

# AROUND THE LAX'YIP

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**GITANYOW HEREDITARY CHIEFS**

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Simgigyet, Sigidim hanak ganhl guuba wilksihlxw,

This month marks a very exciting and productive first year since we began sending out our quarterly newsletter, and we are thrilled to present our latest edition!

In this issue, we announce the recently signed funding agreement with Canada that demonstrates our shared commitment to Gitanyow self government. We also share the new date for our Aboriginal title case, explain how to report a safety incident on the lax'yip, and celebrate our incredible 2024 graduates.

All this and more—enjoy!



## **GITANYOW LEGAL UPDATE**

### **Malii vs. The King**

We are deeply disappointed to announce that the start of the landmark Malii vs. The King Aboriginal title case, originally scheduled for October 1, 2024, has been postponed.

Justice Michael Stephens approved the B.C. government's request for a delay until March 1, 2025, to review Gitanyow's extensive evidence.

A team of experts has cataloged historical documents, artifacts, maps, and preserved oral histories and traditional wisdom by recording evidence from key knowledge holders and Simgigyet, such as Medikm Gyemxk/Neil J. Sterritt and Sindihl/Bob Good.

## **GITANYOW LEGAL UPDATE CONTINUED ...**

Through years of hard work and crucial commissioned reports, the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs (GHC) and legal team have meticulously substantiated Gitanyow's Wilp history, ownership, exclusive occupation, and law and jurisdiction from prior to contact to the present day.

Simogyet Malii expressed our collective frustration,

“We have already waited for over 100 years to be recognized as the true title holders. Despite this setback, our resolve remains strong and we will continue to stand firm in our pursuit of justice for our ancestors, our community, and future generations.”

### **Nisga'a Nation Appeal**

Last month in Vancouver, on June 19 - 20, the Nisga'a challenged Justice Stephens' January decision denying their request to be added as a party to Gitanyow's title case in the B.C. Court of Appeal.

The Province, initially neutral, supported the Nisga'a appeal, likely due to political pressure.

The Nisga'a claim their treaty grants them the right to join legal proceedings involving treaty interpretation or validity. They argued that Gitanyow's title claim could affect their treaty rights. They also argued that they need to be a party to present evidence.

Both Canada and BC supported this, stating they couldn't present Nisga'a evidence themselves.

## **GITANYOW LEGAL UPDATE CONTINUED ...**

Gitanyow responded that our case focuses solely on our title, without involving Nisga'a treaty issues. We suggested that any impact on the Nisga'a treaty would be handled through future negotiations or legal proceedings, not in the current case.

We also suggested that the Nisga'a could participate as interveners, allowing them to present evidence without the full rights of a party.

### **Darlene Simpson's Application For Joinder**

On June 10 - 13, Justice Stephens heard arguments about whether Darlene Simpson, representing Wilp Skiikm Lax Ha/Tsetsaut Nation should be added as a defendant in Gitanyow's title case and allowed to claim Aboriginal title.

Gitanyow argued that Simpson and her party do not correctly represent the historic Tsetsaut community, known as Laxwiiyip Tsetsaut, and that the claim is ten times larger than what the Skiikm Lax Ha claimed in the Delgamuukw case, which we see as an abuse of the court's process.

If Justice Stephens finds they have standing and are not abusing the process, we have asked that Simpson be allowed to intervene with limited rights to present evidence, avoiding delays and expanding the trial's scope.

Rulings are expected by late summer or early fall 2024.

## **GITANYOW SELF GOVERNMENT**

Simgigyet'm Gitanyow have signed an agreement with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) marking a significant step forward in restoring the Dax'gyet - the strength and authority of the Chiefs' relationship with our ancestral lands.

The agreement provides for a significant financial investment from Canada to advance the goals and priorities set out in the Gitanyow Governance Accord, signed in 2021.

The Accord provided a pathway towards full self government based on the restoration and legal recognition of Gitanyow's hereditary governance system.

Activities to be supported by the agreement include the continued development of a Hereditary Revitalization Plan, as well as the process of adapting Ayookxw into modern governance tools and legislative frameworks. This follows on decades of hard work, including:

- The Gitanyow Ayookxw: The Constitution of the Gitanyow Nation
- Gitanyow Lax'yip Land Use Plan
- Gitanyow Wilp Sustainability Assessment Process
- Gitanyow Aks Ayookxw (Water Policy)
- Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area

Gitanyow, Canada and British Columbia are engaged in negotiations to advance the legal recognition of the Gitanyow governance system, Gitanyow self government, and title recognition.

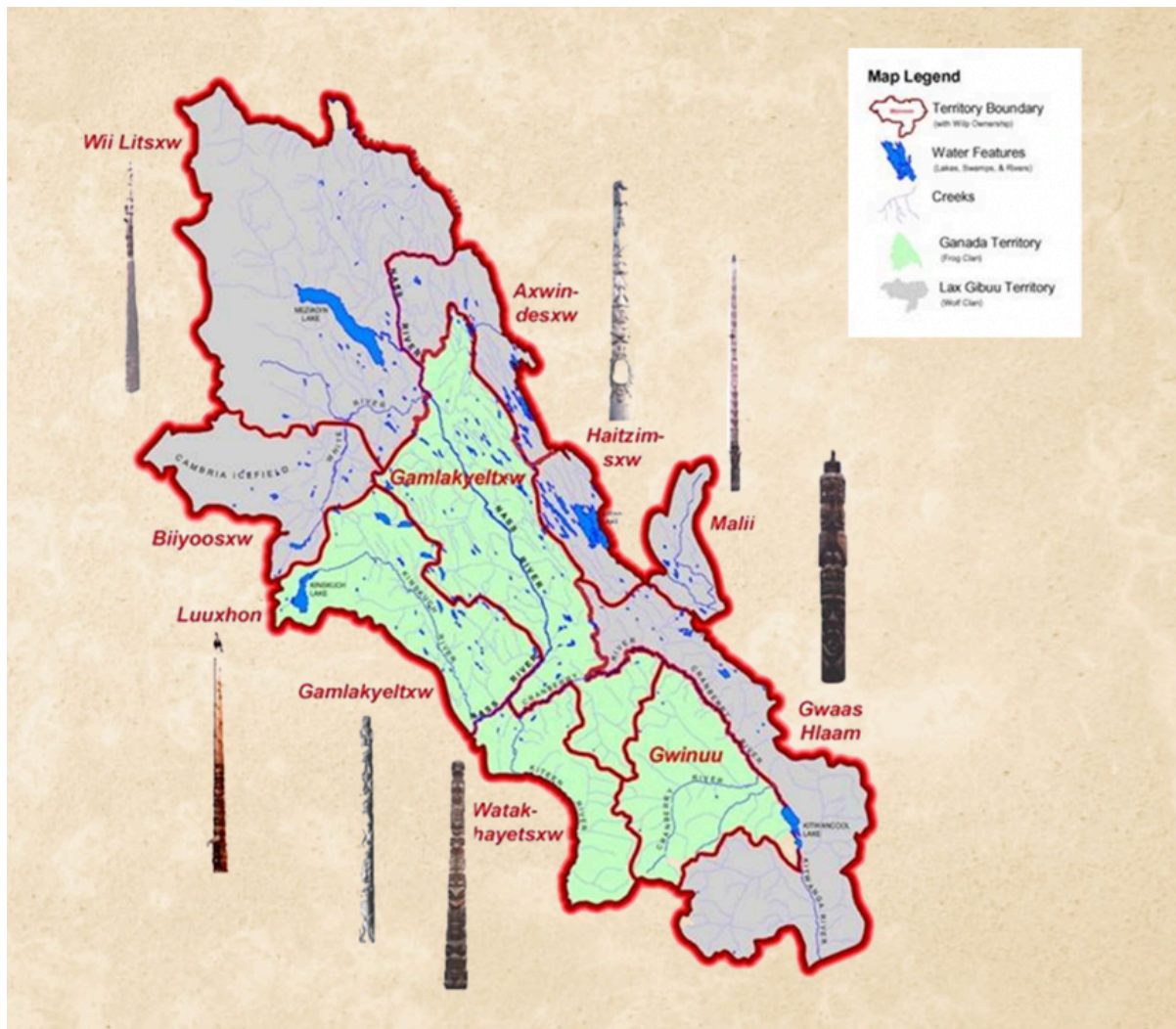
This Agreement will continue to prepare Gitanyow to fully implement its government under its Constitution and to harmonize its laws with federal, provincial and third party interests.

## GITANYOW SELF GOVERNMENT CONTINUED ...

The imposition of Canadian and provincial law historically overshadowed Gitanyow's traditional system, exemplified by the wrongful criminalization of Gitanyow Chiefs protecting our lax'yip.

In 1927, Gitanyow Chiefs were forced into Oakalla prison in Burnaby, B.C. for running colonial surveyors off the territory. In their absence, the reserve system was established and Gitanyow peoples were restricted to living within Kitwancool Indian Reserve.

This incident marks a dark chapter in our shared history, but Gitanyow and CIRNAC's new agreement strengthens our shared commitment to move forward and re-store Gitanyow's traditional legal system that has stewarded the lax'yip for thousands of years.



## **GITANYOW AND NISGA'A MEDIATION**

Despite ongoing legal challenges, there are also promising developments on the horizon. Gitanyow and Nisga'a have embarked on a significant new chapter, demonstrating a commitment to peaceful dialogue and collaboration.

On May 28th, Chiefs and leaders of the two Nations gathered in Terrace to participate in an Eagle Down ceremony, a traditional and powerful ritual dating back generations.

The Eagle Down ceremony demonstrates the commitment of the Nations and their representatives to engaging in discussions in peace, and with the spirit of mutual respect, trust, and understanding.

Following the ceremony, leaders from both Nations signed Terms of Reference for mediation, facilitated by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Frank Iacobucci and John Terry.

The mediation aims to foster a long-term relationship of coexistence, collaboration, and transparent communication between the Nations and the Province of British Columbia.

“Our goal is to create a safe space for honest dialogue,” said Simogyet Malii.

“There is more that unites us than divides us, and we are committed to developing a better relationship for the sake of future generations.”

While the mediation process will maintain some confidentiality, updates on progress will be shared as significant developments occur.

## **GITANYOW AND NISGA'A SAFETY AND SECURITY PROTOCOL**

On June 27th, following the Eagle Down Ceremony, Gitanyow and Nisga'a released a joint statement committing to safety and security in accordance with the Ayookxw and Ayuuk of both Nations.

As the GHC continue to exercise their title and rights within their Wilp territories and seek legal recognition in negotiations and the courts, ensuring your safety as Wilp members on the lax'yip is a top priority.

### **Purpose of the Protocol:**

Both parties aim to provide a safe place for members to raise concerns, ensuring they feel free from the need to take matters into their own hands. Leadership wants members to feel like their concerns are heard and addressed and encourage members to foster safe interactions with one another.

### **Reporting Incidents:**

If you have concerns or an incident to report, please include as much detail as possible and send to Joel Starlund, Executive Director, Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs: [e.d@gitanyowchiefs.com](mailto:e.d@gitanyowchiefs.com)

### **Process:**

Your report will remain confidential unless you agree to share your name. We want to ensure that you feel safe when making a report.

- If appropriate, the incident will be brought to the attention of a small working group that includes Nisga'a representatives for collaborative dispute resolution.



## GITANYOW AND NISGA'A SAFETY AND SECURITY PROTOCOL CONTINUED ...

- If the incident warrants, it will be referred to the respective Simgigat and Sigidimhaanak of both parties and copied to their Wilp for traditional dispute resolution.

Important:

Incidents of a criminal nature, including threats of any kind and potential threats to physical safety, should be reported to the RCMP. Verbal interactions that escalate, become urgent, or feel unsafe should also be reported to the RCMP.



## **GITANYOW WILP MEMBERSHIP AND GENEALOGY PROJECT**

For the past twenty years, the GHC have been recording their matrilineal and matriarchal Wilp genealogy records on paper.

The Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office has now embarked on a project to digitize these records across the Huwilp and has invested in developing a Gitanyow Wilp/Huwilp database.

This database is being developed by One Nation, led by Stacey Rattlesnake and his team, who will work closely with Wilp leads identified by the Chiefs.

The Wilp Luuxhon pilot project for digitizing matrilineal genealogy began in 2022, recording their Wilp members and digitizing their records. This project, led by Katie Ludwig and Kim Olson, has expanded to all Wilp this summer, with staff being recruited for each Wilp.

If you are a Gitanyow Wilp member, you will be contacted to be included in the genealogy and Wilp membership, which will be maintained for ongoing opportunities and updates on title and governance.

The training session for Wilp staff held in June 2022 will be held again in July 2024. Information sessions for Wilp members are being planned for later this year.

Wilp membership inquiries can be directed to Kim Olson, Huwilp Membership Coordinator, at [membership@gitanyowchiefs.com](mailto:membership@gitanyowchiefs.com). When you email Kim, you will be connected with your Wilp lead.

More information about One Nation can be found on their website at the link : <https://onenationgov.com/>

## **GITANYOW JOINS THE CALL FOR JUSTICE AND REFORM**

A coalition, including the GHC, First Nations Leadership Council, BC First Nations Justice Council, #JusticeforJared, Pivot Legal Society, and the BC Civil Liberties Association, has launched a crucial letter-writing campaign to demand a public inquiry into the deaths of Indigenous Peoples at the hands of the police.

The initiative, driven by the families of Jared Lowndes and Dale Culver, seeks to address systemic racism within the RCMP, municipal police, and the BC Prosecution Service (BCPS) and seeks justice for those who have tragically lost their lives.

On April 5, 2024, BCPS announced it would abandon its case against the two RCMP officers charged with manslaughter in Dale Culver's death. 35-year-old Culver, a member of the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan Nations, died in police custody after being chased for riding a bike without a helmet.

Two weeks later, on April 23, the Crown declined to prosecute the three RCMP officers involved in Jared Lowndes' death. Lowndes, aged 38 and a member of the Wet'suwet'en Nation was fatally shot by police in a Tim Horton's parking lot.

Only two of the five RCMP officers recommended for charges in Dale Culver's death will face legal action after Constable Clarence MacDonald's obstruction charges were also stayed.

In all cases, charges were stayed or not approved despite the findings of the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) that officers had committed offences.

## **GITANYOW JOINS THE CALL FOR JUSTICE AND REFORM CONTINUED ...**

The obstruction trial of Sergeant Bayani (Jon) Eusebio Cruz and Constable Arthur Dalman was heard at the Prince George courthouse in June, and the court's ruling is tentatively set for July 25, 2024.

During the trial, the judge heard compelling testimony from Kenneth Moe who recounted feeling "violated" after the two officers allegedly pressured him to delete the video he took of the events following Culver's death.

Moe testified that he was threatened with confiscation of his cell phone and obstruction charges if he did not comply. His testimony highlighted the officers' alleged attempts to suppress evidence vital to the investigation of Culver's death.

Allegations of police misconduct in these cases have raised serious concerns about systemic racism and the mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples in custody.

The coalition believes that a comprehensive public inquiry with Indigenous oversight is essential to uncovering the truth, holding those responsible accountable, and implementing meaningful reforms to prevent future tragedies.

Indigenous lives matter, please join us in demanding justice for Indigenous Peoples!



**Indigenous**  
**LIVES**  
**MATTER**





## **CLIMATE CHANGE DEMANDS TRUTH**

Climate change is not just a looming threat—it is an accelerating crisis that demands immediate and truthful action.

On May 28th, the GHC renewed their call for immediate government action against deceptive fossil fuel advertising campaigns following a unanimous ruling by Ad Standards Canada.

These advertisements, funded by Canada Action, falsely claim that “B.C. LNG will reduce global emissions”.

According to Ad Standards Canada, the advertisements have “distorted the true meaning of statements made by professionals or scientific authorities,” “promised a verified result without competent and reliable evidence,” and created an “overall misleading impression ... that B.C. LNG is good for the environment, amounting to greenwashing.”

Unfortunately, the reaction to the Ad Standards ruling was muted partly because the organization has no enforcement powers and doesn’t release its findings to the public.

In this case, the findings were anonymously shared with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) in light of its campaign to ban fossil fuel advertising to protect public health and prevent disinformation from obstructing climate action.

## CLIMATE CHANGE DEMANDS TRUTH CONTINUED ...

However, a recent amendment to the Competition Act is shaking things up. It mandates all industries to back their environmental claims with evidence, a move that's causing unease among the fossil fuel industry and its supporters.

“It is critical to recognize that LNG development, often promoted as a cleaner fossil fuel alternative, significantly contributes to worsening the climate crisis,” says Naxginkw/Tara Marsden, Wilp Sustainability Director for the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs.

“Climate change demands truth, there’s simply too much at risk. Misleading campaigns not only threaten climate action but also pose serious risks to public health and the environment. Industry and governments hiding behind deceptive advertising and propaganda must be held accountable.”

Ksi Lisims’ website currently states, “Net Zero Ready by 2030 ... will have one of the lowest carbon intensities of any LNG export project in the world, utilizing several technologies to reduce carbon emissions, including using renewable hydropower from the B.C. grid.”

To ensure the accuracy of Ksi Lisims LNG project’s climate claims in their environmental assessment proposal, the GHC commissioned an expert report prepared by Dr. Chris Joseph of Swift Creek Consulting.

The overall conclusion of the review was that the “project’s climate performance is weak” and highlights critical flaws that must be addressed by the BC government before proceeding with approval.

## CLIMATE CHANGE DEMANDS TRUTH CONTINUED ...

In June, we had the opportunity to attend the 'Forward For A Frack Free Future' conference in Vancouver to learn about hydraulic fracturing (fracking).

We sat down with Gwii Lok'im Gibuu/Jesse Stoeppler, a member of the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan Nations and Hup Wil Lax A/Kirby Muldoe, a member of the Tsimshian and Gitksan Nations, to grasp the ins and out of fracking, including its impacts on water and the climate crisis.

We also spoke with Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief Na'Moks about the impacts of the Coastal GasLink (CGL) pipeline being built through his traditional territory.

Please watch these important videos; they help simplify the significant concerns surrounding LNG development and the climate crisis.



# GITANYOW FISHERIES AUTHORITY

## Gitanyow Salmon Projections 2024

The Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA) is the technical arm of the GHC and provides fisheries, wildlife and overall environmental expertise and services. GFA is involved in a wide variety of fisheries type initiatives and is involved in the co-management of salmon and trout in and around the Gitanyow lax'yip. Like in other years, in 2024 we will be sharing information on pre-season and in season salmon projections and returns.

Please see the first update below, separated by the Skeena / Nass Rivers.

\*It is too early to make any assessment of Skeena Coho returns at this time.

<b>Nass River</b>				
Species	Expected Return	Escapement Goal	Ranking compared to recent times (1994-2023)	Implications for Gitanyow Fishers
Sockeye	440,000	200,000	Below Average (Avg.616,000)	Full Limits
Chinook	24,000	15,000	Below Average (Avg. = 30,000)	Full Limits
Coho	166,000	60,000	Average Return (Avg. = 174,000)	Full Limits

<b>Skeena River</b>				
Species	Expected Return	Escapement Goal	Ranking compared to recent times (1994-2023)	Implications for Gitanyow Fishers
Sockeye	1.54M	200,000	Below Average (Avg.600,000)	Full Limits
Chinook	~21,000	15,000	Below Average (Avg. = 30,000)	Full Limits
Coho	Unavailable	60,000	Average Return (Avg. = 174,000)	Full Limits

\*M: millions





# Gitanyow *Fisheries* Authority



June 27, 2024 – For Immediate Distribution

## ***2024 Gitanyow Food Fishing Permits***

Wilp and non-Wilp members that have permission to fish on the Gitanyow Lax Yip (Territory) may now pick up their **2024 fishing designation letters** at the Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA) Office.

**GFA's office is located at 4581-4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Gitanyow.**

**Open on weekdays, 8:30am-4:30pm.**

Reminder that you must report your catch numbers at least weekly for your permit to remain valid. For this year we are also requesting that if you retrieve any fish tags that they be turned in when you report your fish numbers for salmon management tracking purposes. To reward fishers for turning in tag information GFA will hold a draw at the end of the year. For every tag you turn in your name will go into a draw for \$500. Draw to be held in October, 2024.

Also, anyone that intends to transport non-processed fish out of the Gitanyow Lax Yip (the villages of Gitwangak and Gitsegukla are excluded) requires a transport permit. Transport permits can also be acquired from the GFA office during regular business hours.

If you have any questions, please call at 250-849-5373. Fishers can also use this number to report your weekly catch numbers.

Happy Fishing ;)



The GHC extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Gitanyow graduates of 2024. This significant milestone is a testament to your hard work, dedication, and resilience.

As you step forward into new chapters of your lives, we encourage you to carry the spirit of our community with you. Your achievements are not only a personal triumph but also a proud moment for the entire Gitanyow Nation.

Remember the strength of your heritage and the wisdom of your ancestors as you pursue your future endeavors. Whether you continue your education, enter the workforce, or take on new challenges, know that you have the support and admiration of your community.

Keep going, stay determined, and strive for excellence in all that you do. Your success inspires us all, and we look forward to seeing the incredible things you will accomplish.

Congratulations once again, and best wishes for a bright and prosperous future!



## Volleyball:

Miss Hustle - Hailie Johnson  
MVP - Alia Marsden  
MVP - Trenton  
Defensive Player of the Year - Cailin Watson



## Basketball:



Season All-Star - Alia Marsden  
Season All-Star - Tyanna Bear  
Mr. Hustle - Kingston Williams  
MVP - Trenton Bear



## Softball:

Best Outfield - Tyanna Bear  
MVP - Fredrick Bear

## Athlete of the Year:



Fredrick Bear

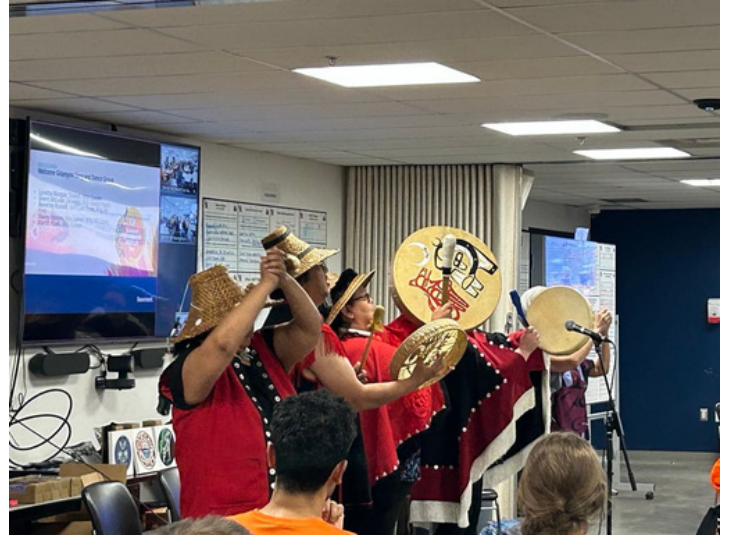


The GHC are immensely proud of our athletes for their outstanding achievements in volleyball, basketball, and softball. Your dedication, hard work, and sportsmanship have not only earned you well-deserved awards but have also brought great pride and joy to our community.

We love watching you play and cheering you on from the sidelines. Your talent and perseverance inspire us all and reflect the strength and spirit of the Gitanyow Nation. Keep striving for excellence and continue to shine both on and off the field.

Congratulations on your remarkable accomplishments!

## CELEBRATING CULTURE: GITANYOW BRINGS EVENTS TO CAMP



Easily 80-90 camp workers at Bruce Jack gathered and were delighted that Aboriginal Day events were brought to them, allowing them to enjoy and celebrate their Gitksan heritage.

The celebration featured Gitanyow members, including elders, who performed traditional songs and dances, and shared medicine bags.

The wonderful hosts, Cherilyn Gray and Beverley Russell from our Education Team, couldn't be happier as employees talked about the event for days afterward and are already looking forward to next year!

Am Jepsip - Great work everyone!



## **GITANYOW EDUCATION & TRAINING INSTITUTE**

GETI will be presenting their 10 year education plan & skills inventory.

Tuesday, July 23rd, 2024

10AM TO 3PM

Gitanyow Hall



## GHC COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

I am deeply grateful for my role as the Communications Coordinator for the Gitanyow Chiefs. Over the past year, I've had the incredible privilege of meeting many wonderful teammates and experiencing a range of activities. From standing on mountain tops, filming wildfire training, capturing the excitement of speedway racing, documenting our legal efforts, and learning about fishery projects on the water, it has truly been an amazing journey.

A huge appreciation goes out to my training mentor, Laurie Hamelin, who has taught me everything from creating newsletters and utilizing programs to filming and photo editing. Without her guidance and support, none of this would have been possible. For her, I am truly grateful. I eagerly look forward to another extraordinary year ahead!

T'ooyaks'y Niin,

Chasity Daniels/Xbiisuunt  
Communications Coordinator