the Delgamuukw/Gisday'wa body of evidence treasure trove.
2. Governance Director then prepares a draft constitution section.
3. Governance Team then present & review the draft section with the WGAC for guidance and direction.
4. Governance Team then conducts Clan engagements and reviews the constitution section (s) and received feedback from Clan and House group members.
5. Governance Team drafts Clan engagement summary, and shares the outcomes of the Clan engagements with the WGAC.
6. Governance Team received further guidance (e.g. Wet'suwet'en Language Authority) in the codification process.

The constitution sections that have been drafted to date include:

- Hereditary Chief's Successorship
- House Group & Clan Decision-Making
- Dispute Resolution
- Wet'suwet'en Citizenship
- Preamble

The next sections that will be drafted over the next 3 month period are:

- Wet'suwet'en Feasts, laws & protocols
- Hereditary Chiefs' Power, Authority & Responsibilities
- Wet'suwet'en Anuk Nu'aT'en (“laws”)
- Law Making Procedures & Protocols

Gil_seyhu Governance Clan Meeting

The Governance Team, working with the Clan Liaisons, will be confirming a Clan engagement schedule very shortly and announcements/notice of each respective Clan engagement will follow immediately. We really look forward to this next round of Clan engagements and we encourage everyone to participate!!



¹ WAGC is comprised of the Hereditary Chiefs, OW designates & Clan Liaisons

² Fancy word that means, “to put into written format”

If you have questions or require information, please contact the Governance Team through:

Judy Walton, Governance Coordinator

Phone (250) 847-3630 Toll Free 1-888-296-4411

Email: judy.walton@wetsuweten.com

LNG ESI (Liquefied Natural Gas, Environmental Stewardship Initiative)

*Submitted by David deWit,
Natural Resource Manager*

LNG ESI was launched by the Province of BC in 2014 to enhance opportunities for Ecosystem Assessment and monitoring, restoration, research and knowledge exchange. This will take place in four regions: Northeast, Omineca, Skeena, and the North Coast. BC has allocated \$30 million towards the initiative over three years.

In the beginning First Nations were told that they had to support the LNG industry to participate; however, this never remained the case. The Office of the Wet'suwet'en are participating in the LNG ESI initiative while maintaining our opposition to all proposed pipelines.

Ecosystem stewardship is strongly linked to our traditional responsibilities as Wet'suwet'en House members. Knowing what significant and valuable resources are on our territory is essential to exercise Whaggus (respect) on the Yintahk. Salmon do not spawn anywhere, moose cannot overwinter anywhere and food for bears is not found just anywhere in the spring. Each has its own unique habitat and knowing where that habitat exists is critical to the survival of that species.

Knowing that unique ecosystems (habitats) support our wildlife and traditional food sources is only one part of the equation. We need to know where and how much there is, what we've lost through impacts from development and what we need to ensure we have enough for the future. This is in essence what cumulative effects monitoring is. The Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum aims to undertake projects to help local communities understand just that.

The Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum is comprised of First Nation groups and government. This group will design and implement projects that will assess various values deemed important to the region and Nation. For example, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en will be assessing FISH HABITAT in a demonstration project.

Fish Habitat is formed by many elements from water quality (temp and chemicals), water quantity (amount of flow throughout the season), to what condition the land is beside the water. Changes in the condition of these elements can influence the amount of fish that can be produced from the watershed. For example, the lack of vegetation beside a stream can create high water temperatures in the summer that make fish survival difficult.

Once our demonstration project has been approved the Office of the Wet'suwet'en intends to utilise LNG ESI resources to improve Fish Habitat assessment and monitoring in the Upper Morice and Bulkley Rivers. We believe that through sharing our local knowledge we can improve on the current systems and create a new method to appreciate the significance of our watershed. These lessons we be shared with our neighbors, as we will also learn from what are neighbors are doing.

Update on delegation of FN Leaders to Ottawa on April 19, 2016

*Submitted by John Ridsdale
Referral Coordinator*



First Nation leaders from northwestern British Columbia said this week that they adamantly oppose a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility on Lelu Island, despite recent provincial government claims to the contrary.

A delegation of First Nation leaders from Northwest B.C. traveled to Ottawa this week to ask Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to reject Petronas's Pacific Northwest (PNW) Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility on Lelu Island and make clear the project does not have the full support of the Tsimshian community of Lax Kw'alaams. The supportive letters, they said, came from elected leadership in a system set up by the federal government and Indian Act, while the opposition's source is community members themselves and their hereditary leadership.

"Christy Clark has been announcing that she has full authorization [for PNW LNG] from First Nations on the North Coast and the Tsimshian communities, which is not true," said Hereditary Chief Yahaan (Donald Wesley), Gitwilgyoots Tribe of the Lax Kw'alaams.

The delegation consisting of hereditary chiefs from Lelu Island, Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan First Nations, as well as Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs President Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, said that in recent months there have been misleading claims of support for the \$36 billion PNW LNG project.

Hereditary leaders from Lax Kw'alaams aren't the only First Nation chiefs concerned about potential impacts from an LNG facility at the mouth of the Skeena River, which is home to Canada's second largest salmon run. Chief Na'Moks (John Ridsdale) of the Wet'suwet'en Nation says the potential impacts of PNW LNG on wild salmon stocks is too great a risk and that trying to force the project through without proper consultation with First Nations will "haunt the provincial and federal governments."

The governments' failure to consult with hereditary leadership and not just the elected band councils is a major issue that the delegation sought to address while in Ottawa.

"We're looking to put some pressure on Parliament itself and the public, to educate them on the fact of jurisdictional issues on the territories," Na'Moks said. "It's not elected band chiefs who have jurisdiction on the territories; it's the people themselves, the hereditary system."

"If [Trudeau] is keeping to his word on this new relationship he wants to instill with First Nations, then he should be listening to the First Nations," said Na'Moks, "not to another form of elected government."



Natural Resource Clan Liaison Roles & Responsibilities

*Submitted by David Belford
Mineral Liaison*

Purpose

The Natural Resource Clan Liaison Project is a strategy to mobilize House members to become involved in Clan decision-making. The goal of Clan Liaison Project is to address issues that impact House Territories through Wet'suwet'en traditional processes. This initiative will provide the tools to address the threats and opportunities to each of the Clan's territory, which is the mainstay of cultural knowledge, feast practice and livelihoods.

Capabilities

- Must be capable of working in a Team Environment
- Must be self-motivated, positive attitude
- Must be computer literate, and have an e-mail address to facilitate communications
- Written and oral communication skills is of the essence
- Must have good time management and organizational skills
- Willing to have flexible work hours
- Local knowledge of Wet'suwet'en land base and culture are an asset
- As field work may be required, good physical health is an asset
- Rudimentary map reading skills is an asset
- Valid Drivers License, and vehicle is an asset

Roles and Responsibilities

- Complete 2 day Training Program
- Assist OW Natural Resource staff in implementing Wet'suwet'en Consultation Guidelines for Government and Industry.
- Assist OW Natural Resource staff plan clan/house meetings, and logistics
- Conduct Clan meeting calls-outs, develop Clan meeting notifications
- Information distribution and record keeping at Clan meetings
- Assist in follow up with clan and community members

We have hired a clan liaison from each clan for this position. In July we had our first Lak-silyu clan meeting discussing referrals on their territory.



Bernie River downstream to Clore Canyon 2014

Wet'suwet'en Wildlife Regulations

Submitted by: Walter Joseph, Fisheries Manager

The Chiefs want the Office of the Wet'suwet'en to begin the process to develop wildlife regulations. The reasons why they believe that Wet'suwet'en regulations are needed are because of an apparent decline in the moose population, and because many of the surrounding nations have implemented regulations or are working on regulations. Those that have regulations in place seem to be pushing hunters into areas where there are no FN regulations in place.



There is also a concern that some Wet'suwet'en hunters may be hunting for profit, and are taking too many moose. House groups have already become more involved in management of many activities within their territory – including managing hunting.

Hunting, fishing and trapping are extremely important to Wet'suwet'en culture and traditions, and so developing regulations that work within the culture and traditions is required. Not only must the Wet'suwet'en regulations work within the traditional system, it must also work with the western legal system and western management. Ideally all management systems – Wet'suwet'en, other FN, and the western system will work together to ensure the wildlife populations are sustained to meet the Wet'suwet'en needs over the long term.

Because hunting is so important to the Wet'suwet'en, developing regulations, enforcement and management will require full consultation and approval. Other FN have developed regulations over a number of years before they were approved.

It's anticipated that the Wet'suwet'en will require 2 years to develop a management system that can be ratified.



MEN'S CAMP—2014

BOARD OF DIRECTOR RECORD OF DECISIONS

January–April 30, 2016

January 27, 2016

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs approve Debbie Pierre to spend one day per month working with the Wet'suwet'en Language Authority.

Approved by consensus: 2016-004

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs support the protection of salmon by way of opposition of the Lelu Island project.

Approved by consensus: 2016-005

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs accepts the letter of appointment from the Unist'ot'en that the Unistoten will return to the Chief's table as ex-officio members dated January 27, 2016.

Approved by consensus: 2016-008

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs recommend Walter seek provincial consensus on moose populations.

Approved by consensus: 2016-010

February 24, 2016

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs approves Wet'suwet'en Gisday'wa Update Project – Phase II work plan.

Approved by consensus: 2016-022

March meetings cancelled—no Quorum

April 26, 2016

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs agree to have a Strategic Planning Session for the Leadership on June 1 & 2, 2016 and make it mandatory for all Board members to be in attendance.

Approved by consensus: 2016-026

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs approve the signing of the Research Protocol between the Town of Smithers, Office of the Wet'suwet'en and Tyler McCreary for the Shared Histories Project.

Approved by consensus: 2016-030

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs endorse the Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum & Indigenous Stewardship Projects Framework. The chiefs endorse the project with the intention these projects will enhance understanding of significant values on Wet'suwet'en territories threatened by development & pipelines. Our participation will not fetter Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs decisions of opposing pipelines.

Approved by consensus: 2016-032

Upcoming Chief Meetings:

August—Summer Break for Chiefs

September 27 & 28, 2016

October 25 & 26, 2016

November 29 & 30, 2016

All clan members are welcome to attend these meetings.

**Meetings are held at the Office of the Wet'suwet'en
3873 1st Avenue, Smithers, B.C.**

**Contact Judy Walton—(250) 847-3630 or
email judy.walton@wetsuweten.com**

**Minutes from these meetings are available
upon request.**