

The Common **Good**

The Nisga'a concept of Saytk'ilhl Wo'osim', or common bowl, is the foundation of Nisga'a culture. Under Saytk'ilhl Wo'osihl Nisga'a, it is understood that since everyone relies on the same resources and community, all must contribute. It is about sharing energy, wisdom, spirit, joy and sadness and it touches all aspects of life. Nisga'a government uses this principle to guide the delivery of education, health, and social services. As the nation develops policies and guidelines, the common bowl concept of fairness will continue to inform decision-making.

Voter Registry & Nisga'a Database

One of the first major challenges facing Nisga'a Lisims Government Programs and Services department was to assemble a voter registry of the Nisga'a Nation in preparation for the first election. Under terms of the treaty, this had to be completed within six months from the Effective Date. A significant portion of department resources was focussed on this critical task. All Nisga'a of voting age, wherever they lived, had to be accounted for and registered to vote.

Two core staff worked exclusively on the citizenship and voter registration drive. They took three tours through the province to count and record Nisga'a of voting age. They also identified all Nisga'a men, women, and children to establish the citizenship list. In part, NLG used Canada's Indian Registry list to identify their people. Nisga'a lineage is matrilineal and citizenship is established through traditional wilp (house) structures.

Throughout the citizenship and voter registration drive, the Nisga'a Nation was assisted by federal departments and provincial ministries. The tripartite Finance Committee and the Implementation Committee were also consulted. The staff of both the provincial and federal systems worked closely with their Nisga'a counterparts to ensure that the transition was as smooth as possible.

Financing Programs & Services

The three governments finalised and implemented the Fiscal Financing Agreement, the main financial arrangement between the parties. Under this agreement, on the Effective Date, Canada provided \$31.5 million to Nisga'a Lisims Government to deliver agreed upon programs and services. In a separate agreement, British Columbia transferred \$1.2 million to NLG on this date.

Health Care

To improve the health of its citizens, NLG is focussed on making its health care services as responsive as possible. This is accomplished by involving the communities.

Since 1989, the Nisga'a people have managed their own health care system. Registered under the Societies Act, the Nisga'a Valley Health Board is made up of representatives from the four villages, plus an elected representative from the non-Nisga'a community. The board is responsible for creating and maintaining facilities and promoting medical and public health care programs. NLG operates a diagnostic centre at Gitlakdamix and satellite clinics in the other villages. This pre-treaty experience helped ensure a smooth transition for the Nisga'a to the increased post-treaty responsibilities.

"The challenge for today is the challenge of all the tomorrows... (the Nisga'a people) must rely on themselves, their own resources, their own energy.... I have great confidence that they will be a model for all aboriginal governments in Canada."

— The Honourable Jack Austin, PC, Senator

Child & Family Services

A major milestone was reached in 1994 when the province delegated authority to the Nisga'a Nation in the area of Child and Family Services. Since then, NLG has been delivering family support services and special needs programs. Since the Effective Date, NLG has also been preparing for the provision of foster care.

Seven people are employed in Nisga'a Child and Family Services (NCFS) department. They deliver services directly to the four communities and operate a receiving home in Terrace. Currently, NCFS is recruiting qualified Nisga'a as care givers for Nisga'a children.

NCFS solicits advice from all four of the communities through the Joint Management Committee which includes representatives from the village governments, Community Resources Committee, and Social Development Workers. It operates numerous programs in Nisga'a villages, including: Family Support Services, Cultural Works, Training for Childcare, Parenting Skills training, and Recreation. NCFS also acts as an advocate for families and children in crisis.

Primary & Secondary Education

Nisga'a government is determined to foster and protect Nisga'a language and culture and recognises the importance of education in achieving this goal. NLG has administrative jurisdiction over the education of its children in School District 92 and provides provincial K-12 programs. In addition, more than 550 Nisga'a students in the Nass Valley are enrolled in bicultural and bilingual courses.

House of Wisdom

Established in 1993, Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (House of Wisdom) partners with a number of public institutions for the delivery of post-secondary programs in Nisga'a communities and Urban Locals. While the core curriculum is based on Ayuukhl Nisga'a (Nisga'a law), Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (WWN) exists to serve both Nisga'a and non-Nisga'a residents of north-west British Columbia. Having this institution of higher learning in the Nass Valley has had a profound

effect on completion rates, community spirit, and pride. It has also helped to preserve Nisga'a language and culture.

WWN delivers a number of vocational and technical courses in conjunction with Northwest Community College, including first aid, fisheries, office technology, computers, day-care, cross-cultural workshops, and conversational Nisga'a. Courses are also offered in Grade 12 equivalency and university-college preparation. Two Nisga'a sit on the Northwest Community College Board.

WWN's core administrative and teaching team includes six full-time staff and 11 part-time faculty members. Eighty-five percent of the faculty are Nisga'a. In association with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), WWN offers a Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies, Nisga'a, with numerous minors (including: History, English, and Psychology). The program has experienced tremendous success with 14 people completing degrees, 32 earning certificates, and 2,388 successful course completions to date. WWN is working toward establishing a masters degree in First Nations studies with UNBC.

WWN has a formal relationship with CONAP (Confederación de Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú), assisting it with post-secondary and adult education in rural and remote areas. WWN has become internationally recognised for its expertise in this field. Aboriginal groups and scholars from Europe, New Zealand, Japan, and China have come to the Nass Valley to study at WWN.

Access to Justice

Nisga'a Lisims Government's Aboriginal Justice Program provides justice-related services to the Nisga'a people. This program assists participants in the justice system in liaising with Nisga'a communities. It also encourages the revival of relevant traditional Nisga'a justice practices, develops alternative programming, assists victims of crime, encourages crime prevention, and fosters restorative justice.

Outreach to Urban Nisga'a

Ensuring that Nisga'a people living in urban centres have access to aboriginal programs and services is a priority for the Nisga'a Nation. Through its urban offices, Nisga'a Child and Family Services is dedicated to reaching Nisga'a living outside the Nass Valley to foster a sense of community and provide support for all Nisga'a, no matter where they live in British Columbia.







