CanyonCurrent

A monthly newsletter from the Kitselas Treaty Office

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Dr. Siomonn Pulla refers to a petroglyph near the Kitselas Canyon as part of his research into Kitselas territory.

Strengthening Kitselas' land claims

By Glenn Bennett

The question of First Nations territorial boundaries is a contentious one not only for First Nations, but for the governments of Canada & British Columbia as well.

Often more than one First Nations will lay claim to the same land, which has huge consequences everyone involved.

The governments are seeking clarity and certainty around which land belongs to who for a couple significant reasons.

First, they have the responsibility to consult and accommodate First Nations when it comes to resource and land development. Examples include the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) pipelines proposed for Northwest BC.

Second, final treaty lands cannot be transferred to a First Nation, if the territorial boundaries conflicts have not been settled.

This is true for Kitselas, for several parcels of land, which Kitsumkalum and Gitsxan also claim as part of their territories.

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GOVERNMENT REPORTS

The governments of Canada & BC base their decisions in these situations on reports they produce called 'strength of claim reports'.

These reports are used to determine the level of consultation and accommodation a First Nation gets when it comes to an area of interest. They are also used to determine the benefits including amount of money, which can be in the millions of dollars, offered to First Nations as part of an impact and benefit agreements

The Kitselas Treaty Office received the '*Kitselas Strength of Claim Report*' last year and determined that it was inaccurate when it came to Kitselas' traditional territory.

Dr. Siomonn Pulla talks to Kitselas members Fred Mason and Wilfred Bennett Sr.

THAT'S NOT RIGHT

The Kitselas Treaty Office has decided to challenge the report with the help of Dr. Siomonn Pulla.

Pulla, who lives in Victoria and teaches at Royal Roads University, is an expert in the field of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal land use and occupancy. He has extensive experience leading complex research projects in support of comprehensive land claims, major resource and heavy industry clients, and the public sector.

According to his biography, Pulla's goal is to "support long-term and meaningful partnerships between Indigenous peoples, the corporate private sector, and government regimes in pursuit of sustainable major resource development projects."

His bio says that "his life purpose is to engage and inspire people to create change."

Pulla will review Kitselas' Strength of Claim Report and help Kitselas refute it. He will also research and provide more information to strengthen Kitselas claim to areas on the North Coast.

KITSELAS PROJECT USING ENERGY FROM THE EARTH

Kitselas' proposed geo thermal energy project is an example of a Kitselas project that would be affected by the 'Kitselas Strength of Claim Report'. Here's a little info about it:

- Kitselas, in partnership with companies Enbridge and Borealis, have submitted a proposal to construct a geo thermal energy plant, the first of its kind in Canada if approved.
- Geo thermal energy comes from the heat of the earth's interior.
- The project would be located south of Terrace in the Mount Layton Hot Springs area.
- The federal government is willing to provide $2.7 million towards exploration into finding a suitable site for geo thermal energy. But the project, and its site, must meet a number of conditions during its approval process. One important condition is whether other First Nations have an interest in the area.
- In the case of this geo thermal project, the provincial government has indicated they must consult further with Lax kw alaams and Metlakatla.
- The Strength of Claim Reports for Kitselas, Lax kw alaams and Metlakatla would all be used to determine if in fact the other two First Nations have an interest in the area.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Pulla has come to the area a few times now to collect info and interview Kitselas members for their traditional knowledge.

"We decided we needed to interview Kitselas members who have knowledge on harvesting areas both on the Skeena River and the North Coast," says Kitselas Treaty Office Director of Implementation Glenn Bennett.

"Wilfred Bennett Sr. was interviewed because he has been a commercial fisherman for most of his life. He has a good understanding of the harvesting areas on the North Coast for all marine resources," Bennett continues.

"Fred Mason was interviewed for his knowledge on the Skeena River and the North Coast. He continues to harvest the various marine resources such as salmon, seaweed, clams and cockles."

NEXT STEPS

The Kitselas Treaty Office will work closely with Pulla over the next few months and report back any new information about Kitselas' Strength of Claim.

Gerald Brown shows off two of the badges he's received for serving in the RCMP.

Retired RCMP officer offers advice and wisdom

By Sharlene Mohr

Gerald Brown is everywhere. Even if you don't know him personally, you would probably recognize him if you saw him.

Gerald Brown is Gitxsan, raised in Cedarville. But for the last quarter of a century, he's been a huge part of the Gitaus, Kitselas & Kitsumkalum communities in his role as an RCMP officer.

Brown recently retired from the force and was honored with badge for his 25 years of service.

"The last badge I received in the mail this year, A3436 special s3774," says Brown.

Brown's career started with one small, but ultimately huge decision.

Brown was interested in joining either the RCMP or the navy. He asked for some advice and decided he was going to go with whoever called him first. It just happened to be the RCMP.

In 1986, Brown applied and got into the RCMP's auxiliary constable program. Auxiliary constables promote community-based policing by participating in community events and assisting regular members of the RCMP with some of their general duties.

Two years later, with experience and training under his belt, he joined the force.

"In boot camp, you would live and breathe work with approximately 30 people. There was so much to learn, there was drill and all aspects of rifle training," he says.

In terms of discrimination, Brown says it did - and still does - exist.

"Yes. I felt it from RCMP to First Nations," he says. "There was also discrimination with First Nations. They thought they were better than me."

"I thought I was better than them. "

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Brown continues, "It used to be bad but it's getting better. Some RCMP are racist and mean, but it's everywhere in professions. So long as you're able to perform on this job, there is no discrimination."

Most of the time throughout his career, Brown was able to diffuse potentially violent situations just by being present in his uniform, he says.

As whether he had to act really tough, Brown says, "That's only in the movies, hype and Hollywood."

Brown is now retired but he's still a huge role model for young people.

As a hobby, he enjoys making drums - it takes him approximately one day to complete one. These days, Brown hosts BBQ lunches at local schools and teaches the students how to make drums.

His advice for young people is to, "Get your education, your license. Volunteer in the community. Showing you are able to work as a team. Join the military or navy. There's so much opportunity out there. Go to college, human relations. Join the force or any program that will give you structure."

He adds, "If you do military, your pension is carried over to the RCMP."

Next time you are out and about, look for Gerald. Say hi. Say thanks for everything he's done – and still does today – in the Kitselas community.

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE RCMP?

Here's a few ways you can get involved or get more info:

- Volunteer for the RCMP Auxiliary Constable Program. For an application form, email: auxiliary-auxiliaires@rcmp-grc.gc.ca
- Drop by the Terrace detachment at 3205 Eby Street to talk to someone about how to become an officer
- Go to www.rcmp.ca

In 2013 Kitselas was blessed with many new additions to our families and community, welcome to the little ones from the past year:

- Justina McDames born March 22nd
- Dean Cousins born May 31st
- Sarah Missy born July 31st
- Ryland Parker born November 6th
- Nathan McMillan II born November 25th
- Anthony Robinson December 10th

Congratulations to all of the families and Happy New Year!

Negotiations Update

What's happening at the treaty negotiations table?

By Clarisa Spencer

Kitselas Treaty Negotiators have been engaged in monthly negotiations with the Government of British Columbia and the Government of Canada since Kitselas voted yes to the Agreement in Principle on February 20, 2013.

Kitselas representatives included Chief Negotiator Mel Bevan, Glenn Bennett, Director of Treaty Implementation, and myself. Kitselas Chief Joe Bevan also joined us in December's session for the first time and will likely join us in for future sessions depending on his schedule.

Gerald Wesley represents the Tsimshian First Nation Treaty Society, of which Kitselas is a part of. He speaks on behalf of Kitselas at the Negotiations Table. And lawyer Mark Stevenson, who has worked with Kitselas for about 15 years, is the Kitselas Treaty legal advisor.

Both are present for all chief negotiation sessions.

The December negotiations session brought an important topic to the table - the Incremental Treaty Agreement.

The Incremental Treaty Agreement is an agreement we've been working on for many years, even before the approval of the Agreement in Principle (AIP). The agreement deals with three parcels of land, promised to Kitselas if we approved the AIP – which we did.

Transferring parcels of incremental treaty lands before an actual Final Agreement, is a step in good faith negotiations by the Government of BC and Canada.

The Province of BC has now completed the surveying of these three parcels and will transfer them to Kitselas soon.

A community meeting is being planned for February 2014, where representatives from BC and Canada will sign off the land to Kitselas.

Copies of this Incremental Treaty Agreement are available to the public and you can contact the Kitselas Treaty Office if you'd like a copy.

2013 has brought many highlights to the treaty table, with Kitselas approving the Agreement in Principle, and Kitselas final negotiations beginning for the first time in history.

CLARISA SPENCER
Kitselas Treaty Office
Documents Manager

The year 2014 will bring even more great things as we continue with monthly negotiations, work with our Constitutional Working Group (now in the process of being formed), and start other community working groups to work on important topics related to the final agreement in 2014.

The next negotiations session will in Vancouver on January 21-24, 2014 and I'll provide you with an update about what happens in the February edition of the Canyon Current.

If you have questions about the Kitselas Agreement in Principle, Final Agreement or the treaty process in general, get in touch with me at 250.635.8882 Ext. 245 or cspencer@kitselas.com

Our stories in print

By Joan Mason-Nyce

Men of M'deek and Wars of M'deek is a book of Kitselas oral history and mythology, told by Chief Walter Wright.

Wright, who died in 1949, was a Tsimshian hereditary chief - Chief of the Grizzly Bear People of Kitselas.

M'deek means Grizzly Bear in Symalgyax, the Kitselas language.

The book's author, Will Robinson, a judge who moved to Terrace in 1928, befriended the chief and earned his trust.

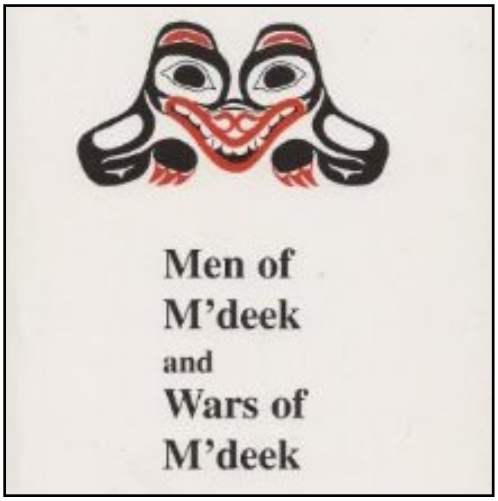
Robinson began recording Chief Wright's stories on a typewriter in September 1936.

Kitimat's Northern Sentinel Press published some of these recordings in a book titled *Men of M'deek* in 1962, nearly 10 years after Robinson's death.

But in his will, Robinson asked that his family publish a second book, Wars of M'deek.

Fifty-one years after his death, Robinson's granddaughter Enid, discovered his old papers in a box and showed them to her cousin Barry.

A photo of Chief Walter Wright in the book Men of M'deek and Wars of M'deek.



Enid and Barry decided it was time to give the documented history back to the Kitselas people.

In partnership with the Kitselas band, they combined the original book with the the rest of the recordings to create *Men of M'deek and Wars of M'deek*. They published 550 copies of the book: 500 soft cover and 50 hard cover.

On October 22, 2003, Barry Robinson generously gave these books, a digital version of the manuscript, and the copyright to all of this material the Kitselas band.

The book is available at the Kitselas Treaty Office if you want to see a copy or buy one.

DID YOU KNOW?

M'deek means Grizzly Bear in Symalgyax, the Kitselas language.

BBall tourney coming up in Prince Rupert

The 55th Annual All Native Basketball Tournament will be held in Prince Rupert this year from February 9th through to February 15th.

This northwest area event brings together many first nations teams from all over BC, Vancouver Island and Alaska. The teams train extensively beforehand and travel to Prince Rupert to compete in this coveted tournament. The tournament is divided into four seperate divisions: Masters, Senior Men, Women and Intermediate.

Almost everyone knows a family member or friend who has played or is playing at the All Native, and its an opportune time to catch up to other family and friends who you may have not seen in a while. Its a reunion of sorts, seeing families gathered and smiling amongst the spectators of the games.

A photo courtesy of www.anbt.ca shows the various communities that attend the All Native Basketball Tournament in Prince Rupert during February

This year, the tournaments Opening Ceremonies will take place on February 9th at 8pm at the Jim Ciccone Civic Centre Arena by the Haida Nation. There will be a Hall of Fame inductee ceremony at this time also.

Tickets can be purchased in advance from $32 for an all day pass for Friday and Saturday, to individual session pricing of $8.

So, if you have time and want to take in some athletic competition, head to Prince Rupert for a guaranteed action-packed trip to the All Native. Who knows, maybe you'll see the long time spectator David Suzuki taking in some games too.

For more info on specific schedules, visit the website at http://anbt.ca

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Got something to share?

Send us your suggestions, info about community events, story ideas, photos, etc.

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