

Wet'suwet'en Voice



Above: The team who participated in the design and construction of the new sign at Owen Lake. Right: Lorraine Naziel with a BC Park Ranger during a 2008 visit to Morice Lake Park.



Six new co-managed parks in Wet'suwet'en territory!

By David DeWit, Natural Resources Manager

Last May, six new provincial parks were created in Wet'suwet'en Territory. No industrial resource extraction (e.g. mining, logging) will occur in these areas. Our chiefs fully supported the new parks, which protect pristine areas of the territory. Although there are already other parks partially within the territory (Babine, Tweedsmuir, Uncha Mountains Red Hills), the new parks are fully within the territory.

Wet'suwet'en will play an important role in managing these new parks:

- Nadina Mountain Provincial Park
- Morice Lake Provincial Park
- Atna River Provincial Park
- Burnie Lakes Provincial Park
- Nanika Kidprice Provincial Park
- Old Man Lake Provincial Park

Co-management

The idea is to communicate the vision of Wet'suwet'en people for the new parks. Should a specific park be used for protection, for recreation? Should we build more cabins? Should traditional trails be restored? Should we promote a Wet'suwet'en trail strategy that could be used by Wet'suwet'en hiking guides with tourists? How can we use the parks to promote Wet'suwet'en culture and how can they provide an opportunity for Wet'suwet'en to spend more time in the territory?

A management plan provides a vision and guidelines for each park. A management planning team has been created to develop Management Plans for all of the new parks. Both the BC and Wet'suwet'en governments



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Executive Director's Message



Your Hereditary Chiefs are work-ing diligently on a publication that will help inform you about what we have

been working towards in the past years of negotiations.

You have heard of many court cases in BC around aboriginal rights and title. The most recent court case was the Tsilhqot'in from Williams Lake, which proved the Tsilhqot'in aboriginal right to hunt, trap, trade in furs and sustain a moderate livelihood throughout the 200,000 square-kilometre claim area.

The world-renowned Delgamuwx-

Gisday'wa court case, which involved the Wet'suwet'en and the Gitksan, changed how governments addressed First Nations across Canada. The words in the Wet'suwet'en Court Case are words that have been carried on for generations and that the Hereditary Chiefs protect for the future of the Wet'suwet'en. These words directly connect you to part of the territories.

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs and OW staff continue to work to create certainty for our membership for future generations and ensure the lands cared for by your past leaders are healthy and vibrant for our Wet'suwet'en children hundreds of years from now.

Debbie Pierre

EMILY NAZIEL – “We may not come up here for long, but it helps us get to know our culture more. It also helps the students from Moricetown to get to know each other and I can't wait till next year.”

DUSTIN DAVID – “ I think these culture camps are very important because we need to teach our young people our culture. It's being lost through our Elders. Our Elders are slowly dying away. And we need to preserve that culture and these camps are a way of doing that . . . of teaching the children how to live out on the wilderness . . . to learn about the trap-lines and the territories and this is my 5th year out here. I've been enjoying it every year and I hope to come again next year.”

ROY MORRIS – (on Culture Camps) “All the way down the line, we're trying to do this for the younger generation. It's not for myself. I'll be gone someday and they're going to follow in our footsteps.”

Culture Camp 2007

by **Leonard Frazer**
Youth Violence Prevention Worker / Culture Camp Coordinator

When I first arrived in the Bulkley Valley in 1997 I had the opportunity to work as a volunteer over a two month period at the “Distinctly Wet'suwet'en” Culture Camp at Owen Lake. I helped out by transporting firewood, drinking water and groceries for the camp and also had the pressure of working with Augustine and Roy Morris, Janet George, and Mel Bazil, to name a few. While working at Owen Lake I took lots of photographs and also shot some video footage, which I later made into a Cultural Documentary. At this time I would like to share some of the quotes from

the participants and workers who attended Culture Camp '97.

SHARELLE TILJOE – “It's an all-native camp and the group ages are between 9 and 11 years old. We do cool things here like swimming and canoeing. It's really fun!”

TREVOR MILTON – “When we were playing ‘Eagle Eyes’ an eagle flew over, and then a hawk started flying this way (pointing) and crow did too.”

ADRIANNE HOLLAND- (on cutting fish) “I first learned it from my Grandma. I need to improve my skills so I can teach other.”

JIMMY JOSEPH – (on dream-catchers) “ You put it up somewhere in your room and just let it hang there. And when you're sleeping it catches all the bad dreams and lets them go when you wake up.”



Leonard Frazer

Parks, Continued...

are represented on this team as well as independent contractors. The team's expertise includes biology, cartography and planning. Two employees from the OW's Natural Resource Department represent the Wet'suwet'en nation on this team.

The BC government has welcomed the OW's suggestion to assign Wet'suwet'en names to the new parks. The Wet'suwet'en names need to be identified quickly so they can be included in management plans, and also so visitors get to know the parks by their Wet'suwet'en names.

Assigning Wet'suwet'en names is only the first step of the Parks Co-management process. The process includes sharing ideas and decisions about park management. There are many co-management agreements for parks in BC and Yukon, however the most successful are those with an equal number of First Nations

and provincial representatives, and where annual budget decisions are made by consensus. **In order to implement such system for parks within Wet'suwet'en territory, each clan and house where parks are located should identify members who can participate in this long-term process.**

Co-management team: All on board!

It is important that each park management plan be based on knowledge of the territory where the parks is located. In summer 2008 we organized a visit with the planning team as well as two hereditary chiefs -- Samooh (Herb Naziel) and Wigetemscholl (Dan Michell) -- to Old Man lake in China Knows vicinity. For the team it was a first opportunity to work together in a park. We all went in one canoe we

borrowed from the Friendship Centre. We discussed issues pertaining to the park got to experience that part of the territory. We'll try to have more park visits over the course of the management planning process, and will include chiefs and other Wet'suwet'en who express an interest.

A visit to Morice and Atna Lake Parks

In Summer 2008, Lorraine Naziel was the coordinator for the Upper Morice Water Protection Management Area Program. This initiative monitors water quality in an area that extends beyond the parks in order to protect the headwaters of the Morice River and other rivers. Lorraine had an opportunity to go to two of the new parks (Morice and Atna) with a Ministry of Environment biologist and two BC Parks employees for their first official visit to the newly created parks. The objective was also to identify cache pits that, unfortunately, were still buried under a foot of snow at the time.

We'll make sure the Upper Morice Water Protection Management Area Program and Park Management process are consistent and benefit each other.

Sharing Stories

Last November, we met in Moricetown with people interested in sharing stories about areas where three of those parks (Morice, Atna and more specifically the Kidprice Lake chain) are located in Gitdumden and Gilsyhyu territories. We watched video interviews Gisday Wa had conducted in those territories in the 1970s for the court case. In one video, Jimmy Morris tells a story that



applies to the south end of Morice Lake, where mountains dive abruptly into the lake on both sides. In the coldest part of winter the ice covering the lake would shatter producing loud noises. According to the story this was because of a water monster living under the ice and that nobody had ever seen, even when the ice was gone. Naming the park after such a story would remind visitors that Wet'suwet'en lived around the lake even in the coldest part of winter.

Caspit (Stanley Morris) whose father was the late Jimmy Morris also told us how hunters once shot from their boat a goat that was crossing a steep avalanche gully where snow accumulated above the lake. The dead goat would slide down the gully and almost straight to their boat! These stories and others could inspire names for the new parks.

After the story, a group of Moricetown students suggested we call the park "Goat Slide." It was an interesting exercise and participants agreed we should have more of story-telling meetings. This is our intention, as we still need names for the remaining parks.

Wet'suwet'en names for parks

Wet'suwet'en chiefs agreed the new parks should bear Wet'suwet'en names reflecting the original occupation of these portions of the territory by Wet'suwet'en people. The names don't have to refer to topographical features such as lakes, rivers or mountain ranges -- somebody suggested that we instead choose names related to stories about each specific area. For example, Chief Gisday Wa (Alfred Joseph) told us the story of a fish that was known to have eaten a grizzly bear. According to the story, the fish used to live in Burnie Lake.

We have to select names as soon as possible to replace current English names. It is important because signs, brochures and websites will soon be developed to promote the parks. Any suggestions for names are welcome. We will submit them by the end of March 2009.

Work opportunities

Stephanie Alfred worked as a summer youth corps in several of the new parks. Among other tasks, she improved portage trails and camps along the Nanika-Kidprice route.

We would like to include a young Wet'suwet'en student on our team and we encourage people to contact us, as we already applied for funding for this purpose.

There are also work opportunities as BC park rangers for the 2009 season. Application should be sent as soon as possible.

Training program: Watchmen

The jobs generated by the new parks should be an incentive for young Wet'suwet'en to contemplate natural resource management training. We may consider starting a training

program similar to the Haida's Watchman course offered in Prince Rupert, adapting the program's coastal theme to the geography of Wet'suwet'en territory.

Sharing our culture

In October 2008 a sign was placed at Owen lake at the base of Nadina Mountain to inform visitors about the new parks, their location, and how Wet'suwet'en have used and managed the land for generations. We intend to create more signs similar at the park entrances.

Getting involved in the new parks

An information session for chiefs and clan members is scheduled at the office of the Wet'suwet'en. The goal is to create a vision for park management. It would be good to have representatives from each clan and house for each of the six parks.

We hope these six new parks will create opportunities for many Wet'suwet'en to spend more time in the territory, either working or simply experiencing and enjoying the land.

Below: Natural Resources Department Manager David Dewit explains the Parks co-management process to Moricetown students in company of Peter David on November 7, 2008 in Moricetown.



Overview Mineral Exploration and Mine Development in 2008

The past year saw an incredible upswing, then collapse, in mineral exploration and mine development due to falling metal prices and impacts from the global credit crisis. Analysts suggest 2009 will bring a slow recovery in the demand for metals but until access to venture capital improves mineral exploration will not reach the level experienced in 2007.

Twenty mineral exploration proponents have been active on 24 sites within Wet'suwet'en territory in 2008. The majority of these are at the early stage of exploration, with many struggling to complete their exploration activities in the face of declining venture capital.

In 2008, the Mineral Liaison strategic work plan focused on asserting Wet'suwet'en rights and title over its territories, and particularly, the right to benefit from the development of mineral resources. The goal of this plan is to gain the funding necessary to support the rights and title assertion strategy approved by the Wet'suwet'en Chiefs.

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en is negotiating an Accommodation Agreement with Blue Pearl Mining Inc. to ensure development of the Davidson Project on Tsa'dek'ay (Hudson's Bay Mountain) respects the rights, title, concerns, and interests of the Wet'suwet'en. Agreements in Principle have been reached on employment and training, and economic opportunities. Negotiations on financial considerations, and the environment protection will continue in 2009.

Since March 2007, the position of Mineral Liaison has been supported through funding agreement with Blue Pearl Mining Inc. This agreement has helped Wet'suwet'en actively engage with the Crown, and other private sector mineral exploration and mine development proponents on the territories. Blue Pearl has also provided funding to support Wet'suwet'en participation in the Environmental Assessment review process.

In 2009, negotiations on financial compensation will resume with Huckleberry Mines Ltd., as will discussions on the development of a consultation agreement with the Ministry of Energy, Mines & Petroleum (MoEMPR).

Given the expected slowdown in mineral exploration activities, the focus in 2009 will be on completing and implementing Mineral Exploration & Mine Development protocols, policy and practices based on the Wet'suwet'en Consultation and Accommodation Guidelines approved in 2008.

This focus will ensure recognition of Wet'suwet'en title, concerns, and interests, and the right to benefit from the development of mineral resources on Wet'suwet'en territories.

2008 Highlights:

HOLH KUN TRUST

Incorporation of the Holh Kun Trust will ensure revenues received through negotiations with resource development proponents are held and used for the benefit of all Wet'suweten.

WET'SUWET'EN VENTURES LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

Incorporation of the Wet'suwet'en Ventures Limited Partnership provides a business structure for joint venture partnerships with private sector companies that are providing goods and services to resource development companies.

WET'SUWET'EN CONSULTATION AND ACCOMMODATION GUIDELINES

Wet'suwet'en Consultation and Accommodation Guidelines set the protocols by which the Crown and resource developers must respect, recognize, and accommodate Wet'suwet'en Rights and Title over the entire 22,000 square km of our territory and its resources, including the recognition of our traditional system of governance.

“The past year saw an incredible upswing, then collapse, in mineral exploration and mine development”