

OCTOBER 2026

AROUND THE LAX YIP



Sigii dim haa’nak’ Ganhl K’uba wilksihlsxw,

As we celebrate many exciting milestones in Gitanyow, we also recognize that the recent provincial election has stirred many emotions for people in our communities.

In this newsletter, we reflect on the strength of those who came before us, share important information about Indigenous rights, and provide an update on Gitanyow's ongoing work to protect the Lax yip and advance recognition of our Aboriginal Title.

Following the majority win for the B.C. Conservatives, many people in our communities are feeling sadness, fear and uncertainty about what comes next, particularly with their commitment to repeal B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA).



We want to remind everyone of something crucial:

DRIPA did not give us our Aboriginal rights or Title.

Our rights existed long before Canada. They are recognized and affirmed under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and have been upheld and clarified through landmark Supreme Court of Canada decisions.

DRIPA is an important part of B.C.'s reconciliation framework, but repealing it would not erase our constitutionally protected rights.

Governments and legislation may change, but our history, our laws and our connection to the Lax yip remain.

In our recent *Fear, Rights, Reality* series on social media, we shared stories of our ancestors defending their rights through generations of injustice and uncertainty, alongside landmark court decisions that have helped establish governments' legal obligations to respect Indigenous rights.

Their strength and determination brought us to where we are today.

We have been here before.

We know the road ahead may bring challenges, but we also know the strength of our people and the importance of standing together.

Our ancestors never gave up on our rights, and neither will we.

Let's take care of each other as we move forward, together.

Talk to one another. Listen to one another. A conversation can build understanding and help keep us together.

***If you missed our series on Indigenous rights, you can find all 12 posts on our Facebook and Instagram pages.**

FACEBOOK

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For thousands of years, Gitanyow has managed the Lax yip (traditional territory) in accordance with our Ayookxw (supreme law). Our Title existed long before colonial governments and courts. The question is how we resolve it.

Gitanyow answered that question more than a century ago.

"Recognize our title, and we will discuss how we share the wealth of our land."

These words were written in 1910 by Gitanyow's first President, Albert Williams, in a petition to Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier seeking recognition of Gitanyow's Aboriginal Title.

Over the following decades, Gitanyow continued to seek recognition through letters, petitions, formal proposals and legal efforts.

More than a century later, Gitanyow's Title remains unresolved, but our commitment to resolving it peacefully through dialogue, negotiation and agreement has not changed.

There are two paths to resolving Gitanyow Aboriginal Title: agreement or courts.

Gitanyow already has an advanced Title case in progress. The trial is currently on hold while the Supreme Court of Canada (SCOC) considers appeals involving the Nisga'a Nation and Skii km Lax Ha.

The appeals concern who can participate in Gitanyow's Title case and whether another Nation can advance its own Title claim within that case.

The SCOC heard the appeals last year in December 2025. Once its decision is released, Gitanyow will have greater clarity about the next steps for the Title litigation.

But negotiation offers another path. Recognition through agreement can establish clear rules for governance and decision-making while creating greater certainty for Gitanyow, governments, industry and private property owners.

Reaching an agreement could also save Gitanyow and the government millions of dollars in litigation costs.

Whichever path ultimately leads to recognition, Gitanyow's objective remains the same: recognition of our Aboriginal Title and a clear and lasting framework for certainty and coexistence.

Learn more about Gitanyow's Title journey and the paths to recognition by scanning the QR code below.

GITANYOW HEREDITARY CHIEFS OFFICE & SINDIHL HOUSE OF LEARNING



After decades of operating out of temporary and aging buildings, the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs finally have a permanent home!

On July 15, we were thrilled to welcome community members, family and friends, neighbouring Nations, industry partners and guests from near and far to celebrate the grand opening with us.

It was a wonderful day filled with great food, live music, laughter and community spirit!

A special moment during the celebration was the ribbon-cutting ceremony led by the family of the late Simoo'gyet Sindihl (Robert Good). A respected Gitanyow leader affectionately known as the "Heart of the Huwilp," his contributions and legacy are honoured through the Sindihl House of Learning, which proudly bears his hereditary name.

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And the classrooms are already bustling with activity!

From the Building Maintenance Worker Training program delivered by Irwin Safety to the Heavy Equipment Operator Training and Certification with O'Brien Training, supported by Tricorp, students are gaining valuable hands-on experience and practical skills for future careers.

Since the Gitanyow Education and Training Institute (GETI) began in 2015, more than 800 people have received training right here in Gitanyow. The new Sindihl House of Learning will build on that success, creating even more opportunities for education, skills development and employment.

Our new building is not only a new home, but a new chapter! It represents Gitanyow's commitment to strong governance, education and a thriving future for our people.

A HUGE thank you to everyone who helped make this vision a reality and to all who came out to celebrate with us!



XSI’GINTAIYIN ELDERS HOUSING



After years of hard work and dedication, Xsi’Gintaiyin Elders Housing is officially a reality!

With the final inspection complete and the keys handed over, we are now welcoming our first residents. What an exciting and emotional milestone for everyone involved.

Designed to provide comfortable, affordable and culturally inspired living in the heart of Gitanyow, these homes are especially meaningful for several Gitanyow members who are returning home to their community.



On November 6, we invite community members to join us for a tour of the new building, with lunch to follow. Location details for the meal will be shared soon.

And in case you missed it, Beverley Russell, Manager of the Sindihl House of Learning, spoke with CFNR radio about the years of planning behind Xsi'Gintaiyin Elders Housing and how community input helped shape the project.

Listen to the interview at the QR code below.

WILP'HO DIX HATCHERY



Thirty years ago, the Gitanyow Fisheries team was raising salmon in a small, makeshift wooden hatchery, determined to help protect the future of Kitwanga River salmon.

Today, that dedication and generations of Gitanyow stewardship are bringing the new Wilp'Ho Dix Hatchery (House of Little Fish) to life.

In August, federal Fisheries Minister Joanne Thompson visited Gitanyow for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and the announcement of a construction contract worth more than $7.5 million for the new hatchery. Once operational, the facility will have the capacity to raise 300,000 juvenile Kitwanga River sockeye salmon annually.

During her visit, Minister Thompson also joined the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs to sign a 10-year Incremental Fisheries Reconciliation Agreement, strengthening Gitanyow's role in fisheries management, salmon conservation and recovery, while creating new opportunities for the people of Gitanyow.

GHC Executive Director, Joel Starlund/Luu'lugum sko'k, spoke about the history behind the hatchery and the importance of rebuilding Kitwanga sockeye populations on CFNR radio. In case you missed it, his interview is at the QR code below.

GITANYOW FISHERIES REPORT 2026



Meziadin River Fishway Counts

The 2026 salmon season marked over a quarter century of Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA) participation in the operation of the Meziadin Fishway counting facility, located on the Meziadin River within Wilp Wii Litsxw Lax yip.

Each year, GFA fisheries technicians work alongside Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Nisga'a fisheries personnel to monitor and count salmon returning to the Meziadin system. This long-standing collaborative effort provides critical information to support salmon management and conservation.

Unfortunately, 2026 saw disappointing returns across all three major salmon species monitored at the facility. Approximately 125,000 sockeye salmon returned to spawn, well below the management escapement goal of 160,000 fish.

Chinook returns were particularly concerning, with only 69 adults recorded, representing just a fraction of the long-term average.

Coho returns were also below average, with just over 3,000 adults passing through the fishway, approximately 75% of the long-term average return.

These low returns, particularly the extremely poor chinook numbers, raise serious concerns about the health and sustainability of Meziadin salmon populations.

They also reinforce the importance of continued monitoring, responsible fisheries management, and collaborative conservation efforts to protect these important salmon resources for future generations.

Kitwanga River Adult Enumeration Facility (KSEF)

Historically, tens of thousands of sockeye salmon returned to the Kitwanga River each year, but populations have declined dramatically over the past five decades.

In 2026, sockeye returns remained extremely low. Only 363 sockeye were recorded passing the lower KSEF monitoring site, with just 247 counted farther upstream at Gitanyow Lake, where they spawn.

To protect this genetically unique population, Wilp Gwaas Hla'am and Wilp Gwinuu have voluntarily closed their sockeye fishery since the 1970s. With numbers this low, every spawning sockeye matters.

On a more positive note, 2,265 chum salmon were counted this year, the highest number recorded since KSEF monitoring began in 2003!

2026 Salmon Counts — July to September 27

Pink — 86,739
Chum — 2,265.
Coho — 1,405
Sockeye — 363
Chinook — 833

Photo by GFA Fisheries Technician, Lesley Mclean.



GITANYOW LAX YIP GUARDIANS



It's been a busy and successful season for our Guardians, but first, we want to say, “Welcome, Kailey Morgan!”

Kailey (Wilp Gwinuu) first joined the Guardians as a summer intern, gaining hands-on experience monitoring wildlife, participating in mountain goat surveys and learning from senior Guardians.

Her hard work and dedication have earned her a one-year position with the team, where she will help develop a youth education program focused on fire stewardship while supporting a wide range of Guardian activities across the Lax yip.

Cultural Burning

Gitanyow's cultural burning program continues to see remarkable success, with 20 burns completed to date, making Gitanyow one of the leading First Nations in cultural burning in British Columbia!

More importantly, we're seeing the results on the land. Aging willow, red-osier dogwood and other important moose food plants are producing healthy new shoots following the burns, and moose are already browsing this fresh growth.

The Guardians are now preparing additional areas for spring 2027 burns, including building access trails and fireguards, as well as mapping culturally and ecologically important features.

This crucial work is helping restore healthy moose habitat while also reducing wildfire risks. The program's success has been made possible through a strong partnership with the BC Wildfire Service, which works closely with Gitanyow to plan and carry out the burns.



Wildlife Monitoring & Research

Our Guardians continue to maintain a network of wildlife cameras across the Lax yip, collecting and reviewing images that help us better understand moose, wolves and other wildlife populations.

Gitanyow is also collaborating with the BC Ministry of Forests Research Division on a carbon assessment project and working with other First Nations organizations throughout the region.

A Strong Voice in Wildlife Management

Through the Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum (SSAF), Gitanyow is working alongside the BC government and several First Nations organizations to improve wildlife management across the Lax yip and the broader Skeena region.

These efforts are helping strengthen Gitanyow's voice in decisions affecting wildlife, while creating valuable employment, training and skills-development opportunities for community members.

GITANYOW MOOSE PERMITTING PROGRAM



The 2026/2027 moose harvest season is now underway on the Gitanyow Lax yip, and we've been seeing your photos on Facebook.

Thanks to Albert T. Hill for sharing this great picture with us!

Why is a permit important?

Protecting cow moose is a key component of the Gitanyow Moose Harvest Permitting Program and an important part of supporting healthy moose populations for future generations.

Where do I get a permit?

This year, permits are issued for each individual Wilp territory. A permit will no longer provide permission to hunt within multiple Wilp territories.

- **Wilp Gwaas Hla'am, Wilp Luuxhon and Wilp Wii Litsxw: Permits are available at the GHCO.**
- **Wilp Malii: Permits are available from Glen Williams.**
- **Wilp Watakhayetsxw: Permits are available from Debbie Good.**
- **Wilp Haitsimsxw: Permits are available from Arlene Bryant.**
- **Wilp Gamlakyeltxw: Not participating in the permitting program for the 2026/2027 season.**
- **Wilp Gwinuu: Gwinuu will open her territory to Gwinuu Wilp members only, and permits will be available at the GHCO by the end of this week.**

Please note: The hunting season may be closed at any time for conservation reasons. Hunters will be notified as soon as possible if a closure is necessary.

Meat Cooler & Processing Room

The meat cooler at the Guardians' building is up and running and available for Gitanyow members to hang their moose, bear and other harvested meat.

The facility also has a spacious food processing room, perfect for families and groups working together to prepare their harvest.

Please contact Kevin Koch at kkoch@gitanyowchiefs.ca to book.

There is no charge to use these facilities; however, we ask everyone to follow a few important guidelines:

- Safety first! Please work with our team to hang your meat safely and watch out for meat hooks when entering the cooler.

- Give advance notice whenever possible. We understand that successful hunts can't always be predicted, but please contact Kevin as early as you can.

- Keep it clean. Animals must be free of dirt and debris before being brought into the cooler.

- Pick up your meat on time. Cooler space is limited, and our team will let you know when your meat needs to be collected. Please respect these deadlines.

- Clean up after yourself. Cleaning supplies are provided, and everyone is responsible for leaving the space clean for the next users.

While use of the facilities is free, donations of cleaning supplies are always appreciated.

Happy Hunting!

TRAUMA-INFORMED HR CULTURAL TRAINING INITIATIVE



We are excited to welcome Jessica Starlund to the team as Project Coordinator for our new Trauma-Informed HR Cultural Training Initiative!

Working closely with our Simgigyet, Sigidm Hanaak', knowledge holders and consultants, Jessica will help develop a Gitanyow-led cultural training program for our staff, partners and industry working on the Lax yip.

The initiative will bring together Gitanyow knowledge, cultural teachings and trauma-informed practices to promote greater understanding, respect and culturally safe workplaces.



Jessica holds a Master's in Indigenous Language Revitalization and brings years of experience in First Nations education, teaching and community engagement.

Her knowledge and experience will be invaluable in strengthening cultural understanding and ensuring that Gitanyow values are reflected in how we work with one another and our partners.

We look forward to seeing this important program take shape!

SUMMER INTERNS



This past summer, we welcomed five incredible Gitanyow youths as interns across our departments through Canada Summer Jobs funding!

Working alongside the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office, Sindihl House of Learning, Gitanyow Fisheries Authority and the Gitanyow Lax Yip Guardians, they were dedicated, eager and ready to learn.

Throughout the summer, each intern brought unique talents into their role, creating a variety of experiences across the Lax yip and within our community.

Depending on their placement, individuals gained specialized field skills from monitoring local wildlife and conducting helicopter goat surveys to supporting the RMOT program and earning Swiftwater Rescue Certifications.

Others focused their talents indoors, delivering community training, supporting virtual learners, managing program logistics and building communications skills.

While no two pathways were the same, every intern worked closely with senior staff and mentors, deepening their connection to land stewardship and Wilp structure.

We are incredibly proud of their hard work, adaptability and dedication to protecting our lands, waters and community.

Programs like Canada Summer Jobs create clear pathways into long-term, meaningful careers, and thanks to their outstanding contributions, several of our interns are transitioning into permanent roles or continuing their work with us through the fall!



On September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, The Tyee published a personal essay by Simoo'gyet Malii, titled You Can't Beat the Truth.

Malii reflects on the teachings of his late grandfather, Simoo'gyet Lelt, and how those lessons shaped his lifelong commitment to protecting Gitanyow's Lax yip and Aboriginal Title.

Through his personal story, he reminds us that reconciliation is about more than acknowledging the past. It requires meaningful action.

Read the essay by scanning the QR code below.

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Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter and stay connected with all the important work happening at our office and across Gitanyow.

If you have any questions, feedback, or know someone who would like to be added to our mailing list, please don't hesitate to contact us at communications@gitanyowchiefs.ca.

T'oyaxsi'y 'Nisi'm



Photo by Gitanyow Lax Yip Guardian, Karisse Marsden.