

AMHAW GITGA'AT

Issue 03 | Winter 2023



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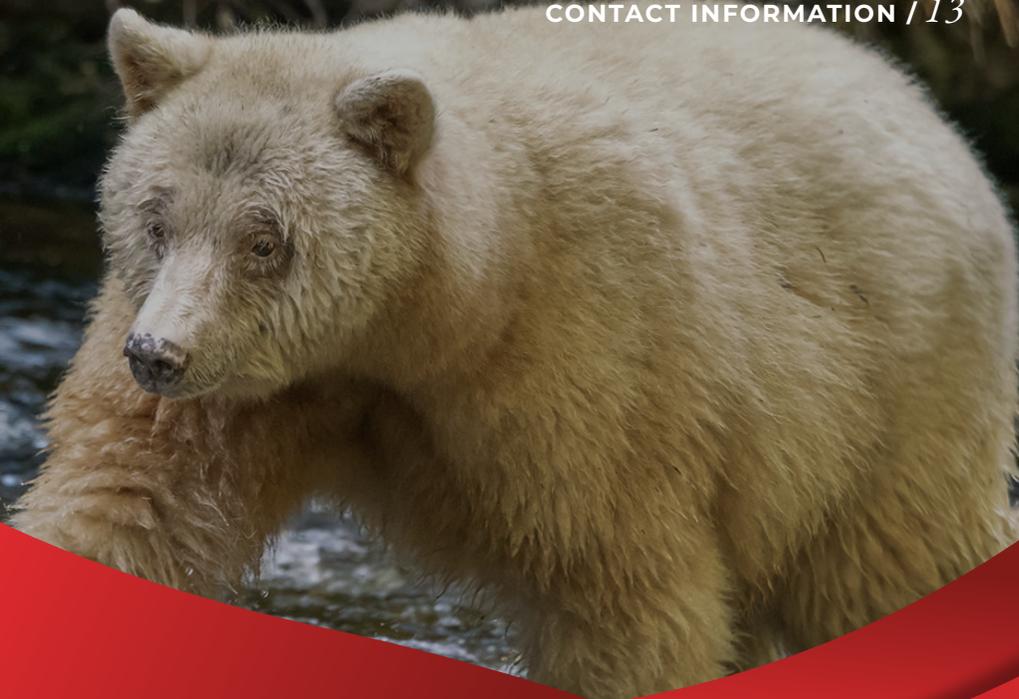
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Updates from LEADERSHIP

Welcome back to Amhaw, your quarterly update on everything happening across the Gitga'at territory and within the community. As we get through the last stretch of winter, we hope you have all enjoyed the season, community events, and togetherness.

We're well into 2023, and the year ahead looks bright for the Nation. Gitga'at members are already anticipating the arrival of spring and spending more time outdoors connecting with family, friends, and neighbours.

Winter has been a busy season for the community; we are glad to see members supporting each other, attending social events, and finding ways to bring culture, tradition, and community into your everyday lives.

There were numerous holiday, health, and wellness events in the last few months, and we were glad to see the turnout. Especially in cold and flu season, you must take care of your mental, physical, and emotional health. Though several healthcare practitioners are visitors to the community, we are pleased with the number of members who schedule time with them as a means to take care of themselves. If you want to see one of our visiting clinicians, please contact the health department to learn more about the services available.

Looking forward, this year will have a tremendous focus on growth through more infrastructure projects, building our community through social events, and making necessary system upgrades for the health of the Nation.

Additionally, the updated Gitga'at website is now live—an excellent resource for everyone in the community. You can find it at <https://www.gitgaatnation.ca>.

In this edition, you'll see what kind of projects we have on the go and get updates on how these projects are coming along. Construction tends to slow down when the weather transitions to winter, but with spring on the horizon, the days are finally starting to get a little bit longer (and warmer). We're excited to see some buildings reach the finish line and other projects break ground.

Finally, we want to remind you that Amhaw is by members for members. We take submissions from everyone and encourage you to share details about community events, updates on businesses, the environment, developments, changes, feel-good announcements, and other news members should know. Submission information can be found on the last page of Amhaw.

We look forward to seeing you out and about in the community.

—Chief and Council

Thank you

FOR READING AMHAW; WE'RE HAPPY YOU'RE HERE.



GITGA'AT
First Nation

What's happening

Culture & Education

A RECAP OF HOLIDAY SOCIAL EVENTS

After a few years where socializing and gathering were kept to a minimum due to COVID-19, we finally celebrated together over the holidays. The month of December was chock full of wonderful events, including:

- Tree lighting and skate night with hot chocolate (December 2)
- Family gingerbread making (December 7)
- Community dinner (December 9)
- Santa came to town for pictures and hot chocolate (December 11)
- Kids Christmas caroling (December 13)
- Kids baking for Santa (December 22)
- Prizes awarded for the best-decorated house (December 24)
- Christmas celebration with Santa (December 25)
- Community pancake breakfast (December 28)
- Ringing in the new year (December 31)
- New Years celebration with fun and games (January 1)

Special thank you to Santa's helpers, Jennifer Clifton, Elliott Reece, and Vanessa Danes. These three did all the coordinating and hosting events on behalf of GFN. GFN sponsored the events, and supported Teresa's fundraising efforts to make these holiday gatherings possible.



JENNIFER & ELLIOT'S HOUSE DECORATION



KASEY AND HER GINGERBREAD HOUSE



HELEN WITH SANTA



AALYIAH WITH SANTA

COMMUNITY ARTWORK CONTEST WINNER

Congratulations to Shawna Kiesman, the winner of the Gitga'at community artwork contest for the new Gitga'at daycare!

The finished artwork will be about 8 feet high by 40 feet long, laser cut from 4-foot by 8-foot sheets of aluminum sandwich panels, then fastened over the soffit cladding. The artwork will be a reflection of growing up caring for the environment and our culture.

Shawna Kiesman was born in Prince Rupert, BC, and raised in Victoria, BC. Her mother is Tsimshian/Nisga'a, and her father is Haida/German. She graduated from Blanche MacDonald with two diplomas (Make-up Artistry and Fashion Merchandising) before attending Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art and graduating with a Diploma in First Nations Fine Art. Shawna went on to Emily Carr University of Art & Design, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts and winning several awards.

When asked about her art, Shawna says, "Every piece I create is an opportunity to learn and fully understand the complexities of my culture's visual language. My teachers have shared the foundations of the traditional art form. Now, I can continue the journey to share my voice through my artwork and honour my ancestors."

Learn more about Shawna at shawnakiesman.com.

GITGA'AT ANT GAMES

The Gitga'at Health Department sponsored viewing of games featuring Gitga'at Teams at this year's All Native Basketball streaming on CFNR. The live streams played at the Cultural Center for anyone who wanted to gather to watch.

GOAT HUNT PROJECT

The Health Department is partnering with Spencer Greening on his goat hunt project to have him teach skinning and processing to any who would like to learn. There will also be a community dinner to try some goat dishes and hear from Spencer about his experiences. Dates and times will be available.

COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER FOR SKATING RINK

At the beginning of November, we asked community members to help clear out the sports court so it would be ready for ice installation. Cecile, Nerissa, Floyd, Justin Jr, Acacia, and Sakari swept up all the rocks, leaves, and garbage, so the area was ready for the artificial ice installation.

Frank and Floyd packed the ice tiles from the shed to the sports court. Cecile, Sandy, Marven, Sakari, Justin Jr, Liam, Delana, Brienne, Alexa, Karlene, Cameva, Acacia, Frank, Floyd, and Chloe all come out to help install the tiles for the skating season. A big thank you to everyone. Great job on getting it done.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS HELPING WITH ICE TILES



YOUTH ENJOYING THE START OF SKATING SEASON

SKATING LESSONS WITH STUDENTS

Sheri Pringle, a skating instructor, came out in November, offering skate lessons for school kids. There were more lessons with the kids in January, followed by report cards and awards.

ROCK CLIMBING

Caitlin DuBiel held two belaying certification courses for adults and students. Those who took the course are now certified to belay other climbers safely. Brianne and her students have a rock wall available if anyone would like to climb.



WRESTLING MAKES A RETURN

Chandra will be back for wrestling with the students in April! Come and learn some moves and have fun participating in this sport. We will post the details once they are confirmed.

HEALTHY EATING FOR KIDS

Getting children involved in cooking can help young kids learn basic math concepts and build language skills. Creating meals can develop their self-confidence and lay the foundation for healthy eating habits.

Not sure where to start with kids in the kitchen? Families can come and try out healthy recipes with Cecile; children and parents/guardians are welcome to attend—we will post dates and times shortly. If you have a healthy recipe suggestion for future sessions, please send them to the health department.



SUUBM NAKS FUNDRAISER

Hartley Bay School students and staff had a busy morning on January 23, preparing Suubm naks (feast soup). Faculty and students prepared the food for a Community Dinner Fundraiser. Attendees were very impressed with the result, and the hours of preparation certainly paid off.

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION, SKILLS, AND JOB TRAINING

We want you to reach all your career goals; sometimes, you just need the right resources. Gitga'at members can build their careers, access training opportunities, and

secure educational funding through various programs.

Developing your skills, achieving your education goals, and growing your career takes effort and resources. Pushing yourself and getting in touch with organizations that can help you can transform your life.

Whether you want to open your own business, learn a trade, gain your degree, or do anything else, the right resources can help you get the job you want.

PLANTS OF THE GITGA'AT PEOPLE

There is plenty of vegetation in our beautiful territory, and several herbs, grasses, flowers, and other plants have been used in healing. However, some of these plants are toxic and poisonous, so you should be able to identify them.

Twistedstalk, also known as maaya galipliip (thunder berries), are common all over Gitga'at territory. These red, translucent berries hang under each leaf toward the upper end of the stalk. The berries are not edible and should not be touched.



TWISTEDSTALK

Indian Hellebore, or Poison Root is what we also call huulens. It's a large, bright green plant with pleated leaves that you can find in moist areas, such as the damp woods, near the lake, or bogs above Hartley Bay. If you see it, do not touch it. Though it is a highly toxic, poisonous plant, trained healers would use the roots to salve for sores, kill lice, or topically treat arthritis and other inflammatory conditions. It is also used as incense during illness, such as the flu. Poison root has also been used for ceremonial purification, luck, and other practices.

Want to learn more about these and other plants around Gitga'at territory? We have several experts in the community—including Elizabeth Dundas, Helen Clifton, Tina Robinson, and Goolie Reece—who have published information about the Plants of the Gitga'at People. Visit the News section of the Gitga'at website to learn more.

Gitga'at Administration

UPDATE ON GFN'S COMPLAINT AGAINST BC HYDRO FEE

Approximately eight years ago, BC Hydro started providing electricity to members as part of the Remote Community Electrification Program. Before this, Gitga'at operated our electricity service.

When we agreed to the project, we signed an Electricity Servicing Agreement, which outlined a yearly fee of \$85,000, which is what the community pays on top of what community members pay for service. We have since realized an issue with this agreement.

In 2022, GFN received an annual utility fee of \$85,000 from BC Hydro. We have filed a complaint about these charges and would like to see BC Hydro reimburse us for annual utility fee payments we have made in previous years.

We believe this charge violates the Utilities Commission Act because it was not reviewed by the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC). The Act outlines that BCUC must set all terms, conditions, and rate schedules.

Instead of paying an unjust and expensive annual fee, GFN would like to allocate these funds to other areas of our community that need a boost.

On August 30, 2022, BC Hydro appointed a panel to review our complaint. On November 4, they submitted a letter to the Commission that they plan to end the agreement and stop charging the annual payment. If BCUC agrees with their stance—that the BCUC did not have to review and approve the yearly fee—BC Hydro will determine whether previous payments would be refunded to GFN.

If BCUC determines that the fee does need to be reviewed, they will be the ones who decide whether the annual fee should be stopped and whether past payments should be refunded.

The complaint proceeding is still underway. We will update the community once we have new information to share.

Treaty

RECONCILIATION NEGOTIATIONS ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

For the last year, the Reconciliation Advisory Committee has been meeting to develop an engagement strategy with Gitga'at members that informs our negotiators in the Reconciliation process.

Reconciliation negotiations have replaced treaty negotiations for many First Nations in BC. Reconciliation agreements have a lot of improvements over the treaty process. They start by acknowledging our Aboriginal title, they include funding for our priorities up front, and we never have to sign away our rights.

The Reconciliation Advisory team, led by Eric Anderson, has completed a first round of engagement around Gitga'at Nation priorities.

So far, there have been two meetings in Hartley Bay, two in Prince Rupert, and one online. We also sent out an online survey. The meetings and the survey show the top priorities for members, which are education, healthcare, and housing.

There is a lot of interest in culture and language education for all members and more mainstream education like academic upgrading and support for post-secondary. The leading healthcare priorities are mental health, wellness, and recovery for people struggling with addictions.

And Gitga'at members are looking for safe, clean, affordable housing accessible in Hartley Bay and Prince Rupert.

The next step on priority engagement will be for the Reconciliation Advisory Committee to present the engagement results to Chief and Council. The report

will be available for Gitga'at membership to review after the presentation.

Safety

WINTER BOATING SAFETY

Even though spring is on the horizon, safety on the water should never take a break. There are risks year-round while on a vessel, but the cold temperatures, ice formations, and unexpected weather changes make it crucial to follow winter boating safety recommendations.

If you are on the water this winter, get reacquainted with standard safety equipment and safety protocols when boating during cold seasons. Be prepared, so even if the unthinkable happens, you are ready for it.

Visit the Gitga'at blog for more information.



KNOW SAFETY PROTOCOL ON WATER

GOLD WELCOMES NEW FISHERIES MANAGER

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Martin Ostrega as the new GOLD fisheries manager. He is already

Ocean & Lands

an integral part of the team, and we can't wait to see his leadership in action.

Martin was gracious enough to provide us with some information about himself, so we could introduce him to our community.

Originally from Southern Ontario, Martin grew up foraging for wild mushrooms and fishing with his parents. A childhood spent with hours outdoors ingrained in him a strong love and passion for being in nature. He became an avid fly fisherman, witnessing how human disturbance can negatively impact aquatic ecosystems.

Witnessing such damaging events firsthand encouraged him to fight for the sustainable management of fisheries. Martin is an advocate for the conservation of fisheries, and he uses his voice to help protect aquatic species.

Martin holds a Master of Marine Management Degree from Dalhousie University. He previously worked with a non-governmental organization (Bonefish & Tarpon Trust) to develop management strategies to conserve bonefish throughout Cuba.

Alongside bonefish, he has a deep-rooted respect for salmonids and other species on the Pacific Coast.

In another previous role, Martin helped increase the survival potential for juvenile chinook salmon, coho salmon,

and steelhead trout while ensuring spawning habitats were abundant for migrating adults.

Martin feels incredibly fortunate to be a fisheries manager for the Gitga'at First Nation. In this role, his goal is to listen and learn from individuals who rely on surrounding fisheries and collaboratively develop strategies to sustain species in and around Hartley Bay. In his new role, Martin plans to keep learning more about fish and being part of positive change for aquatic animals.



MARTIN OSTREGA, FISHERIES MANAGER

WATCH PROJECT: HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM MONITORING AND PLANNING FOR SEAFOOD SAFETY IN

THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Since November 2021, the Gitga'at Oceans and Lands Department (GOLD) has been a part of the We All Take Care of the Harvest (WATCH) project. FNHA supports the WATCH project, a pilot project to address seafood safety and sovereignty in the context of climate change for First Nations along the coast.

Presently, participating First Nations in the WATCH project are Gitga'at, Tseshaht, Malahat, and Klahoose, though WATCH is expanding and is open to any interested communities.



WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP TO UNDERSTAND THE TRENDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVERS OF BIOTOXINS IN SHELLFISH

WATCH's primary purpose is to help communities access timely seafood safety information to help harvesters decide when and where their seafood is safe to harvest. The first step is to monitor for harmful algal bloom (red tide) phytoplankton species.

We collect water samples from shellfish harvesting areas in the territory bi-weekly (weather permitting). We analyze the samples for the presence of harmful algae species. This monitoring complements biotoxin sampling done by the Guardians and can act as an early warning system and help to understand the trends and environmental drivers of biotoxins in shellfish. Another part of the WATCH program is to enhance the ability of communities to plan for and

manage climate impacts that affect different seafood.

The WATCH community coordinator for Gitga'at Nation is Mary Reece, with support from Kim-Ly Thompson. If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback about the WATCH project in Gitga'at territory, please contact Mary at maryreece@gitgaat.ca.



EXAMPLE OF HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM



Capital & Planning PROJECTS

DAYCARE

Construction on the new daycare has begun! BC Headstart funded \$2,400,000 toward the building, and First Nations Health has contributed an additional \$109,768 toward the playground and its equipment.

The forms for the building foundation were poured on September 14, and the building has an estimated completion date at the end of May 2023.

As for those behind the work: Nancy Mackin of Mackin and Associates Architecture is the architect, Matt Kidd of Kidd Custom Homes is the contractor, and RAM Consulting is the Construction Manager. The framing and general construction will be carried out by the Gitga'at Housing Crew and other Gitga'at members with oversight and assistance from Matt Kidd.

MARINE EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RESEARCH FACILITY (MERRF)

Planning for the construction of the MERRF is well underway, and Gitga'at expects to finalize a contract with Kidd Custom Homes very shortly. Nancy Mackin is also the architect on this project, and RAM Consulting is providing construction management services to support Matt Kidd. Again, local members will complete the general construction and framing.

We anticipate that construction will begin in the spring of 2023, but we are making every effort to begin as early as possible (without starting in the pouring rain).

SEPTIC SYSTEM

Indigenous Services Canada has funded GFN to upgrade the sewage lift station on IR 4A. Contractor selection will begin shortly, with work planned for spring 2023. The Nation is also seeking funding to upgrade the electrical control panel on the existing sewage tank on the waterfront.

GFN is engaged in a design process to develop sewage lagoons that will replace the septic tank on the waterfront. The expected location for these lagoons is near the new Malsey Bay road. Work on this project is targeted for 2024.

WATER SYSTEM

GFN is working on upgrading various portions of the water treatment system, including replacing the existing water reservoir. Upgrading the water treatment plant and replacing the reservoir will be significantly simplified by accessing the sites from the new Malsey Bay road.

GFN is also working on a water security project to build a weir and dam on the upper lake. The weir will allow the capture of more water in the lake when the rains happen with the ability to release that water when there are dry summers so that Hartley Bay never runs out of water. A road to the upper lake will be constructed to facilitate construction and allow members easy access to the lake when construction is complete.

Health & Wellness

UPCOMING DENTIST VISIT

Dr Falk and his team will return to Hartley Bay April 24–28. They will be available for checkups, cleanings, and other necessary dental work that members may need.

FEBRUARY IS HEART HEALTH MONTH!

This month is about learning to take care of your heart and manage risk factors for cardiovascular disease. We will host a women's health fair event and a men's health fair event, both focusing on heart health screening and information. Stay tuned for details on the health fair!

SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTH DIRECTOR CHRISTA MEUTER

Many of you know Christa Meuter and her impact on the health and well-being of Gitga'at members. We asked Christa to tell us a bit more about herself, so the community could get to know her better.

K'amdmaxx (Christa) is an eagle in the house of Sinna Xeet. She grew up in Prince Rupert, spending summers with family in Hartley Bay. After high school, she attended the University of British Columbia and received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Following post-secondary, K'amdmaxx worked at the Prince Rupert Regional Hospital as a maternity nurse, then as a diabetes nurse educator—a role she held for over 20 years. Her next job was working for Gitga'at as a visiting home care nurse.

While coming and going between Prince Rupert and her home care nurse job, she met her husband, Hermann Meuter (Director of the Pacific Whale Society). K'amdmaxx moved to Hartley Bay, becoming the Nation's Health Director and marrying Hermann shortly after the move.



CHRISTA MEUTER, HEALTH DIRECTOR

She enjoys living in Gitga'at territory and participating in traditional harvesting and other cultural activities that were difficult to do when living away.

As Health Director, K'amdmaxx takes on her role with great enthusiasm. She finds great value in her work by making a difference for Gitga'at people and giving back to the community. She constantly strives for improvement and takes on additional opportunities to learn more—she is currently halfway through her Master's Certificate in Indigenous Public Health from UBC.

In her work, she aims to implement the best services and programs for Gitga'at members to help them not only improve their health but help them thrive.

Outside work and school, K'amdmaxx hopes to continue learning and participating in culture more. She loves spending time with her family, travelling to new places, being in the territory, harvesting, learning, and picking berries.

Upcoming Events

ELECTION FOR CHIEF AND COUNCIL

As you know, the election is coming in March, and we encourage all members to get out to the polling station to vote for the Chief and Council.

Advance polling is on Wednesday, March 8th, in Prince Rupert. Otherwise, the election is Wednesday, March 15, in Hartley Bay.

LEARN ABOUT WILLS & ESTATES

Mark your calendar to meet some professionals in wills and estates to help you take care of your loved ones after you are gone. We have three presenters who will walk you through what wills and estates are, why they're important, and explain their differences.

Anne Fletcher of Bella Coola Legal Advocacy Program will do a presentation on wills and estates on reserve, followed by Chelsea Leung of DIAND Estates, giving a briefing on wills and estates off-reserve.

Following them, Marie-Noel Campbell, the Executive Director of Seniors First BC Vancouver, will discuss wills, estates, power of attorney, and representation agreements.

Bring your questions, and the presenters will be available if you need assistance creating a will.

Join us on February 28th at 7:00 pm in the Elders Room to learn the importance of having wills and estates. Refreshments will be served.

INFORMATION EVENT ON THE WATCH PROJECT

Keep your schedule free on Saturday, February 25th. There will be an information-sharing event in Hartley Bay about Gitga'at climate change projects and initiatives, including the We All Take Care of the Harvest (WATCH) project.

Door prizes, snacks, and refreshments will be included. More information about the time and location to come!

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Events bring communities closer together. Any Member can submit updates and information about upcoming events to this newsletter. Please include the relevant details for future events, including the date, time, and contact information.

Contact Us!

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