



A letter to the Gitksan communities from the
Gitksan Hereditary Chiefs;
strong progress in 2012, more to come in 2013

December 18, 2012

Simgiigyat, Sigidim Haanak, and Guubawilsxw.

As 2012 winds to a close and we celebrate Christmas we want to highlight key accomplishments of this year just past, and to look ahead to 2013 and what it might bring for the Gitksan.

Economic opportunities creating jobs, revenues

Skii km Lax Ha is setting a great example for all Gitksan house groups, creating jobs and economic wealth.

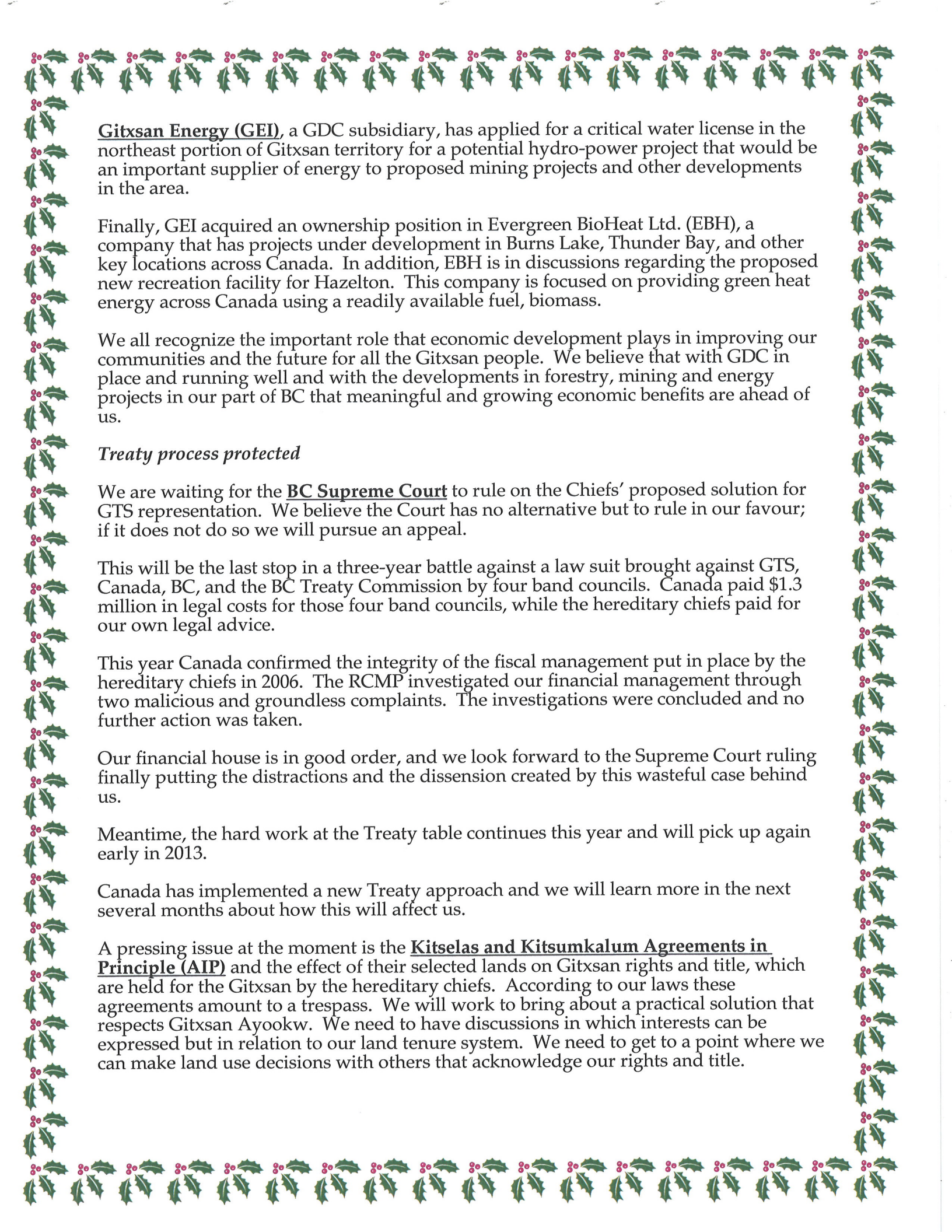
Since 2009 it has brought almost \$2 million each year into our area with employment and service contract opportunities, largely with mining and mining exploration companies on the traditional territory. Skii km Lax Ha has been able to develop arrangements with corporations that provide benefits for **both** parties.

Gitksan Development Corporation (GDC) celebrated the first anniversary of its formation by the Gitksan Hereditary Chiefs. At the direction of the Chiefs GDC has been charged with the development and management of business in and on the Gitksan traditional territory.

Through a first-time cooperative agreement developed with Skii km Lax Ha, GDC was tasked with the negotiation and execution of an agreement with BC Hydro for 41 km of the Northwest Transmission Line project.

Approximately 20 Gitksan are working today due to Skii km Lax Ha's pursuit of business opportunities with GDC. In addition, there are numerous spin-offs such as the ownership of a camp facility and revenue from the sale of logs felled along the line.

After losing money for five years the management of the Gitksan forest license is now fully in the hands of **Gitksan Forest Inc.** and we are now targeting breaking even for 2013. The next step will be to show a profit on our forest operations. To facilitate this process GFI has partnered with Brinkman Forests Ltd., a premier forest management company, focused on developing capacity for First Nations peoples.

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Gitxsan Energy (GEI), a GDC subsidiary, has applied for a critical water license in the northeast portion of Gitxsan territory for a potential hydro-power project that would be an important supplier of energy to proposed mining projects and other developments in the area.

Finally, GEI acquired an ownership position in Evergreen BioHeat Ltd. (EBH), a company that has projects under development in Burns Lake, Thunder Bay, and other key locations across Canada. In addition, EBH is in discussions regarding the proposed new recreation facility for Hazelton. This company is focused on providing green heat energy across Canada using a readily available fuel, biomass.

We all recognize the important role that economic development plays in improving our communities and the future for all the Gitxsan people. We believe that with GDC in place and running well and with the developments in forestry, mining and energy projects in our part of BC that meaningful and growing economic benefits are ahead of us.

Treaty process protected

We are waiting for the BC Supreme Court to rule on the Chiefs' proposed solution for GTS representation. We believe the Court has no alternative but to rule in our favour; if it does not do so we will pursue an appeal.

This will be the last stop in a three-year battle against a law suit brought against GTS, Canada, BC, and the BC Treaty Commission by four band councils. Canada paid \$1.3 million in legal costs for those four band councils, while the hereditary chiefs paid for our own legal advice.

This year Canada confirmed the integrity of the fiscal management put in place by the hereditary chiefs in 2006. The RCMP investigated our financial management through two malicious and groundless complaints. The investigations were concluded and no further action was taken.

Our financial house is in good order, and we look forward to the Supreme Court ruling finally putting the distractions and the dissension created by this wasteful case behind us.

Meantime, the hard work at the Treaty table continues this year and will pick up again early in 2013.

Canada has implemented a new Treaty approach and we will learn more in the next several months about how this will affect us.

A pressing issue at the moment is the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum Agreements in Principle (AIP) and the effect of their selected lands on Gitxsan rights and title, which are held for the Gitxsan by the hereditary chiefs. According to our laws these agreements amount to a trespass. We will work to bring about a practical solution that respects Gitxsan Ayookw. We need to have discussions in which interests can be expressed but in relation to our land tenure system. We need to get to a point where we can make land use decisions with others that acknowledge our rights and title.

We expect 2013 to be a critical year at the Treaty table. A possible change of government in the May provincial general election may also result in changes in BC's mandate or direction.

We also continue work on a comprehensive ratification list of Gitksan citizens in our huwilp. We continue to seek advice of the Sigidimhaanak as they hold much of the responsibility for tracking the ever-changing huwilp membership. We also encourage Huwilp to keep their geneology work current through their simoogit, and we ask the simoogit to update their membership through our office.

We are looking to identify capacity building opportunities within the huwilp and watersheds so that we are able to take advantage of the economic development opportunities that lie ahead. We look forward to more economic development successes in our territory, with the jobs, revenues and optimism for the future such projects create.

Meelii Chlismas ganhl amma sii kuhl.

