



GITKSAN CHIEFS' OFFICE

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POISED TO PROSPER – Gitksan Summit 2011 explores economic opportunities coming to Gitksan nation

Kitwanga BC – The Gitksan Nation wrapped up its annual summit today after three days of presentations and discussion; much of which was focused on economic development. The theme of this year's summit was "AYOOKW Gitksan." Ayookw means "Gitksan law practiced in the Wilp Li'ligit (feast hall).

The majority of presentations highlighted a raft of economic opportunities potentially coming to the area. "We own 33,000 sq. kms. of land which has sustained us for thousands of years. For too long we watched resources leave our territories without a say in its destination or a share in the profits," said Elmer Derrick, Chief Negotiator with the Gitksan Chiefs, "In July of this year, we launched the Gitksan Development Corporation. It is an economic vehicle the Gitksan can use to explore all these opportunities being presented to drive responsible development on our lands."

"I have been told the Gitksan will die on the hill for the food supply," said Rick Connors, CEO of the Gitksan Development Corporation "As the theme of this year's summit suggests, all decisions we make in pursuing business on Gitksan land remains faithful to the laws of the people. Those who wish to do business in Gitksan territory will be held to Gitksan standards." About 250 people attended per day and special prizes were given out to encourage youth to attend. 20-25 young people watched the proceeding each day. Chiefs at the summit also reiterated their support for the Jackson family, whose son Rodney was killed two years ago by an RCMP Emergency response team in the village of Kisgagaas.

Delegates were reminded of the words of Gwis Gyen (Stanley Williams) during the famous Delgamuukw trial. "All Gitksan people use a common law. This is like an ancient tree that has grown the roots right deep into the ground. This is the way our law is. It's sunk. The big tree's roots are sunk deep into the ground, and that's how our law is."

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