

Summer
2015

Hagwilyaa

A quarterly publication of the Tsimshian First Nations Treaty Society



Sharlene Patterson Photography

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TFN
Treaty Society

4562 D Queensway Drive
Terrace, BC V8G 3X6

250.635.5511

tfntreaty.ca



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Kitseelas & Kitsumkalum AIPs Signed!

Community members and regional dignitaries witnessed the official signing of the Kitseelas and Kitsumkalum Agreements-in-Principle on August 4th 2015 in two separate events. While this important milestone in the BC Treaty process took place more than two years after the respective communities approved their Agreements-in-Principle the day was very much celebratory. The signing officially moves both Kitseelas and Kitsumkalum on to stage five of the treaty process - Final Agreement negotiations.

While inclement weather had caused a flight delay and late start it couldn't dampen the spirit of the Kitseelas event held at the Health and Administration building in Gitau. The youth from the Gitseelasu Culture Camp drummed in community elders with a new song they had learned and various speeches illustrated the significance of reaching this formal stage of a more than twenty year negotiation journey. Chief Joe Bevan had a moment of emotional reflection on the journey to date stating to the crowd, "we have

waited much longer, many, many generations to regain our self-government." Chief Negotiator for Kitseelas and Hereditary Chief Mel Bevan explained the history of land claims for the Kitseelas noting "we have to remember what our ancestors wanted us to do. Many of our elders who were with us in Prince Rupert 30 years ago when we agreed to begin this process are no longer with us today." Bevan became visibly emotional in his declaration to the audience that the treaty process requires the continued support and investment of time by the community as the end to a long journey is in sight saying, "it is not about the money, it is about land and the People's authority over it." Chief Negotiator for the Tsimshian Treaty Society, Gerald Wesley said, "Kitseelas lands are being restored to the rightful owners. There is still requirement to reach a Final Agreement which will be presented to membership for review and direction and I hope approval!" He issued a challenge to the provincial and federal parties to reach a Final Agreement



Front (L-R): Neilane Mayhew, Associate Deputy Minister - British Columbia; Honorable Minister John Rustad - Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Chief Joe Bevan - Kitselas, Chief Negotiator Mel Bevan - Kitselas.

Back (L-R): Staff Sargeant Sid Lecky and Constable Josh McNutt (of the RCMP).

Below (top): David Wells leads the procession

Bottom (L-R): Kitselas Elders - Alfred McDames, Harold McDames, Anne McDames, Rhoda Seymour and Isabelle McKee with Minister John Rustad and Chief Joe Bevan.

All photos courtesy the Province of British Columbia

within two years. Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, John Rustad, acknowledged the length of time it has taken to this juncture and made a commitment from his government to find a way to improve the pace of treaty talks noting he would like to see children in this generation grow up under treaty saying “a generation is too long to be getting to an Agreement-in-Principle.”

Following the signing and some refreshments the delegation moved on to the Kitsumkalum Hall where Chief Don Roberts and Chief Negotiator Alex Bolton, both hereditary chiefs, awaited the start of their planned event. Dressed in traditional regalia the event began with a moving procession of the community leaders with government representatives symbolizing the walk forward together. Chief Negotiator Alex Bolton opened the event with a talking stick and spoke to the journey of this milestone, “in 1973 our elders and the community got together and wanted to prove the lives of the Kalum people. To do that we needed the proper tools and it was decided then to get into the treaty process.” Chief Don Roberts added “we didn’t want Indian Reserves, we wanted access to all of the territory. At one time I was undecided on treaty and in the past decade have looked at the issue from all sides. If we didn’t go for treaty where would we be heading?” Gerald Wesley, also a hereditary chief from Kitsumkalum, added, “the land and resources have sustained us from ancient times...we still use the lands and we identify a need to protect it...its cultural significance...and the economic opportunities it can bring.” As with Kitselas the commentary and reflection at Kitsumkalum illustrated the long-term perseverance it has taken to get to this point in the BC Treaty process and Minister John Rustad restated



the commitment of the province stating “we will be working closely with the First Nations Summit and federal government to find ways to expedite the process.” Kitsumkalum concluded their event with a dinner and traditional dancing – a fantastic ending to a monumental and historical day.

Front (L-R): Chief Negotiator Alex Bolton - Kitsumkalum; Neilane Mayhew, Associate Deputy Minister - British Columbia; Honorable Minister John Rustad - Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation; Vera Dudoward-Matriarch; Chief Don Roberts - Kitsumkalum; Gary Alexcee - event MC. **Back (L-R):** Constable Josh McNutt and Staff Sergeant Sid Lecky (of the RCMP).



Below (top): Kitsumkalum dancers lead the procession
Bottom (L-R): Tom Happynook, Mark Smith and Sashia Leung of BC Treaty Commission with Chief Roberts

What is an Agreement-in-Principle?

An Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) is not legally binding, but it is the critical framework to a concluded Final Agreement or Treaty. When the communities of Kitselas and Kitsumkalum voted “YES” to the AIP it mandated the negotiators to move forward with Final Agreement negotiations. Terms identified in the AIP are subject to change or additions can be made throughout the course of Final Agreement negotiations.

Why are we negotiating treaties?

The purpose of a treaty is to finally settle land claims and receive a fair deal from Canada and BC for the loss of our lands. A Treaty will be constitutionally protected and we will no longer have to go to court to prove our claim to land and resources. Going to court is lengthy, costly and is not guaranteed. The ruling in a court case is also limited in scope and is not as comprehensive as a treaty. Modern treaties remain Canada’s most comprehensive means of achieving reconciliation with First Nations.

What’s next?

The Kitselas and Kitsumkalum negotiations continue to move forward and more substantive issues will unfold over the targeted two year timeline to Final Agreement. This stage of negotiations will require extensive and focused work by expertise in areas of law, finances, natural resources, lands and so forth. Once the negotiators have concluded their work and agree to the terms of the Final Agreement there will be a “hand shake” which means all parties are in agreement. The task then will be to consult and engage the communities to ensure they understand the content of the Final Agreement before it goes to a ratification vote.



A digital copy of the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum Agreements-in-Principle, and more information, can be found on our website!
tfn treaty.ca

Summer Fun in our Tsimshian Communities!



Photo: Metlakatla Communications Department

A yearly tradition, Metlakatla Youth brave the cold waters on a hot summer day!

By Veronika Stewart
Metlakatla Communications Dept.

This summer has been a busy one in Metlakatla! The Metlakatla food fish program has been hard at work since June distributing salmon and halibut to our members. Tufts of smoke along the main road in Metlakatla usually mean a delivery of sockeye has come in a few days before, and members are busy smoking, drying and jarring our traditional foods for the winter.

In July, Metlakatla's Education Program hosted a week long cultural camp for youth that taught drum-making, drumming and singing, as well as Sm'algyax. Youth finished off the camp with a drumming and singing performance in the village to the delight of the elders and parents who came to watch. Youth and elders were also treated to a whale watching trip, where they got plenty of shots of a pod of orcas travelling through our territory.

Meanwhile, the Metlakatla Treaty office is continuing its negotiations with the Federal and Provincial governments, and is looking forward to making gains in the treaty process. With treaty, we hope to continue to strengthen the cultural legacy for our Ts'msyen community.

Kitselas Treaty Office took provincial and federal representatives on a land and boat tour to see first hand the location and cultural context of fishing sites and rights of way that come into play through land negotiations. These opportunities allow negotiators to better understand the interests being brought to the table. *Photo: Brittany Seymour and Cyril Bennett-Nabess of Kitselas flank (L-R) Alissa Wrean-Negotiations Analyst BC, Darrell Gunn-Min. Transportation, Robert Leece (front)-Sr. Negotiator BC, Gerry Flemming (back) - Sr. Negotiator Canada on historic Ringbolt Island.*



Photo: Kitselas Treaty Office

Some of the young people who took part in the Kitselas Treaty Office's annual Culture Camp.

By Cyril Bennett-Nabess
Kitselas Treaty Office

Twenty-two children participated in the Kitseas Treaty Office's annual Gitselasu Culture Camps this past summer. Each child took home cultural knowledge, including their work projects like bent boxes and paintings.

Daily we ventured down to the canyon trail and spoke about our History and the great things our ancestors did. Summer students hired through the treaty office played important roles in the Culture Camps and where actively involved from the beginning to the end.

Each camp concluded with a treat of salmon and halibut for the children to enjoy courtesy Wilfred Bennett Sr. I am grateful to our grandparents and ancestors for providing the knowledge to pass on and share. This was the third year the camps have been offered and supported by the community.

An investment in our youth, is an investment for the future!

