



GITXSAN CHIEFS' OFFICE

Gitksan Development Corporation (update)
February 17, 2011

INTRODUCTION

This office of the Gitksan Hereditary Chiefs (Gitksan Chiefs) was established in 1986 to serve 13,000 Gitksan people. It is only an office; it is not a governance structure at all.

The Gimlitxwit (Gitksan Governance) is made up of at least 65 head chiefs. This *innovative* forum was established in 1994 to oversee the 33,000 sq km of Gitksan country that is made up of nine administrative watersheds. There are a number of head chiefs with corresponding *lax yip* in each watershed. The purpose of this *innovative* approach is to do business with corporations (proponents) and governments - simplifying a process over a vast area of lands and resources.

In terms of resource development projects, the Gitksan are a regulatory body within our 33,000 sq km of Gitksan country. The *ayookw* (Gitksan laws) have been in existence for over 6,000 years for the purpose of sustaining our lands, waters and resources for future generations, *gwalx ye'insxw* (inheritance). A great deal of money was spent developing detailed Gitksan policies on lands, fish, water, minerals, forestry and oil and gas. The Gimlitxwit are ready and have the capacity to harmonize with government policies in these areas. (To date our requests for detailed discussion of such harmonization have not been answered)

GITXSAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

In the past four years of planning the Gitksan Chiefs are in a final process of establishing a **Gitksan Development Corporation** (GDC) to act as an overall holding company for initiatives we are developing or contemplating in forestry, carbon credits, energy, transmission lines, and the fishery and so on. The opportunity is for all our companies (e.g. GFEI) to be independent subsidiaries thereby gathering all our assets to establish a huge "bankable" company – attracting investment and building infrastructure for job creation.

Thus the opportunity is here, today, for *business managers* in these various corporate structures. As well, there is ample opportunity for educated and business minded *directors* – credible and bankable folks to attract huge investment to the northwest – for job creation. These structures are the foundation for continued job creation and a better quality of life for Gitksan and other people.

The ownership of the GDC will be by a new **Gitksan Society**, with five (5) directors – each appointed by a Gitksan clan, and the fifth be chosen by the directors from a group at large. In addition there will be a new **Gitksan Trust** with five (5) trustees appointed in the same manner as the society (not the same people). The purpose of the society would be to invest into various projects. The purpose of the trust is to distribute dividends to individuals for their own use.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As in the past five years, all our bookkeeping is being done by Vandergaag & Bakker, chartered accountants in Smithers. An expensive undertaking however it is necessary to keep proper accountability and transparency – building credibility and trustworthiness for our people.

GITXSAN COUNTRY (33,000 sq km)

We are poised for progress. There are many potential economic projects large and small that are presently employing many members of our house groups (huwilp) in some of our watersheds. We do not measure progress by the number of economic projects alone. We measure progress by the success of our people. By the jobs they can find and the quality of life those jobs offer.

Yes, the economy in the northwest has changed. The competition for jobs is real. It is now a challenge for us – and we as Gitxsan have the largest potential for a prosperous economy. Our people, here in the northwest know how to work. Gitxsan country continues to be the foundation of a prosperous economy – our feasts continually gather at least \$18K cash per feast, there are at least three feasts per month, and sometimes, three feasts a weekend! 1/3 of the money is put into the feast with the other 2/3rds going into Smithers or Terrace for food products and goods – our feasts benefit the non-Gitxsan people.

ADMINISTRATIVE WATERSHEDS

The Suskwa watershed sustainability project, stimulated by the federal government brought \$1 million over two years into our local economy. The Gitsegukla watershed forestry pilot project injects thousands of dollars each year into this economy. GFEI is now actively harvesting logs in our watersheds – a good number of our people are working their own lands.

Potential projects will do the same: Northwest Transmission Line (\$600 million project) has brought at least \$1 million into the Gitwangak watershed. CN Railroad to the Klappan is another major project just getting started. And now, Northern Gateway Pipeline promises to provide equity and yearly dividends to the Gitxsan – we suggested that we would rather have \$5 million contributed to the **ice arena** immediately (benefit all, not just Gitxsan), \$1.5 million to fund a equipment for a major grocery store (Sobeys, IGA) and a few thousand dollars to relevant watersheds – protection of fisheries and water.

This is what the Gitxsan have done for over 100 years: **reinvented ourselves.** Gitxsan innovation has established the Gimlitxwit as a governance - a forum of head chiefs - to strengthen Gitxsan sustainability on the land, protect the resources for the people of the northwest, and the ability to create countless new jobs for our people – by attracting global investment.

The purpose of the Gimlitxwit is not just handing out money - we are re-inventing how we lived off the land for 10,000 years, re-establishing our wilp as an economic entity – a cornerstone of the northwest economy.

Luutkudziiwus (Gordon Sebastian)