



HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE GITANYOW HEREDITARY CHIEFS OFFICE!

As we welcome 2025, we reflect on an incredible year of progress and achievements.

In this issue, we highlight key moments from 2024, including the Maili v. the King case for full rights and title, the establishment of our new Indigenous Protected Area, and our Elders housing update.

We also celebrate prestigious awards, plus, we're excited to share updates on the Fire Panel and our exciting genealogy work.

LEGAL UPDATE:

The Gitanyow Nation has won an important battle against the so-called group “Tsetsaut/Skii km Lax Ha Nation” (“TSKLH”), represented by the Gitxsan Hereditary Chief Darlene Simpson. On December 5, 2024, the BC Court of Appeal (Malii v. British Columbia, 2024 BCCA 406) has overturned the chambers judge decision that previously allowed the group to bring their own Aboriginal title claim to a territory overlapping with the Gitanyow Lax’yip in the Gitanyow Nation’s action. In deciding so, the Court considered the serious prejudice to the Gitanyow Nation that would result from allowing the TSKLH to bring their own claim in the Gitanyow title action against the Province and Canada. The Court however concluded that authorizing the TSKLH to participate as a defendant in the action, thus allowing them to challenge the Gitanyow Nation’s claim to title and rights, would be the most practical way to preserve the alleged rights of the TSKLH and to balance the prejudice to the Gitanyow Nation.

Further to this decision, the TSKLH Nation filed an application seeking to adjourn the Gitanyow’s trial for no less than one year. On December 18, 2024, the chambers judge denied their application but allowed a two-month adjournment until May 5, 2025. This modest adjournment is intended to provide further time for remaining pre-trial steps to be completed by all parties.

The TSKLH Nation is now opposing the Gitanyow’s application for protective orders limiting the disclosure of the Gitanyow wilps’ adaawk, and limx’oy, and prohibiting their publication as they constitute sacred information under the Gixtsan law. The TSKLH Nation alleges that the Gitanyow’s sacred information is already widely disseminated and that there is no substantial evidence of risk of prejudice if the information is disclosed. The hearing on this application will be continued on January 14, 2025, and counsel for the Gitanyow Nation will fight to protect the sacredness of Gitanyow’s adaawk, ayuuks and limx’oy.

NISGA'A APPEAL

The Nisga'a Nation sought to be added as a defendant and full party status in the Malii title case. January 17, 2024 Justice Stephens denied the Nisga'a application.

We are pleased to announce on August 29, 2024, speaking for the Court of Appeal, Justice Abrioux upheld Justice Stephens decision and denied the Nisga'a Nation appeal to be added as a full party to the Malii title case. At para. 51 he went on to say, that "If anything, the Nisga'a is in a better position in the action than the Gitanyow was in the treaty negotiation process. Referring to how Gitanyow were not afforded a similar opportunity of involvement in the treaty-negotiating process and speaking to how BC and Canada may lead evidence on behalf of the Nisga'a, if any indeed exists."

Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs were successful in clearly laying out for the court how the Nisga'a treaty modified and codified their title and rights. And that the treaty has defined provisions that anticipate title and/or a final agreement being recognized for another nation, such as Gitanyow.

In October 2024, the Nisga'a filed an application asking the Supreme Court of Canada to hear a second appeal of the decision to not add them as a defendant to the case. The Supreme Court of Canada does not hear all appeals, only those appeals it decides raise issues of "national and public importance". Both the Province and Canada decided to support the Nisga'a application for leave to appeal, reversing positions taken by them in the lower courts.

The Gitanyow filed a response in November 2024 opposing the application to have the appeal heard, and the Court is now considering the application. That decision is expected in late winter or early spring. If the Court decides not to hear the appeal, that is the end of the appeal process for the Nisga'a. If the Court decides to hear the appeal, the hearing would likely take place in late 2025 or early 2026.

**GITANYOW'S DARLENE VEGH & DR. KIRA HOFFMAN
FEATURED AT WILDFIRE BOOK SIGNING EVENT**

November 5th, In an insightful evening attended by staff members Kevin Koch and James Morgan, Gitanyow had the privilege of supporting Dr. Kira Hoffman, Fire Ecologist, and Darlene Vegh, Indigenous Scientist and Fire Practitioner. The event, hosted by author John Vaillant, focused on the urgent issue of wildfires, as discussed in his book "Fire Weather - The Making of a Beast".

Vaillant led a thought-provoking conversation about the increasing intensity of wildfires, linking climate change to the growing devastation caused by these fires. He emphasized the need for collaborative solutions, combining modern fire management with traditional fire practices to address the rising challenges. Kira and Darlene were featured as key speakers, sharing their important work on Gitanyow's Cultural Burning, which aligns with Vaillant's message about the balance of old and new methods in wildfire management.

Key takeaways from the event included the critical need for homes to be more firesmart and for communities to have clear wildfire response plans in place. It was highlighted that the majority of frontline firefighters are young, with many working without rest for days at a time, while tragically, six lost their lives in the past year. In Canada, a quarter of a million people were displaced by wildfires last season, underscoring the urgency of preparedness.



GITANYOW WILP MEMBERSHIP AND GENEALOGY PROJECT

We are excited to launch the Wilp Membership and Genealogy Project and invite all Gitanyow Wilp members to sign up for our new Wilp Member Database. This unique initiative, in partnership with One Nation, aims to strengthen our hereditary governance system and ensure everyone is included.

Each Wilp has a designated lead reaching out to members to assist with the sign-up process. Our first membership cards will provide access to services such as youth sports, medical travel, and priority hiring with Gitanyow Lax'yip partners.

**KATIE LUDWIG****KIM OLSEN**

To get started, please contact Kim Olsen, Wilp Membership Coordinator, at membership@gitanyowchiefs.com.

Kim will connect you with your Wilp lead for assistance. Enrollment is open until March 2025.

GITANYOW WILP MEMBERSHIP AND GENEALOGY PROJECT CONTINUED...

Background: For the past 20 years, Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs have documented their matrilineal records. This project is basically Gitanyow's version of ancestry.com, and digitizes those records across the Huwilp, supported by One Nation, and will create a Gitanyow Wilp/Huwilp database. This effort aims to replace the Indian Act's non-hereditary membership system with a traditional, hereditary model for better engagement and support.

The Wilp Luuxon Project began in 2022 under Katie Ludwig and Kim Olsen and expanded in 2024 with staff recruited for each of the 8 Gitanyow Wilp.



For more about the pilot project with One Nation



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PROTECTING THE CRANBERRY AND KITEEN WATERSHEDS: A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT FOR SALMON AND THE LAND

In response to growing concerns about the environmental impacts of pipelines on Gitanyow Lax'yip, the Ganeda Wilps Watakhayetsxw and Gamlakyeltxw have come together to propose an Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) in the Cranberry and Kiteen watersheds. These vital watersheds are located along the pipeline route and have been identified as key areas for fish, wildlife, and cultural preservation.


The importance of this land was first recognized during the 2013 review of the PRGT pipeline, when it was acknowledged as an area of extraordinary value. Now, with climate change impacting the region, the risks posed by pipelines are even more concerning. The proposed IPA aims to safeguard migrating and spawning salmon from the compounded threats of industrial development and changing climate conditions.

By establishing this Indigenous Protected Area, we will ensure that these salmon populations—critical not only to our culture but to the broader ecosystem—are protected for generations to come. This initiative stands as a testament to the ongoing efforts of the Ganeda Wilps Watakhayetsxw and Gamlakyeltxw to safeguard the lands and waters of our ancestors while continuing the fight for a sustainable future.

Consultation with affected parties will occur over the next two months, and anyone interested in learning more can contact Tara Marsden/Naxginkw, Wilp Sustainability Director at Tara.Marsden@gitanyowchiefs.com

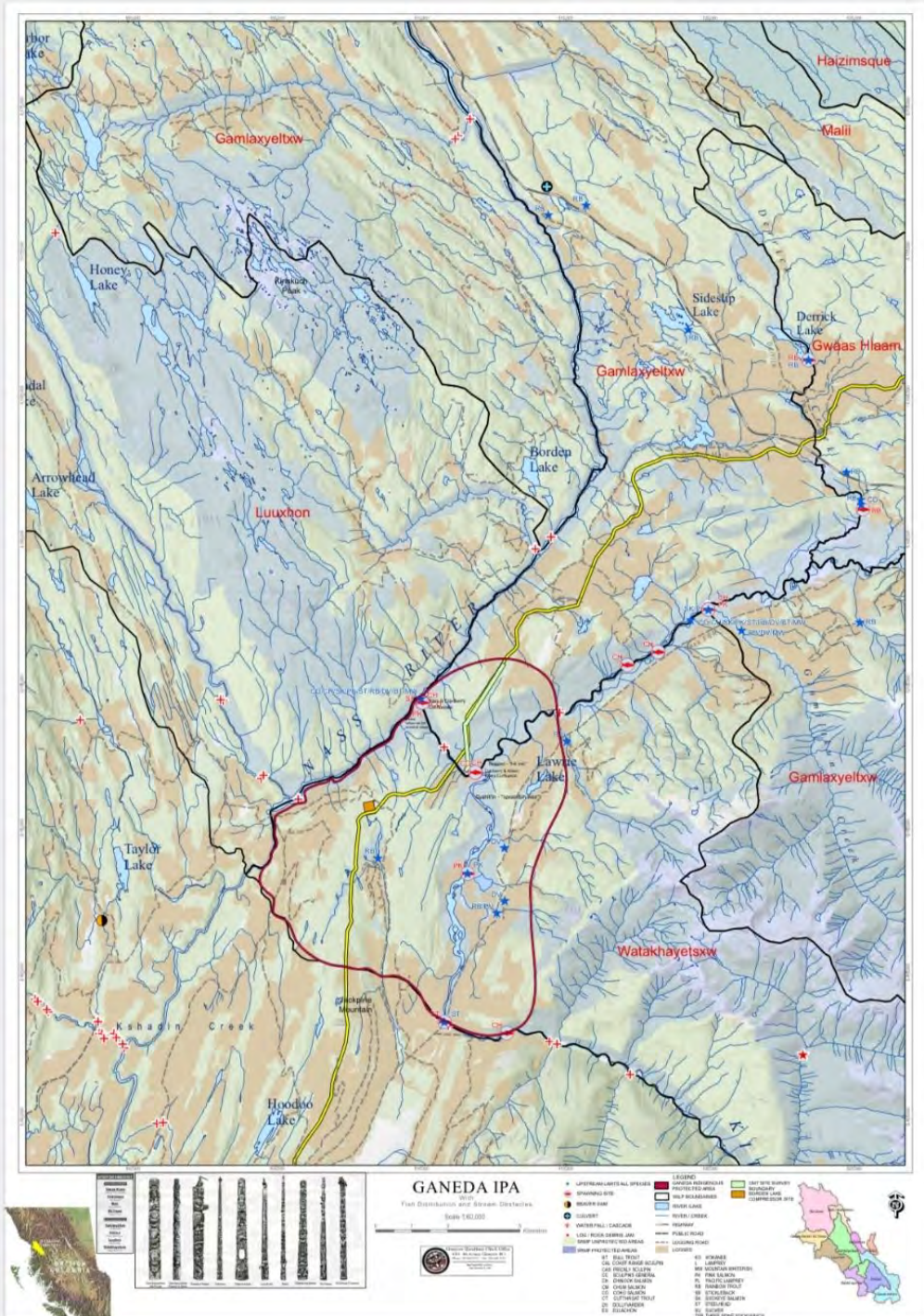


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Check out our Gitanyow Land Use Plan here

**WILP GAMLAKYELTXW & WATAKHAYETSXW
INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA**



The protected area adds to overall Gitanyow conservation efforts made in the Gitanyow Lax'yip Land Use Plan and the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area.



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Check out our Meziadin Protected Area here

GITANYOW'S TARA RECEIVES THE DR. ANDREW THOMPSON AWARD & IN THE SAME WEEK HONOURED BY SIMOGET WIILIITSXW FOR HER WORK

We are beyond proud to share that Tara Marsden has been awarded the prestigious Andrew Thompson Award!

This award recognizes outstanding contributions to environmental law and advancing Indigenous rights, and it's a well-deserved honor for Tara, who has dedicated her life's work to the intersection of Indigenous knowledge, environmental justice, and law.

Tara has been a relentless advocate for Gitanyow rights and has played a key role in shaping sustainable, community-driven solutions. Her work has empowered Indigenous nations to assert their legal rights and ensure the future of our lands, waters, and cultures.

As Gitanyow Chiefs, we are grateful for those who contribute to the protection of our land and culture. Recently, one of our Simogets, Wiiliitsxw (Greg Rush Sr.), also honoured Naxginkw, Tara Marsden with a flag & gifts to recognize her important role in our work, including the building of cabins on Gitanyow Laxyip (territory).

This gift is a tribute to the "unsung heroes" who quietly make a big impact. We are proud to acknowledge Tara's dedication and support in protecting our land and heritage.

Scan the QR code to read more on the article :)



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Gitanyow
Fisheries
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GITANYOW FISHERIES PART OF AN AWARD

This summer, we were honored to host Authentic Indigenous Seafood and Chef Rob Clark at our historic Gitanyow Fishing Village in Lax an Zok (Meziadin Junction), located at the headwaters of the Nass River. This fishery is a cornerstone of our Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs' plan to restore wild sockeye runs to the Meziadin watershed, which supplies over 75% of the sockeye in the Nass River.

In 2021, we proudly designated the 54,000-hectare Meziadin watershed as the Wilp Wii Litsxw Indigenous Protected Area to protect this vital resource for future generations. Our mission is to provide high-quality, sustainable salmon while reinvesting in local stewardship.



This journey of sustainability, community, and innovation has led us to being a part of a recognized group who has won the Indigenous Business of 2024 at the BC Food & Beverage Rise Awards, and we couldn't be more proud of what we've accomplished together.

GITANYOW FISHERIES AUTHORITY CONTINUED...



At our fishery, you'll see our fishermen carefully selecting sockeye from the clear waters, ensuring they're stress-free before being processed for restaurant-quality standards. These flash-frozen sockeye are regarded as some of the best in the world!

We're proud to support our community by employing summer students and local members, prioritizing food fish for our people and those in need.



Hamiya (thank you) to our partners, our community, and all who support us as we continue to nurture our connection to the land, the waters, and the salmon that sustain us.



GITANYOW LAX'YIP GUARDIANS

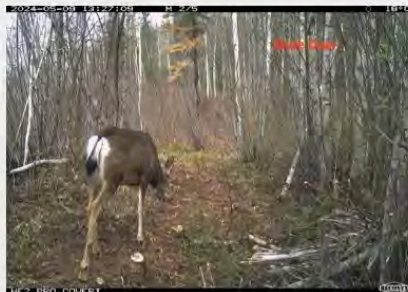
This winter our Guardians still have field programs underway, including:

- Moose harvest and roadkill monitoring
- Wildlife camera maintenance



Our Wildlife Camera Trap project is a very exciting initiative aimed at finding alternative ways to determine abundance of moose and wolves especially. We've established a camera trap grid in "out of the way" locations throughout the Lax'yip.

So far we have documented elk on the Lax'yip (!!), seen many wolverines, grizzly and black bears, lynx, deer including whitetail, mule AND sitka blacktail, and of course moose and wolves. Our goal is to maintain this camera trap grid indefinitely giving Gitanyow more authority and capacity to monitor wildlife on their Lax'yip.



THE GITANYOW LAXYIP GUARDIANS CONTINUED...

Winter is also a time for planning, reporting and proposal writing which involves long hours in the office and in meetings, BUT is the essential work to keep our programs going. Exciting initiatives we are planning in the next year include:

More cultural burning - weather permitting we are planning to do more burning south of Gitanyow and possibly just north of Gitanyow, and also up at Lax An Jok. We work closely with BC Wildfire on this initiative and together we are building capacity for Gitanyow to eventually do cultural burns on their own. Stay tuned for training opportunities upcoming and we hope to get more people involved!!



We are preparing for a large grizzly bear population study up in the Meziadin next season. You may have noticed our sea can on the Gitanyow north access road, that is where we prepare the bait needed for these studies. We are also hoping to sell some of our "very fine" bait (yuck) to a mining company who is doing a study this summer.

We are still dealing with issues with our meat cooler but will definitely have those worked out by the spring/summer bear hunting season. So please keep us in mind if you need to hang an animal in the cooler, this facility is for YOU. We are also applying for funding to have someone look after that facility on a part-time basis to help promote and manage it. Stay tuned:)

Take care everyone and wish you all the best during this dark time of year. Hopefully we get a bit more real winter and spring is just around the corner:)

GITANYOW ELDERS HOUSING UPDATE:



We are thrilled to announce a major milestone in our Elders Housing Project! Construction is set to begin in April 2025, with the much-anticipated "Heads in Beds" phase expected to be completed by April 2026.

This project is an important step in addressing the growing need for safe, supportive, and accessible housing for our elders, ensuring they can continue to live with dignity and connection within our community.

One exciting feature we are happy to share is the addition of a Feast Storage Room in every apartment.

This unique touch ensures that residents have a dedicated area to store cherished preserved goods for community events.

**GITANYOW SPONSORS LADIES BASKETBALL TEAM
MEZAIIDIN BLUES**

The Gitanyow Chiefs are proud to support the Meziadin Blues Ladies Basketball team! We believe in the power of women’s sports to inspire strength, confidence, and teamwork.



Supporting mental health, staying active, and lifting up our local community are all important to us, and the Blues are a slam dunk in every way! We're thrilled to see the team in their beautiful new jerseys, and we're on the sidelines, cheering you on with full force. Keep pushing forward, ladies—you're dribbling your way to greatness, and we've got your back every step of the court! Keep playing hard and aiming high—you've got this!



A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUBSCRIBERS

Thank you for tuning in and supporting our newsletter! We appreciate each and everyone of you. As we look ahead into another amazing year, we encourage you to share this with family and friends so they can stay informed and engaged as well.



Here's to an exciting 2025, filled with continued progress, unity and more wonderful achievements!

