



GITXSAN TREATY SOCIETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Judge confirms Gitksan Treaty Society is valid and blockade of chiefs office is illegal

Smithers BC – A BC Supreme Court judge has confirmed the Gitksan Treaty Society (GTS) is a valid entity (and always was) and may attend to the necessary work of the GTS while he considers how to remedy a technical irregularity in the appointment of the society's directors. During the hearing, the judge also expressed his view in clear terms that the blockade of the Chiefs' office is illegal and told the protesters that they have no right to deny access to the office.

On March 5-7, the Court heard the GTS's petition to address the irregularity. The GTS asked the court to respect the decision of the Simgiigyey (hereditary chiefs) at the January 17th Gimltxwit where they voted 45-3 to become members of the society so their right to select GTS directors would not be questioned. The GTS bylaws currently allow each Gitksan Pdeek (Clan) to appoint 3 directors to the GTS Board and the Simgiigyey have always played a key role in that appointment process. Although that process conforms with Ayookim Gitksan (Gitksan law), it did not conform to the technical requirements of the provincial *Society Act*. The GTS asked the court to help in bringing the society's appointment process back into compliance, while also respecting Ayookim Gitksan.

“The role of the Gimltxwit is to provide a forum for Simgiigyey to reach decisions through consensus building and respectful dialogue. In voting the way they did the Simgiigyey adhered to our Ayookw (law) and expressed how they wanted the GTS to function,” said Gwaans (Bev Clifton Percival), Negotiator with the GTS, “The GTS' application to the court sought to respect and uphold those wishes by asking the court to make an order that the Simgiigyey select the GTS Board.” All parties who made submissions to court agreed on the primary importance of the Gitksan Houses and the authority of the Simgiigyey under Gitksan Ayookim.

The GTS expects that the court will issue its judgment on these questions by early April.

“Every reason the protesters gave for blockading the office has been dealt with. The Simgiigyey voted down the Enbridge deal on January 17, and the GTS is in fact a valid society. The protesters have been reminded that their blockade is illegal and they can no longer prevent the chiefs from entering their building,” said Miluulak (Alice Jeffrey), “through it all we have repeatedly invited them to engage in a respectful dialogue to no avail. It is time for them to accede to the wishes of the chiefs and take down the blockade.”

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