

Laxmihl



On May 11, 2000, the Nisga'a Final Agreement went into effect, marking a new beginning for the Nisga'a Nation. The Nisga'a Final Agreement sets out Nisga'a Lands and the Nisga'a people's right to self-government.

The governments of Canada, British Columbia, and the Nisga'a Nation are partners in the Nisga'a Final Agreement. Because three governments share responsibility for the treaty, an Implementation Committee was formed to provide a forum for sharing information and ideas, and to ensure implementation of the Nisga'a Final Agreement. The committee reports that the parties continue to work in a spirit of co-operation and shared vision. This report, funded by the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, summarises the progress made in the third year of the treaty, from April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003.



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Long ago,

two children were playing down by the river. One child caught a salmon and slit open its back. The child stuck sticks into the salmon's back, set them on fire, and returned the fish to the river. The children were amused to see the salmon swim erratically, smoke rising from its back. The other child caught a salmon and slit open its back, inserted a piece of shale, and put it back into the river. The salmon floated on its side, weighed down by the shale. The children laughed at the struggling fish.

An elder happened upon the scene and warned the children, "Take care what you do. The salmon will curse you and the Creator will respond in kind."

The ground began to tremble and shake. Nature's harmony had been upset. A scout was sent to investigate. From the top of Gennu'axwt, he saw smoke and flames and ran to warn the people of their fiery destiny. In panic, some villagers fled up the mountain. Others canoed to the far side of the river but were killed by the lava. As the people watched the lava flow over their villages, Gwaxts'agat (a powerful supernatural being) suddenly emerged to block the lava's advance. For days, Gwaxts'agat fought back the lava by blowing on it with its great nose. Finally, the lava cooled and Gwaxts'agat retreated into the mountain where it remains to this day.

— from Nisga'a oral tradition

It's
about
respect

Kwhlixhoosa'anskw



Fire and Stone

Laxmihl

Canada's last volcanic eruption occurred in the Nass Valley approximately 250 years ago. The lava destroyed everything in its path, sparked fires in the surrounding forests, and covered two Nisga'a villages. More than 2,000 people perished.

Today, the vast lava beds still dominate the Nass Valley. They serve as a memorial to those who lost their lives and as a reminder of the importance of respect — for both the natural world and the wisdom of the elders.

Treaty for a New Generation

For 113 years, Nisga'a people sought recognition of their right to govern themselves on their own land. Finally, on May 11, 2000, Nisga'a negotiators brought home the Nisga'a Final Agreement, British Columbia's first modern treaty.

“The Ayuukhl Nisga’a is our code of laws... ten areas that today we still observe and consider hallowed. The first is respect. When you understand the meaning of respect you have a power that emanates from you and the people around you will respond likewise — they will treat you respectfully. And so, when it comes to the laws of the Nisga’a, if you can’t understand the meaning of respect, then you are going to run afoul of every area of Nisga’a law.”

— Late Bert McKay, Nisga’a elder

Today, more than 40 percent of Nisga’a people are under the age of 20 and were too young to be involved in the negotiations leading to the Nisga’a Final Agreement. Beneficiaries of a century of determination and resolve, they see the treaty as more than an attempt to redress the past — they see it as a foundation upon which to build their future.

Three governments are responsible for the implementation of the Nisga’a Final Agreement. It is our sincerest hope that the treaty will inspire Nisga’a youth to take pride in their culture today, and empower them to meet the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.





“We’re all in a circle and we need to keep our circle together...”

Rosetta Doolan, 27, Killer Whale tribe
Teacher’s Assistant & Rediscovery Program Co-ordinator, Gingolx

I first learned about the Rediscovery Program at the Native Indian Teacher Program in Kamloops. The program began on Haida Gwaii to provide youth with drug-free and alcohol-free programs, and to build cultural awareness and self-respect. We began one here so we could have our youth get into the Nisga’a culture and explore the wilderness. There were no programs like this when I was young.

Four of us went through the leadership training program in Kamloops. It included instruction in canoeing, lifesaving skills, personal growth and professional development, respect, sharing, and global connecting – learning about other parts of the world. When we came home, we gave a presentation on what we’d learned. Then I started thinking about how we could start it up here.

Our first summer camp was at Mill Bay. The kids went hiking and fishing. An elder came with us and told stories around the campfire. He told the kids they should respect each other, their parents, and nature. He encouraged them to do well in school, go after their career goals, and learn as much Nisga’a as they can. He told them the story of the volcano, how the youth were disrespecting the animals and how the creator punished them to make an example. Our theme the first year was “The Prophet of Our Future is Our Past.” In order to succeed in life, we have to be united as one nation. We need to learn the ways of our elders and carry on our traditions.

This program shows our youth that there is more to life than Nintendo and drugs and alcohol. It promotes the Nisga’a language and culture – which I feel is slowly dying out among our youth. I think we need to protect it. It gives young people a better sense of identity and where they stand in life. It lets them know their traditions so

they can pass them down to the next generation... A lot of our culture is about respecting our elders. We’re all in a circle and we need to keep our circle together, our youth and our elders. It is our way of life and it’s the best way for us to succeed.

I think the new road will make our communities more united. We’ll do more things together – sports, culture, and Nisga’a dancing. I will be dancing at the road opening this weekend.

Ten years from now, I want to see that the Rediscovery Program has grown. I want to see four longhouses – one belonging to each tribe. It’s important to meet the people from other villages who belong to your house and learn the stories, songs, dances, and legends. This is something I want to plan for. I’ve dreamed about it for a long time and I want to make it happen. Rediscovery was just a dream when I first heard about it. Now it’s a reality.



The
Nisga'a
Final
Agreement

Minhuk'ak'ansgum' gan wilhl maaxhl maalim'

When the Colony of British Columbia was created in 1858, Nisga'a territory was declared Crown land. In 1887, the Nisga'a people began petitioning government to recognise their ownership of, and rights to, Nisga'a territory.

In 1998, the governments of Canada, British Columbia, and the Nisga'a Nation initialled the Nisga'a Final Agreement, British Columbia's first modern treaty. The Nisga'a Final Agreement sets out Nisga'a Lands and the Nisga'a people's right to self-government. The Nisga'a Final Agreement came into effect on May 11, 2000. This day marked the realization of a long-held dream. The Indian Act no longer applies to the Nisga'a people (except for the purpose of Indian Registration and

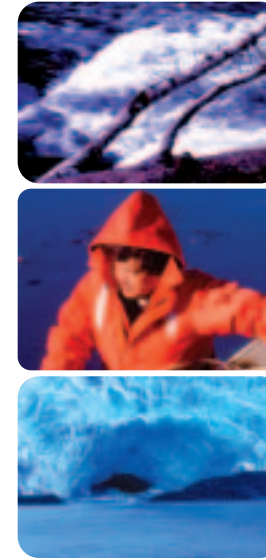
certain transition matters mentioned in the treaty). Through the self-government provisions of the treaty, the Nisga'a people are now empowered to conduct their own affairs once again. The treaty put to rest any uncertainty regarding ownership of the land and creates new opportunities for the co-operative, sustainable development of the Nisga'a Nation's natural resources. It benefits all Canadians.

The Nisga'a Final Agreement marks a milestone in the development of aboriginal self-government in British Columbia and Canada. It serves as an example of how governments and aboriginal peoples can, in good faith, work together to forge a more secure future for everyone.

The Shape of a Nation

The Nisga'a people have lived in the Nass Valley since time immemorial. Today, the Nisga'a Nation includes approximately 5,500 people. Nisga'a citizens reside in the four communities on the Nass River: Gingolx (Kincolith), Laxgalts'ap (Greenville), Gitwinksihlkw (Canyon City), and New Aiyansh, as well as the British Columbia urban centres of Terrace, Prince Rupert, and Vancouver. For administrative purposes, these urban communities are identified by Nisga'a Lisims Government as Nisga'a "Urban Societies."

Under the Nisga'a Final Agreement, the Nisga'a Nation owns approximately 2,000 square kilometres of Nisga'a Lands in fee simple. Under the treaty, the Nisga'a harvest fish in the Nass Area (approximately 26,838 square



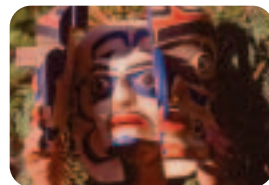
kilometres) and wildlife in the Nass Wildlife Area (approximately 16,101 square kilometres).

Nisga'a Lisims Government

The Nisga'a Nation has the right to self-government and the authority to make laws. Nisga'a government is democratic, representative, and responsible to its citizens. It is composed of Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG) — which consists of executive and legislative branches and a Council of Elders — and four Nisga'a village Governments. Each Nisga'a Village acts through its Nisga'a Village Government in exercising its rights, powers and privileges, and in carrying out its duties, functions, and obligations. Nisga'a Lisims Government is responsible for intergovernmental affairs.

Wilp Si'ayuukhl Nisga'a is the 39-member legislative body responsible for considering and passing Nisga'a Lisims Government laws. It includes every Officer of NLG, the Chief Councillor, Councillors of each Nisga'a village, and two elected representatives from each Nisga'a Urban Society. During the reporting period, there were four sittings of the Wilp Si'ayuukhl Nisga'a: June 19, 2002; July 4–5, 2002; December 11–12, 2002; and March 5–7, 2003.

The President, Secretary-Treasurer, Chairperson of the NLG executive, and the Chairperson of the Council of Elders are elected by all Nisga'a citizens and serve as the four Officers of NLG. The Chief Councillor and Councillors are elected by Nisga'a citizens resident in



each village. The NLG executive consists of the Officers, the Chief Councillor of each Nisga'a Village Government, and one representative from each Nisga'a Urban Society.

The Nisga'a have always governed themselves according to Ayuukhl Nisga'a, the traditional laws and practices of the Nisga'a Nation. The Council of Elders provides guidance and interpretation of the Ayuuk to Nisga'a government. Composed of chiefs, matriarchs, and respected Nisga'a elders, the Council of Elders is appointed by NLG in accordance with Nisga'a law and the Nisga'a Final Agreement.

Under the terms of the Nisga'a Final Agreement, Canada and British Columbia provide annual capital transfer payments to the Nisga'a Nation until 2014. During the reporting period, payments of \$12 million from Canada and \$1 million from British Columbia were made to the Nisga'a Nation. Nisga'a Lisims Government met its obligations by repaying \$2 million to Canada toward its negotiation loan.





“...what we’re doing here is important. It’s important for all of us.”

Niva Percival, 23, Wolf tribe
Student and Nisga’a Fisheries Technician, New Aiyansh

I was born in Vancouver and we moved to New Aiyansh when I was 14. After graduation, I went to WVN (Wilp Wilxo’oskwhl Nisga’a), and then to UNBC (University of Northern British Columbia). I changed from arts to science because of my summer job with Nisga’a Fisheries.

What really influenced my decision is that I enjoy working here. When I was put out on the river, I realised that this is where I belong. This is what life should be for me. I don’t know how to explain it. This is why I was put here. I had never been on the Nass River before — then I was put out on the fish wheel. It felt like I’ve known the river all my life. It was like I had been here before. I learned how to tag and take DNA samples. I loved it. And I think that is how the other guys here feel about their jobs.

I’m learning more about fish populations, preserving all the species of fish. Not just for Nisga’a people but for everyone. It didn’t really click for me for about a year — that what we’re doing here is important. It’s important for all of us. Especially with the treaty. Everyone is watching us, like a million cameras watching every move we make. It’s scary but it’s fun. Working here makes me feel important. Not many people get to feel that. Before, I never thought anyone knew who I was. Now I feel like everyone knows who I am and it’s nice to feel that.

I think having control will change things for the better. The people who are in charge have more say, they don’t have to ask other people for permission. They have authority. They have to go by DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) regulations but there’s not so much hassle to get something done. With fish stocks, timing is critical. Things have to get done right away. With the treaty, there is no delay.

A lot of people my age are looking to come back to the Nass Valley. They want to help their people. That’s what I want to do. That’s how my mom is, that’s why she became a teacher — to help her own people. And that’s how I feel about working here. I want to keep the salmon here. We’ve relied on wild salmon as a staple food for centuries. It’s important for the culture and community on many levels.

I feel positive about the treaty. It gives people direction, control. That’s what Nisga’a people wanted. We want to help the younger generation. We want the younger kids to benefit from what we’re doing, just like our parents want us to benefit from what they’ve done.



Stream
of
Consciousness

Gansimutkws

K'alii Aksim Lisims, the Nass River, flows almost 400 kilometres from its headwaters, Magoonhl Lisims, to the sea at Gingolx. Along the way, it courses through the heart of Nisga'a life and culture. It is the spawning grounds of five species of wild salmon, steelhead, and oolichan, a member of the smelt family. Long before the arrival of Europeans, the bounty of the river fed the Nisga'a people, provided valuable resources for trade and was a transportation route to get their goods to market.

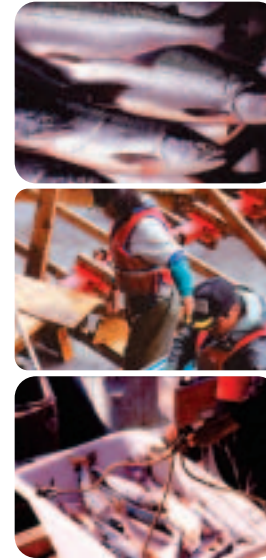
The Nisga'a Final Agreement sets out the right of the Nisga'a people to fish throughout 26,838 square kilometres of territory known today as the Nass Area. Under the direction of Nisga'a Fisheries and pursuant to of the Nisga'a Final Agreement, the Nass River is once again providing opportunities to help Nisga'a people thrive.

Fisheries Management

Since 1992, Canada and the Nisga'a Nation have co-operatively managed fishery resources through Nisga'a Fisheries. Under the treaty, fisheries are co-managed by Canada, and Nisga'a Lisims Government. The treaty allows for the commercial sale of salmon and this new revenue has enabled Nisga'a communities to benefit both culturally and economically.

On May 11, 2000, the Joint Fisheries Management Committee (JFMC) was established under the Nisga'a Final Agreement to oversee fisheries assessment and management in the Nass River watershed. Comprised of six members — two each appointed by the Nisga'a Nation, Canada, and British Columbia — this tripartite committee recommends the Nisga'a annual fishing plan to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). One hundred people were employed by Nisga'a Fisheries during the reporting period and 26 were trained in Swift Water Rescue and Boat Operation.

The 2002 fishing season was phenomenal. Four hundred and eighty-seven Individual Sale permits were sold to Nisga'a citizens for a chance to participate in ten Individual Sale Fishery openings. A total of 252,135 kilograms of sockeye salmon were caught, which represents \$833,781 in revenue to Nisga'a fishers — more than double the previous year. The Communal Sales Fishery harvested 42,263 kilograms of sockeye, generating \$253,870 for Nisga'a Fish Corporation, up from \$162,908 the previous year. The Nisga'a Nation's domestic food fishery increased over three times from the previous year, totalling 41,674 salmon.

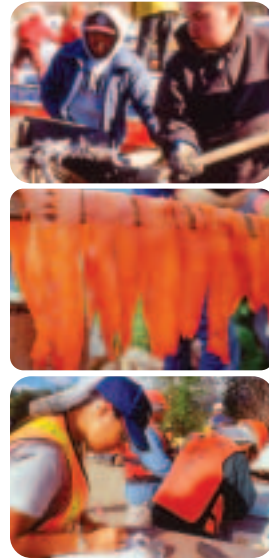


During the reporting period, key stream studies were conducted at Ksi Ts'oolhl Ts'ap (Zolzap Creek), Ksi Gingolx (Kincolith River), and Kwinageese River. Pink and Chum salmon escapement studies were conducted at Ksi X'anmas and Dogfish Creek. Concern over weak Nass sockeye stocks prompted Nisga'a Fisheries to conduct the following studies: lake sampling at Fred Wright Lake and Meziadin Lake, and DNA sampling at Hanna, Tintina rivers, and Meziadin Lakes. A multi-year Dungeness crab study continued to examine areas of abundance and distribution in the Nass estuary before and after the commercial fishery in the late fall.

Nisga'a Fisheries was contracted by DFO to conduct a bivalve biotoxin study for the Nisga'a harvest areas. Four PSP (paralytic shellfish poisoning) monitoring stations were installed in Winter Inlet, Nasoga Gulf, and the north and south ends of Observatory Inlet. DFO also contracted Nisga'a Fisheries to conduct a study on the abundance and distribution of shellfish species within the Nisga'a bivalve harvest area. Canada and NLG continued working toward establishing appropriate allocation levels for non-salmon species and aquatic plants.

Lisims Fisheries Conservation Trust

Nisga'a Fisheries applies the highest possible standards in the areas of conservation and environmental protection to ensure a healthy, productive aquatic ecosystem for the benefit of present and future generations of all peoples. This commitment is ensured, in part, by the



Lisims Fisheries Conservation Trust. Managed by trustees appointed by the NLG and Canada, the Lisims Trust promotes conservation and protection of Nass Area fish species; facilitates sustainable management, watershed restoration, and wildlife habitat restoration; and supports Nisga'a participation in fisheries stewardship for the benefit of all Canadians.

Hydroelectric Power Generation

The endless flow of rivers and streams across Nisga'a Lands could help power the local economy in a whole new way. Like much of British Columbia, Nisga'a Lands are rich in energy potential. Under terms of the Nisga'a Final Agreement, the Nisga'a Nation is able to investigate the hydroelectric power capacity of unrecorded waters in streams (other than the Nass River) that flow wholly or partially within Nisga'a Lands. By tapping into this sustainable power source, Nisga'a Lisims Government would not only be able to provide energy for its citizens, but also gain a new revenue stream through the sale of surplus "green" electricity back to the provincial power grid.

During the reporting period, detailed hydrological studies were initiated with the installation of "data loggers" on a number of streams to determine the feasibility of commercial "run-of-the-river" hydroelectric power projects.





“The Nisga’a Treaty means we got our land back. That is important...”

Sheena & Naquitta Azak, (17 & 16), Raven tribe
Students, Nisga’a Elementary Secondary School, New Aiyansh

Sheena: We go fishing with our father. We’re not like most of the girls – we go out with our dad and our brothers. When we come back, we cut the fish into strips of K’ayukws, then we hang it to smoke and get all the oil off. But fishing is more exciting, you get to set the net and see when the fish are caught and pull it in. You get a workout. My favourite fish to eat is smoked sockeye.

Naquitta: My mom teaches us how to stick oolichans and hang them, how long to keep them in the smokehouse, and how to cook moose meat and sea lion. But we also like being out on the boats. It’s not scary at all and we enjoy it a lot. The other girls just ask why. They say it’s too dirty and everything, but it doesn’t bother us. We have fun. Our dad is proud of us... Our job is to set the net. We go up on the bow and make sure the lead line and the cork line don’t get tangled when we let them out. Then my dad tells us when to pull it in. This is drift net fishing.

Sheena: Sockeye season is the busiest – three to five weeks. In the summer is commercial fishing. I got paid in the commercial fishery. I used the money for new school clothes...

Naquitta: One thing we like to do is Nisga’a dancing. We do it on special events, like the road opening this weekend. We dance at totem pole raisings and Hobiyyee (Nisga’a New Year). We’ve been dancing since we were kids. We like it because we get to use our regalia and show people our culture. It gives us pride in being Nisga’a.

Sheena: The Nisga’a Final Agreement means we got our land back. That is important, because it’s our land and we never had a treaty over it. It makes us proud to have the treaty. We get the fish and oolichan and the sea lion. Before we didn’t really have any control over the land.

Naquitta : Our grandparents help us mend nets and taught us how cut the fish: Ts’al means “to cut the fish.” Our grandmother taught us how to be a woman and how to prepare food for the winter. She tells us what we’re supposed to do and not supposed to do – how to knit and sew.

Sheena: Sometimes we speak the language with granny. She likes the fact that I’m learning Nisga’a in school. She’s proud. She tells us stories, like the one about the volcano. The kids were playing with the fish, being disrespectful. They put sticks with fire in their backs and let them swim around with fire. The Creator decided it was time to teach them a lesson... After I graduate, I want to take classes like First Nations Studies. I want to learn more about my culture. It gives me pride to learn about my language and history.



Deep Rooted

Dax̣yukẉdim' wisihl gan wiḷxo'oskẉhl

The coast of British Columbia lies at the heart of the world's largest temperate rainforest. This remarkably rich ecosystem produces an abundance of organic life — double the amount found in the tropical rainforests of Amazonia. For 10,000 years, Nisga'a Lands have provided cedar and hemlock for Nisga'a buildings, boats, and art. It is also home to a variety of fur-bearing mammals. Nisga'a culture respects and protects the gifts of this generous land.

Under the Nisga'a Final Agreement, the Nisga'a Nation owns Nisga'a Lands and the forest resources on those lands. Nisga'a Lisims Government is managing these resources for long-term sustainability.

Forest Management

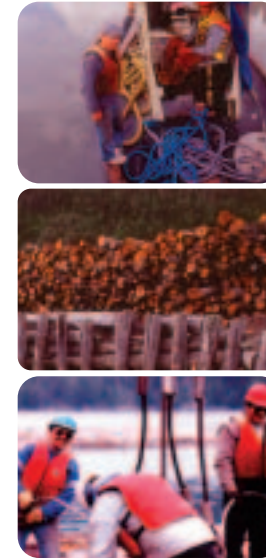
The Nisga'a Final Agreement requires that Nisga'a forestry practices meet or exceed standards established under provincial forestry practices for Crown land.

Nisga'a Lisims Government remains committed to meeting this requirement while providing consistent, sustainable employment for Nisga'a people.

After the first five years of the treaty, control of timber harvesting and management on Nisga'a Lands shifts from British Columbia to NLG. During this transition period, B.C. licences the harvest of timber to forest companies who held licences prior to the treaty's effective date. Responsibility for the administration of these licences is shared between the province and NLG. In May 2005, the transition will be complete and the Nisga'a Nation will have full control of Nisga'a timber.

Under the transition arrangement, forest companies are licensed to harvest specified volumes of timber each year and a percentage of the volume must be contracted to Nisga'a citizens to harvest. In the third year of the treaty, the target of 70 percent Nisga'a contractors was exceeded. Forest companies harvested 59,557 cubic metres of timber from Nisga'a Lands — much of it by community-owned Laxgalts'ap Forest Corporation. This figure is lower than expected due to continuing international trade disputes and volatility in North American lumber markets.

During the reporting period, NLG and B.C. reached agreement on the procedure for estimating the Vancouver Log Market price of timber harvested from Nisga'a Lands. In support of logging operations, 9.6 kilometres of new roads were constructed and upgrades were conducted on 3.7 kilometres of existing roads. The British Columbia Forest Practices Board conducted five audits on Nisga'a Lands during the reporting period. One audit was conducted for each licensee that



had active operations or outstanding obligations under provincial forest practices legislation on Nisga'a Lands. The results of the audits were still being compiled at the end of the reporting period.

Forestry Transition Committee

The Forestry Transition Committee approves forest development plans throughout the five-year transition period. Comprised of one person each from NLG and B.C., the committee approves the silviculture plans for harvesting and issues all cutting and road permits.

The Forestry Transition Committee met six times during the reporting period. One Forest Development Plan (FDP) for Forest Licence A64298 — held by New Skeena Forest Products Ltd. — was approved as was an extension to the NLG Public Lands FDP. The Forestry Transition Committee continues to work on procedures for the review and approval of harvesting activities on Nisga'a Lands.

In 2002, British Columbia transferred quarterly Same Economic Position (SEP) payments, totalling \$357,316 to NLG for timber harvested on Nisga'a Lands. Under the SEP arrangement, NLG receives payments equivalent to those they would have received if they harvested the timber themselves.

Mushroom Harvest

With the exception of timber harvesting during the transition period, NLG's Lands and Resources Directorate manages all land and forest resources in Nisga'a forests. Pine mushrooms, a popular delicacy in Asia, are the second most valuable resource found



in Nisga'a forests. In 2002, the mushroom harvest totalled 23,000 kilograms, which added approximately \$1 million to the local economy.

Wildlife Management

The Nass Wildlife Committee, a tripartite body created under the Nisga'a Final Agreement, provides advice about wildlife management and harvest within the 16,101 square kilometre Nass Wildlife Area. British Columbia uses this information to establish the total annual harvest levels and approves the annual Nass Wildlife Management Plan. During the reporting period, British Columbia conducted mountain goat population assessment studies at a cost of \$40,000, which led to changes in harvest and hunting regulations for some goat populations. From an estimated moose population of 1,400, the Nisga'a were allocated 126. An accurate estimate of the bear population could not be attained, so no domestic allocation was established. Under the terms of the Fiscal Financing Agreement, B.C. provided \$20,000 to the Nisga'a Nation for wildlife management.

Anhluut'ukwsim Laxmihl Angwinga'asanskwhl Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park

Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park is jointly managed by the Nisga'a Nation and British Columbia through the Joint Park Management Committee (JPMC). The committee was established in 1992, and continues under provisions of the Nisga'a Final Agreement.

During the 2002 season, 2,600 camping parties used the campground at Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Park, an increase of over 60% from the previous season. While visitation continues to grow, it is expected that



the completion of the Nisga'a Highway upgrade will help attract thousands of visitors to the region's rich natural and cultural resources.

During the reporting period, Nisga'a Lisims Government and British Columbia jointly funded the operation of the visitor centre. Additionally, B.C. funded an operation permit for the maintenance of park facilities (a \$7,000 contract), and awarded a \$2,000 contract for the construction of a viewing platform.

Tourism

The Nisga'a Nation has been in the business of commercial tourism since 1996 with the launch of Wilp Sy'oon (House of Glacier) fishing lodge. Offering visitors remote wilderness fishing holidays, Wilp Sy'oon is accessible only by boat or floatplane. The lodge is located approximately 30 kilometres south of Gingolx (Kincolith) near Pearse Island and enjoys a loyal and growing clientele.

Each year, the number of visitors to Nisga'a Lands continues to grow. Overland visitors, particularly from Western Canada, are eager to find out more about the land and people made famous during the negotiations of the Nisga'a Final Agreement. The Nisga'a Highway Upgrade Project is paving the way for ease of access to Nisga'a Lands and the Nisga'a Highway Extension to Kincolith, completed in December 2002, adds a tremendous asset to the region as a destination. The opening of an overland route to this seaside community has already attracted visitors from around the world. Nisga'a citizens of all ages are awakening to the potential for tourism in their communities and are making plans for the future.



“...our language and culture.
It’s what keeps us together.”

Raymond Stewart, 16, Killer Whale tribe
Student, Nisga’a Elementary Secondary School, Gingolx

I live in the dorms at school (in New Aiyansh) but I go home every two weeks. I’m taking Nisga’a, English, Science, Art, and Career and Personal Planning. In Art class, we’re doing traditional carving; I’m working on a plaque that has the image of a wolf.

Nisga’a language class is interesting. I get to learn things about my language and culture. I’m not fluent, but when we greet each other, we use Nisga’a expressions, like Nit (hello). My favourite Nisga’a expression is eh Ganada, which means “pretty frog.” My girlfriend is from the Frog tribe.

My grandparents speak it. I listen and try to figure out what they are saying. Back home I was the leader of the traditional Nisga’a drumming group... It’s important to me to know this stuff because it’s fading away and we don’t want to lose it. If it faded away, I guess our unity would be lost. It’s a different way of seeing the world. When I have kids I will try my best to teach them Nisga’a. It’s important to try and get them into our language and culture. It’s what keeps us together.

With the road opening, it’s going to be different for Kincolith. There will be tourists and more job opportunities. It will be easier to see our relatives. I have two sisters and one brother. I’m the oldest... I miss Kincolith, my family, my baby sister — everyone. The people in Kincolith make you feel really welcome. It’s home. When I’m back there I like to play ball, visit family, and go on nature walks.

I want to go college to study culinary arts. I love cooking. Back home, I help my grandparents prepare Nisga’a foods. My favourite Nisga’a food is oolicans and smoked spring salmon. Some day, I want to open a restaurant here in the Nass Valley. I’ll be the chef. I’ll cook traditional Nisga’a food for the tourists.



Extended
Family
Values

Yuuhlimk'askw

Nisga'a society is based on a concept known as Sayt'kilhl wo'osim or "common bowl". This system of shared resources and responsibility manifests itself in family, tribe, and community relationships. From education and training to health and social services, Nisga'a Lisims Government is dedicated to delivering programs that reflect and respect Nisga'a culture.

Programs & Services

During the reporting period, Canada transferred \$36 million to Nisga'a Lisims Government under the Fiscal Financing Agreement (FFA) to support the delivery of programs and services in the areas of health, education, social programs, income assistance, and local services. British Columbia contributed

\$1,323,862 to the Nisga'a Valley Health Board specifically for physician, diagnostic, and treatment services. Each year, NLG allocates over \$150,000 to each Nisga'a village specifically for the delivery of programs and services for youth.

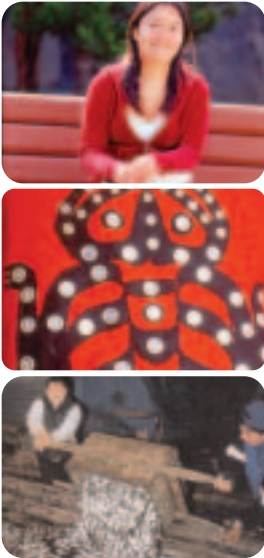
Nisga'a Valley Health Board

Since 1989, Nisga'a government has managed the provision of healthcare in its communities through the Nisga'a Valley Health Board. Registered under the Societies Act, the elected board includes representatives of the four Nisga'a villages and an elected representative from the non-Nisga'a community. Responsible for creating and maintaining facilities and promoting medical and public healthcare programs, the board operates a diagnostic centre at New Aiyansh and satellite clinics in the other villages.

During the reporting period, the Nisga'a Valley Health Board continued to provide health services to the Nisga'a communities as outlined in the Transitional Funding Agreement. Nisga'a Lisims Government allocated nearly a quarter of the FFA (\$9 million) to the board for the delivery of healthcare services. British Columbia continued to provide advisory support for managing healthcare budgets, planning to enhance primary healthcare services, setting priorities, and developing collaborative planning with the Northern Health Authority.

Nisga'a Child & Family Services

Nisga'a Lisims Government has been delivering family support services and special needs programs since



1994. In 1996, British Columbia entered into an agreement with NLG which enabled it to deliver a wide range of family protection services through Nisga'a Child and Family Services (NCFS). Acting as an advocate for families and children in crisis, NCFS offers various family support and recreation programs in Nisga'a villages and operates a care home in Terrace for Nisga'a children in foster care. NCFS solicits advice from the four villages through the Joint Management Committee, which includes the Community Resources Committee which is comprised of village government representatives and social development workers from each community.

Both federal and provincial laws which require the reporting of child abuse continue to apply on Nisga'a Lands and NCFS assists British Columbia in the administration of child apprehension cases. Nisga'a children who require protection are placed in Nisga'a extended families according to the Ayuuk. As the responsibility for child protection shifts to Nisga'a Lisims Government, NCFS is meeting the challenge with 7 fulltime staff dedicated to helping children in need.

During the reporting period, British Columbia provided \$395,000 to the Nisga'a Family and Child Services, \$270,000 for staffing of Guardianship Services to Nisga'a children living in Terrace and Prince Rupert, and \$100,000 for the development of infrastructure and culturally appropriate support services. In addition, British Columbia contributed \$25,000 to support Perry's Place Family Reunification Program. Perry's Place is a residence in Terrace that



allows children in care to be supervised by a contracted caregiver while the parent resides in a suite within the home. The caregiver works with both the child and parent to help facilitate family reintegration.

Outreach to Urban Nisga'a

To ensure Nisga'a citizens living outside the Nass Valley have access to aboriginal programs and services, NCFS works to provide support and foster a sense of community for Nisga'a living in Terrace, Prince Rupert, and Port Edward, B.C.

In 2001, NLG purchased the former Elks Hall in Prince Rupert to serve as the centre for the delivery of programs and services for Nisga'a citizens living in the Prince Rupert region. The hall is well used as a centre for the Nisga'a community, providing a venue for dances, celebrations, memorial/settlement feasts, fundraising events, wedding banquets, conferences, public meetings, sports, and cultural events.

Primary & Secondary Education

In the Nass Valley, K-12 education is provided by British Columbia through provincial School District 92 (Nisga'a) school board. Nisga'a Lisims Government works to foster and protect Nisga'a language and culture and much of this work is targeted to Nisga'a youth. Currently, approximately 560 Nisga'a students are enrolled in bicultural and bilingual courses in School District 92 in the Nass Valley.

Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a

Since 1993, Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (House of Wisdom) has offered Nisga'a-based post-secondary programs in Nisga'a communities and Urban Societies.

Scholars from around the world have come to the Nass Valley to study at this institution of higher learning. Serving both Nisga'a and non-Nisga'a students, Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWN) partners with a number of public institutions for the delivery of programs. Through an affiliation with Northwest Community College, WWN offers vocational and technical training, Grade 12 achievement, and university/college preparation. Through an affiliation agreement with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), WWN offers a Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies. Since 1994, the WWN-UNBC Bachelor of Arts: First Nations Studies degree program has resulted in 2,164 course completions.

During the reporting period, enrolment in vocational/technical programs increased and enrolment in the Bachelor of Arts program more than doubled to 240 students. These courses are fully transferable for arts credits at other universities throughout Canada.

WWN continued to explore the possibility of offering an Introduction to Early Childhood Education course during the reporting period, as well as establishing a Masters program with UNBC and obtaining degree granting authority. WWN, in conjunction with UNBC, now offers Arts 101 Learning Strategies and Arts 102 Research Writing courses. These courses are designed to equip students for university success.

WWN's annual budget is \$1.3 million. During the reporting period, NLG contributed \$200,000 for post-secondary education. Canada contributed \$200,000 and B.C. (under the FFA) contributed \$226,000 for the support of post-secondary education and training programs.



“I stay because of family, tradition, and culture.”

Kathryn Kervel, 21, Eagle tribe
Student & Administrative Assistant, WWN, New Aiyansh

I moved to the Nass Valley from Vancouver when I was 14. Up here, there's more of a focus on the extended family. We have lots of family functions. My mother has ten brothers and sisters. At first it was a little strange having them all watching over you, helping you, training you. Now I realise how important that is.

When I first went to UNBC in Prince George, my family got together and had a dinner. They told me they were proud of me and helped me out financially. My uncles, aunties, cousins, grandparents – they all helped out... The first year was exciting but the second year I got homesick. It wasn't easy because I was used to having my extended family around me.

I travelled to Europe last year. I was gone six months working as an au pair in Switzerland. When I first got there, and the family told their kids I was an Indian, they thought I'd be like Pocahontas. I was scared – but I'm brave if I have to be.

None of my family has been to Europe but I wanted to get away and do something different. It was extremely different – the food, the lifestyle, everything. I went to Rome, London, and Paris. I liked it but I missed home. My aunt sent a can of sockeye salmon. I had to ration it... When I came back, a whole bunch of my family met me at the airport.

Now I'm working on my BA in First Nations Studies here at WWN. I'm not exactly sure what I'll do after I finish my BA, maybe go into teaching. If WWN wasn't here, I'd have to leave the Nass and I'd miss out on the cultural and family activities. It's the reason I get to stay. I stay because of family, tradition, and culture.

I would encourage other young people to travel... After they travel a bit, they will have a better appreciation for what we have. Travelling has changed the way I see my mountains and the trees. I also realised that I took my family for granted.

Down the road I want to have children. I will teach them about my culture – I will teach them about respect.



The Way Forward

Gen̄ dim luuyox̄gum̄

In an interconnected, global economy, reliable transportation and communication are indispensable for ensuring the free flow of people, products, and ideas. It's about bridging the gap between potential and opportunity. Nisga'a Lisims Government is committed to connecting Nisga'a communities with each other and the wider world.

During the third year of the treaty, substantial progress was made in improving the transportation and communication infrastructure within the Nisga'a Nation.

Celebrating Success: the Road to Kincolith

The village of Gingolx (Kincolith) is now connected by road to the rest of the Nisga'a Nation, Terrace and the provincial highway system. The extension project, under construction for two years, opened to travellers on December 8, 2002.

The 29-kilometre Nisga'a Highway extension was built at a cost of \$34 million under a tripartite agreement between British Columbia (\$17 million), Canada (\$13 million), and Nisga'a Lisims Government (\$3.7 million). The extension is a two-lane, all-weather gravel road built along the Nass River through some of the most geotechnically challenging terrain in Canada. The new road offers stunning views of the Nass River valley and estuary. Previously, Kincolith was accessible only by seaplane, boat, or by vehicle on ice roads during the winter.

Construction of the road required the blasting and removal of a significant amount of granite. Major environmental challenges included creating a tidal platform and transplanting sedge during a very restricted window of opportunity in the spring of 2002. This project was undertaken to compensate for an area of habitat loss where the road was built. Sedge is indigenous to the area and is an important part of bear and salmon habitat. At a cost of \$1 million, the work was accomplished on time and to the complete satisfaction of environmental agencies.

Thirty-six percent of the project workforce was made up of local residents. Other economic benefits of the extension include enhancement of the tourism infrastructure and the opening of an important year-round link for the transportation of seafood and other resource products.



Nisga'a Highway Upgrade Project

The \$52 million Nisga'a Highway Upgrade Project has been under construction for three years. Funded by British Columbia and slated for completion in 2006, the project involves upgrading 90 kilometres of gravel resource road to a paved, two-lane, 70-km/h year-round highway. The project starts at Sand Lake and extends northwest to Laxgalts'ap and east to Nass Camp. A unique bridge launch construction method was employed to ensure local streams would remain in good condition throughout construction. To protect wildlife and workers, a grizzly bear mitigation plan was employed to avoid human-bear conflicts. Thirty percent of the workforce was hired from the Nass Valley.

During the reporting period, construction continued on the most difficult 10.5-kilometre Lava Lake segment of the road, which consists of steep rock cuts and narrow lake foreshore. Work also continued on the 10.7-kilometre segment between Laxgalts'ap and W.D. McKay Bridge. Design work for the Kwinyarh Creek to Lava Beds segment (7.3 kilometres) was concluded in 2002 and the project is scheduled for completion September 2004.

The road segment that includes Ginlulak' access to W.D. McKay Bridge (1 kilometre) was set aside from the larger contracts due to hydrology challenges. These were resolved during the reporting period and the grade in this segment was raised 1.2 metres.

Global Reach

In the Information Age, access to modern, high-speed communication is critical for the advancement of Nisga'a citizens, government, and entrepreneurs. To meet this need, NLG is investigating the possibility of bringing broadband internet access to the Nass Valley through the NLG Broadband Project.

The key objective of the NLG Broadband Project is to connect all four Nisga'a villages to a fibre optic network and share with Telus a fibre optic connection to Terrace. During the reporting period, British Columbia worked with NLG on the overall project concept and helped facilitate discussions between Telus and the NLG. The Telus phone service will run on the Nisga'a fibre and Nisga'a net will operate the service. Telus will train Nisga'a community members to install and maintain the network. The province provided \$80,000 to NLG to support engineering costs.

Bringing fibre optic, broadband internet access to the Nass Valley will have many spin-off benefits for Nisga'a citizens and has the potential to attract outside businesses wanting to work in a region with state-of-the-art communication capabilities. Even more important, it will offer a new way for Nisga'a to reach out and share their history and culture with each other — and with people around the world.





“Without the treaty, this project wouldn’t be possible.”

Peter Azak, 21, Raven-Frog tribe
Computer Technician, Nisga’a Lisims Government, New Aiyansh

I got my first computer when I was 13. I won it under the Sam Monroe program. I became a freelance technician in the village. People would call me in to help. Some would pay me if they wanted to, but I didn’t really mind either way. I did that mostly for free.

After I graduated from high school, I went to UNBC to take computer studies. Then at WWN, I took First Nations Studies. It taught me about my culture and history and motivated me to dig deeper into my background. I have more knowledge now and I am more fluent in my language.

WWN really helped me. They started me working in the YCAP (Youth Community Action Program). I volunteered my time as a computer technician. It was very basic computer training for the community. I taught 20-30 people. It felt a little strange, being young and having to be the teacher. It made me feel important... Soon after, I was offered a job at NLG. I’ve been working here since December.

In my free time, I like to DJ, write poetry, and create visual art and music on my computer. I want to integrate our cultural songs into the rave scene, hip hop, and rap. I can also draw into the computer. My grandfather taught me certain designs for totem poles and other artwork. I’ve been trying to integrate my culture into my computer talents.

The treaty allows us to bring broadband Internet access into the valley. Without the treaty, this project wouldn’t be possible. It will bring more opportunity into the community.

Broadband will help businesses, connecting them and integrating them — making everything work easier. One example would be Perry Azak’s courier service. He would be able to take orders from computers all over the valley, right on his web site. He’d have all the information about when a package will arrive, pricing, and tracking — just like modern couriers services. It’s also good for people in the villages. They will be able to have video conferencing so they can go to class in their own homes or in a building in their own villages.

I’m planning to go to BCIT (British Columbia Institute of Technology) to upgrade my computer skills. I’m so passionate about it. I’ve been interested in computers since I was a kid and I’m good at it. People know me by that now. It’s part of my identity.



“It is my dream to let the world know who we are.”

Chris Nelson, 25, Eagle tribe
Tourism Marketing Student, Prince Rupert

I graduated with a certificate in Aboriginal Tourism Management from the First Nations Training and Development Centre in Prince Rupert. Now I'm doing a practicum as a travel counsellor at the Prince Rupert Tourism InfoCentre. After the summer, I want to start my own business.

When foreigners think of Indians, they think of prairie Indians. No one thinks of Northwest Coast Indians. It is my dream to let the world know who we are. I plan to do this by offering cultural tours. My business is called Origins. It will offer cultural tours to the Northwest coast operating out of Prince Rupert and Terrace. This is all new territory. Basically, I've identified a need and my plan is to address it.

We can take visitors hiking, game hunting, fishing, and show them our native dancing. I'll involve the other Northwest coast tribes as well as the Nisga'a. You can't buy a ticket to who we are, but we can show you the richness of our culture.

Outsiders are interested in our regalia, singing, totem poles, food, ways of life, language – pretty much the whole culture. It's new to them, but in some ways it's new to us as well. After the residential schools, our culture was almost stripped – it was practised in secret. Now we have to keep it alive. It's coming back with such strength... And now visitors want to see who we are as a people.

My Nisga'a culture is a part of everything I do. I want to bring back the power of the culture to my people. Who my parents are to me I want to be to my children. Who my grandparents are to me, I want to be to my grandchildren.

I was in Victoria in 1998 when we signed the Nisga'a Final Agreement. Seeing first-hand how our leaders dealt with the other governments was very impressive. It made me proud as a Nisga'a to see that we are being portrayed in such a dignified way... Seeing Joe Gosnell speak in the legislature made me proud.

The treaty gives me hope in the future. Now that we have our land and our future in our own hands, the potential for the nation is limitless. This is true for the tourism industry as well. If we reach our full potential, then the revenue generated will be phenomenal. And we will be able to share with people from all over the world and to let them know who we are.

