

Gifts of the Forest

From the banks of the Nass River to the rugged slopes of the Coast Mountains, Nisga'a Lands are covered with trees. Nisga'a forests are blessed with an abundance of cedar, hemlock, Sitka spruce, lodgepole pine, balsam, and cottonwood. From these forests, the Nisga'a people have always harvested bark for baskets and hats, and wood for fire, dwellings, canoes, and the poles that grace their villages.

Forest Management

Now that the Nisga'a Nation has ownership and control over its forests, it is concentrating on managing the resource. The Nisga'a Final Agreement stipulates that Nisga'a forest practices meet or exceed British Columbia forest practice legislation. NLG is committed to achieving this goal while providing consistent, sustainable employment for forestry workers.

In 2000, a total of 99,588 cubic metres of wood were harvested from Nisga'a Lands — an amount much lower than expected because of a drop in demand from a depressed forest industry. As a result, NLG responded by making long-range planning a top priority. One of the aims of the Nisga'a Forest Resources Department is to inform the Nisga'a people about the opportunities available to them for work in the forest sector. Therefore, as the markets recover, the Nisga'a will be well-positioned to respond to increased demand for wood products.

The Forestry Transition Committee, with representatives from the Nisga'a Nation and the province of British Columbia, was responsible for all aspects of timber management and harvest on Nisga'a Lands prior to the Effective Date. In 2000, British Columbia transferred quarterly Same Economic Position (SEP) payments to the Nisga'a Nation for timber

harvested on Nisga'a Lands. British Columbia continues to apportion the annual timber volumes among existing tenure holders.

The treaty provides for a transition from the current operators harvesting trees on Nisga'a Lands to the Nisga'a themselves. The present contractors will be phased out over a five-year period to provide opportunities for Nisga'a contractors. Under the current arrangement, contractors must meet specific quotas concerning the number of trees they harvest each year. As well, a percentage of this work must be contracted to Nisga'a citizens and this percentage will increase annually. In the first year of the treaty, the target of fifty percent Nisga'a employment was far exceeded.

As awareness of opportunity grows, Nisga'a citizens are approaching Nisga'a government to find out how they can participate in the forest resource sector. This positive dynamic is compelling Nisga'a government to rise to the challenge and help its citizens realise those opportunities.

Mushroom Harvest

The Nisga'a people now manage all resources on Nisga'a Lands. Pine mushrooms, in high demand in Asia, are the second most important resource found in Nisga'a forests. Although the 2000 mushroom harvest was below average at 13,620 kilograms, it was estimated to have added over \$400,000 to the local economy.

Prior to the treaty, the Nisga'a people had little control over this resource. The Nisga'a Nation is now taking steps to identify and protect high-yield mushroom areas and enforce Nisga'a regulations to help ensure sustainability. Consequently, obtaining and compiling complete and accurate data was a top priority in 2000. Nisga'a Lisims Government

"All of us living here want to be part of a better future. We know that treaties are not a panacea... they are one tool among many that allow all of us social and economic prosperity. This Nisga'a Treaty provides an opportunity for (Nisga'a) and non-natives to chart a common future.... The City of Terrace eagerly looks forward to those opportunities."

– Jack Talstra, Mayor, Terrace, British Columbia

is the first government in Canada to establish a management plan for the harvest of this renewable resource.

Tourism Development

British Columbia has earned an international reputation for its stunning natural beauty and superior wilderness tourism opportunities. The Nisga'a Nation is eager to take part in the tourism sector, B.C.'s second largest industry. Two tourism ventures, outlined below, utilise the Nisga'a people's remarkable natural environment, their traditional knowledge of the land and water, and their rich cultural heritage.

Under the Nisga'a Final Agreement, British Columbia issued a commercial recreation tenure to the Nisga'a Nation. Lisims Backcountry Adventures, incorporated on August 9, 2000, was designated as the recipient of this tenure and will provide wilderness tourism and cultural experiences for visitors to the Nass Valley — including guide-outfitting, heli-skiing, and hiking. Planning is currently underway to launch the venture in 2002.

Wilp Sy'oon (House of Glacier) Fishing Lodge began operation in 1996. Created to provide memorable fishing holidays, Wilp Sy'oon also provides visitors the opportunity to experience Nisga'a culture and hospitality. The lodge is accessible only by boat or floatplane and is located near Pearce Island, approximately thirty kilometres south of Gingolx. Charter companies meet guests in Prince Rupert to fly them to and from the lodge.

With seven bedrooms, the lodge accommodates up to 14 guests in style. Nisga'a artwork is integral to the interior design and is featured in each room. A professional chef serves local seafood. In 2000, 290 guests visited the lodge, which employed sixteen Nisga'a (full-time and part-time). Wilp Sy'oon, the Nisga'a Nation's first venture in the tourism industry, is a success by any standard.









