



Canyon *Current*

“Increasing Knowledge Together for a Better Tomorrow”

Volume 3 - Issue 7 April 2011

Self-Government Kicks Off Community Engagement



Community members gathered together on March 24th 2011 in Gitau to watch the first screening of a new film entitled “Government by the People” and engage in a discussion on Self-Government. This was the kick off event for a series of community meetings to come throughout the next year in anticipation of an land and cash offer from Canada and British Columbia as part of the Agreement-in-Principle negotiations. Each community meeting will focus on a different topic as it relates to treaty and self-government. See story inside on page 6 for more on this topic.

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In the Community

Easter Basket Raffle - the Kitselas Youth are selling tickets to raise funds for their centre. You can contact Marica Spencer or any of the young people who regularly participate in youth centre initiatives for your ticket! Draw will be on April 23rd.

Pancake Breakfast Friday April 22nd 8am - 11am at the Elder's Centre - Gitau

Tea & Bazaar May 14th 9 am - 2 pm at the Kulspai Hall. Please contact Cora at 250-635-7302 to book a table \$10.00 each.

Ongoing

Women's Wellness Group meets every Tuesday from 6-9 at the Gitau Office.

Elders Walk/Swim - Tuesdays For more info call Sharlene at 635-5084 ext 237. Please bring a snack and drink.

Elder's Group meets every Thursday for lunch at the Satellite Office - Kulspai at 12:00 pm

Floor Hockey - Fridays from 7-9 pm at the Kulspai Community Hall. Call Dustin Parker for more information at 635-1985.

Alcoholics Anonymous - rides available to attend the Wednesday noon hour meeting. Please arrive at the Band Office by 11:30 am.

Parent Connection every Wednesday at 12:00 pm Gitau Admin Office. Join us for lunch, questions and sharing.

Sm'algyax Lessons - Wednesdays 10am - 12pm and 1 - 2:30 pm at Wabsuwilaks'm Gitselasu. Please call the school in advance to confirm your attendance at 635-3301.

Do you have a community event, story or photo you would like to share? Community submissions are always welcomed at the Canyon Current! The next deadline for submissions is **Friday May 13th 2011**.
Email: newsroom@kitselas.com OR Phone: 250-635-8882 ext 242

Cst. Ryan Smith will have scheduled office days for walk-in visits in Gitau at the Firehall on Thursdays from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm.

The Housing Dept. would like to remind residents that rent/house payments are due on the 1st of the month. Please avoid going into arrears and ensure payments are made in full. Band members are also asked to submit/up-date housing applications, Thank you.



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Correction Notice:

Chris BOLTON was the first president of the Elder's Group. He was improperly named Chris Mason in the last issue of the Canyon Current. Lili Mason should have ready LILA Mason. Sincere apologies for any confusion or offense this error may have caused.

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the newsletter please email h.zornow@kitselas.com
Your address will also be added to a distribution list for any news or updates that come through the communications office.



**[www.facebook.com/
CanyonCurrent](http://www.facebook.com/CanyonCurrent)**

Fiscal Policy Opens Doors

Kitselas Band Council has recently begun the development of new financial laws that will guide the administration in coming years and promote accountability and transparency. Kitselas has signed onto the First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act under the First Nations Financial Management Board. The purpose of this Act is to allow Native governments an opportunity to participate more actively in the Canadian economy, promote private investment and meet community needs. The completion of financial management laws will allow Kitselas to begin seeking funds that will break the bonds of dependency on INAC. Having increased access to outside source revenue will allow the administration to make decisions for the community with income that is outside the rigid INAC funding streams. Strong financial management is the key to successful implementation of self-government. Outside of this concept, the community stands to gain from improved standards by ensuring funds are maintained properly. Financial laws will also ensure the administration has the capacity to run efficiently and effectively. This is one of many initiatives that have been put into play by the Band Council to create real options for Kitselas members. Stay tuned for more as this story develops or visit www.fnfmb.com to read more on this topic.

Loose Dogs a Safety Issue

Recent attacks by loose dogs have spurred a great deal of concern in the community for the safety of children. The recent killing of a cat in Gitauas and other incidents involving individuals has community members concerned that dogs roaming together will create a dangerous pack mentality that could result in violent attacks on people. Chief Bennett adds, "Council shares everyone's concern and frustration with the dog and cat problem, we ask pet owners to be responsible and control their pets to prevent injury to persons or property."

Unfortunately a formal dog control program would cost \$50,000.00 each year through a contract with the Regional District. The RCMP currently have enforcement authority for the existing Dog By-law.

Community members are encouraged to be in touch with the RCMP regarding any issues that arise as a result of problem dogs. Pet owners are urged to be mindful of their neighbors and the safety of the community and ensure their pets do not become a nuisance.



The Kitselas Sunrunners received a sizable donation of \$1500.00 from community partner - Swiftpower. This kind donation went toward covering the expenses of the team on their recent trip to Vancouver to participate in the Sun Run. The group actively fundraises to take part in this exciting annual event each year and we congratulate them on their return from another successful run - way to go!

A vertical banner for the Kitselas Treaty Facebook group. At the top is a stylized white frog with large eyes. Below it, the text reads "Kitselas Treaty is on facebook" in white. Underneath is the URL "http://on.fb.me/kitselastreaty" and the text "Join our Group at" and "and invite others to join!". At the bottom is a stylized white fish jumping over a rock, with a white swirl and green reeds in the background.

Kitselas Treaty
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Community Member Releases Second Album



Both of her albums, “Person to Person” (released in 1990), and most recently “Where Has the Time Gone”, are filled to the brim with all original music written and composed by Debbie. Being self-taught, Debbie doesn’t chart her music, rather she memorizes each

her song “There’s a Song Deep in My Heart” has been climbing the charts of American Gospel Radio Stations for the last year. Debbie’s aim is to make a difference through her music and notes that, “this is not a get rich thing...it’s more about ministry than industry.” She credits her husband for financing the project and states that after expenses the sale of her music goes toward ministry.

Deborah Toovey has lived in Terrace all her life. The daughter of Rena Parker (nee Bolton), Debbie, as she is commonly known, is devout in her beliefs and has a musical talent that has caught notice in the gospel music community.

song, which is a rather amazing feat considering she has close to 400 songs stored in her head!

Debbie was awarded “Songwriter of the Year” for Canada by the Country Gospel Association and

Debbie’s recent album “Where Has the Time Gone” was written for her children and she says the album song of the same name is just in time for Mother’s Day. You can purchase the album at Misty River Books, Grace Fell Florists or by a personal call to Debbie at 250-638-1396.

Alternative Therapies Available in Gitau

Therese Hagen is a friendly and familiar face in the community. As the Kitselas Wellness Worker she has brought a range of tools to help individuals find balance. In addition to referrals and counseling services Therese also offers Healing Touch and Soul-Directed Healing.

Healing Touch works on the premise that everything has energy, including our bodies. When we are mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually balanced energy moves freely through us. When we are not in a state of health energy gets blocked. Healing Touch can be helpful for relieving pain, lowering blood pressure, improving sleep, reduce cravings, improve resistance to illness, and aid in general recovery.

Soul-Directed Healing works with an individual’s own belief system, whether religious or cultural to

help find clarity. It is a practice that helps you to heal old emotional hurts and gives you a new perspective, through this practice you can begin to heal yourself. This self-directed method can help individuals to better cope with the ups and downs of daily life; work through problems; heal old hurts; give you a greater understanding for why you experience certain things in your life; teach you to love and trust yourself; and give you a great connection with your spiritual or religious beliefs.

These therapies are not intended to replace care provided by your family doctor, rather they are tools to compliment the care you already receive.

Contact Therese to learn more at 250-635-5084 ext 226. Hours are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 8 am - 4pm.



Cullen visits Gitau

Nathan Cullen, MP was in Gitau on March 31st 2011 to meet with the Kitselas Elders and discuss issues of concern for seniors and the general Native community. His easy nature made for a very candid and insightful conversation as he shared a great deal of relevant information as it relates to government funding for Native communities.

Housing was a major issue of concern for many as there are limitations on funding sources to build homes in the community, especially for seniors. Nathan listened carefully as the Elder's expressed their concerns and noted that a significant number of seniors in this country are living below the poverty line. The New Democratic Party (NDP) has strengthening pensions and living conditions for seniors high on their party platform. Cullen added seniors have a significant voice in the upcoming federal election as they represent a considerable percentage of the population. Nathan Cullen's office, located at 116-4720 Lazelle in Terrace, often acts as an advocate for community members who are hitting roadblocks with various government agencies. Elders who had expressed concerns with pensions and other issues were



encouraged to visit or call the office at 250-635-7783.

Aside from the discussion surrounding seniors' issues, Nathan made some very poignant comments regarding Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) that is right on target with the need for Kitselas to consider self-government. Each year Canadians hear about the \$11.5 billion that is spent on Aboriginal initiatives without much consideration to the fact that \$8 billion of these funds are spent in Ottawa on the bureaucracy (INAC). "Indian Affairs is its own industry," said Cullen, "it's like [the bureaucracy is] in a movie and everyone plays a role...the perception is money goes out the door but it doesn't". He made note of the

fact that funds often announced as "new" money, is often the exact same funds that were announced the year before and so on. "The general public thinks the money has been spent and wonder why there is still a problem," stated Cullen. His remarks echo the same argument critics have often touted - Aboriginal Funding is "big business" in Canada.

The upcoming federal election on Monday, May 2nd 2011 is the fourth in seven years – virtually unheard of in generations past. This political unrest costs millions of dollars in public money. Therefore, if you are going to vote be sure to educate your decision, how will the party you are electing change the face of Canada and how will their policies affect your life?



Ken McDames Sr. Not Running in Next Election

Ken has sat on council for the last 20 years. The long standing member has announced today that he will not be running in the upcoming election for Chief and Council. While this recent announcement was a difficult decision to make, Ken expresses that his work and personal commitments will keep him busy. He would like to thank the community for the long standing support over the years and wishes the new council best wishes with all of the future endeavours. He is grateful for the support of friends and family especially his wife Heddy for her patience and support as his role with council has meant a lot of time away from home.

Council & Staff thank Ken for his commitment to the community and wish him the best!

Self-Government: A Real Solution Hilary Zornow



Pictured: Community members pose questions and contribute to the community discussion on March 24th at the Gitaus Administration office. Two meetings were held on this date. Suggestions for upcoming meetings are welcomed, contact Hilary at 250-635-8882 ext 242 or email h.zornow@kitselas.com

On March 24th 2011 the Kitselas Treaty Office hosted a public screening of a film entitled “People of the Grizzly: Government by the People”, followed by a community discussion. The film illustrates the various benefits to First Nations who are self-governing. It is important to realize that self-government is not dependent on a Treaty. Various Native groups in British Columbia, such as the Sechelt and West Bank, have successfully implemented self-government without a formal treaty. The purpose behind a treaty is to settle land claims and receive a cash offer to develop infrastructure. With that said, a signed treaty will not strip Native people of their rights. The rights many people associate with their livelihoods are constitutionally protected, not dependant on the Indian Act. The Indian Act cannot simply be removed from our lives without a solid system of governance in place, which is where we are today.

Kitselas has already begun to realize self-government through the Kitselas Reserve Lands Management Act which gave the Band law making authority as it relates to land and essentially removed the limitations of approximately 25% of the Indian Act – and nobody has missed it. The Lands Management Act is only one piece of a whole and while it has been a source of liberation for Kitselas it is not without limitations. Kitselas still does not have a legal claim to their reserve lands, something that can be remedied through a self-government agreement should Kitselas choose to move in this direction.

While the community meeting was not intended to focus on grievances, concerns raised over housing were very effective at illustrating the limited power the Band Council has under the Indian Act. Funding for housing is controlled by the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. This person has the authority to approve or not-approve the funding proposals submitted by the Band Council. The Minister holds the purse strings and makes the ultimate decision as to how much the Band will receive for new construction every year. As is custom with federal funding schedules the money for new homes doesn’t typically come in until September, regardless of how ridiculous this timing is for northern communities. Unfortunately because the Band Council has no other source of revenue for housing, this is as good as it gets. Housing on-reserve is vastly different than what an individual can expect off-reserve because of the difference in property rights.

The West Bank First Nation have within their Self-Government Agreement “the rights, powers, responsibilities and privileges of an owner in relation to Westbank Lands and may grant Licences and interests in Westbank Lands.” They can lease their lands to anyone they wish and as such have been able to collect a sizable income for their community based on their proximity to the urban community of Kelowna and the major lenders and retailers who build on their lands. If Kitselas chooses to move in a similar direction, our community can truly benefit from the reserve lands and individuals will have more opportunities.

As Kitselas moves forward making use of the tools available, such as the Certificates of Allocation, are a significant piece of regaining the independence enjoyed before being confined to reserves. Thinking about self-government is another positive step. As the small example regarding housing and property rights shared here demonstrates, self-government is a means to resolve the many social and economic issues that face our communities. The Indian Act was imposed, self-government must be a choice. We can be free of the Indian Act, we only need to decide as a community to move in a new direction.



Pictured: Gerald Wesley provides an update to the audience on the current treaty negotiations. Mel Bevan and Judy Gerow, seated, also delivered presentations, answered community questions and addressed various concerns.

The next community meeting will take place on June 2nd at the Kitselas Hall at 5 pm and will focus on land claims. Members are encouraged to forward their updated contact information to receive a personal reminder. Contact Hilary at 250-635-8882 ext 242 or email h.zornow@kitselas.com to add your name to an email list for updates.

Property Rights Explained

Reserve lands are owned by the federal government. Individuals do not pay property tax on-reserve because the land their home sits on is not legally theirs. Off-reserve, individual property owners hold land in what is called “fee simple”, which is the most complete form of land ownership any individual can hold in Canada. Fee simple ownership gives the individual the right to use the property, to earn income from the property, to transfer the property to whomever they wish, and to enforce their property rights – meaning the government will defend your right to ownership. On-reserve the only rights individuals have to the land is the right to occupy, they do not have any property rights.

Because reserve land is not subject to seizure or cannot be mortgaged INAC must act as a guarantor for the Band Council, guaranteeing a home loan will be re-paid. This is why INAC has the authority to say how much they are willing to give to the Band Council and why housing arrears are so problematic. If the Band has too much debt this will affect the amount of money INAC would be willing to guarantee. Individuals can access a personal home loan through the Royal Bank of Canada for on-reserve housing, but the Band Council must sign as guarantor. Off-reserve any individual can go to a bank to secure a loan. Because they are buying a home on fee simple land the bank is willing to finance because if the owner cannot pay, the bank can seize the property and get their money back.

Indigenous Political Rights - Mel Bevan



Photo: <http://www.ximeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=445747>

When Prime Minister John Diefenbaker enacted the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960 someone realized that continuing to ban the aboriginal right to vote in federal elections would be a contradiction and internationally indefensible. The repeal on the ban acknowledged the aboriginal people's equality in the right to vote but fell short in granting equal political rights.

When Status Indians vote in a federal election they are not voting for their own governors, they are assisting the people of

Canada in electing their government. The lives of Canadians are in constant change as parliament passes new laws designed to improve the running of the country and to improve the lives of Canadian citizens. Of all the laws of Canada, Status Indians are governed by only one law – the archaic Indian Act administered by the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs.

The Minister of Indian Affairs has the power, under the Act, to make laws by proposing legislation to parliament, to make regulations and to formulate and enact policy that will affect the lives of Status Indians (particularly on-reserve). The Minister has powers of administration, judicial powers and the power to make final decisions on all facets of Indian life, including after-life. Band Councils can make by-laws but the Minister has the exclusive power to disallow them. In a democracy such as Canada, this type of power is held and exercised by elected members of Parliament and Members of Parliament are accountable to the people who have elected them. The Prime Minister appoints the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. The Minister is not elected or appointed by the aboriginal people of Canada and is not accountable to them.

All “Indian problems” are referred to INAC, including the implementation and management of modern day treaties. The government can only assist aboriginal people to the extent that the majority of the population, who hold all of the political rights, allows it to do so. International pressure has on occasion influenced government policy but the Canadian government can only implement change that is in tune with what the rest of Canada will accept. As time marches on and the rest of the world and Canada progress, the aboriginal people and their problems are held further and further behind by an Act and a system that is no longer relevant.

Many have argued that the solution to the “Indian problem” is to simply abolish the reserves and assimilate aboriginal people into mainstream society, which almost happened in 1969 with the White Paper, introduced by the Trudeau government. However, aboriginal people in Canada have long known that if this happens they will eventually lose their identity as a distinct people and vanish into the fog of history. Should the Indian Act disappear tomorrow, Native people would also be left floundering if there is no other reliable form of governance to take its place. Implementing self-government would allow for progress while also maintaining our culture and identity. The Kitselas people must make their own laws that will allow them to preserve their history, control their own lives and futures. It will not be possible for the government of Canada to ever govern the aboriginal people in a way that will allow for progress nor can they fix the problems, social or economic, unless the barriers to equal political rights are removed. Namely these barriers include the Indian Act and the prescriptive nature of INAC funding and policies.

Nelson Mandela in his speech to the South African Court during his trial in 1964, before spending the next 20 years in jail, said, “above all, we want equal political rights, because without them our disabilities will be permanent.” Political rights means having your vote mean something. It means having the people you elect work for you and be accountable to you. It means having the same political rights that other Canadians enjoy. Only the people themselves can make change and only the people can demand of the leadership that we elect in our communities, our national, provincial and regional organizations to work toward making change. The right to vote without real political rights gives us an illusion of democracy, our task is to make it real.