

The Road to **Unity**

Just as Canada's transcontinental railway was considered a crucial link for uniting a new nation in the 1880s, so the drive to connect the four villages of the Nass Valley by road is important for uniting the Nisga'a Nation today.

New road construction in the Nass Valley has increased since the Effective Date and includes the Nisga'a Highway Upgrade project and the Kincolith Extension Project. Both projects are providing employment for the Nisga'a people.

Nisga'a Highway Upgrade Project

The \$41 million Nisga'a Highway Upgrade Project, funded by the province of British Columbia, has been underway for two years. Approximately 90 kilometres of Nisga'a Highway (from Sand Lake to Nass Camp) will be upgraded from a gravel resource road to a 70 km/h, two-lane paved highway capable of handling 100 percent legal loading year-round. The project budget is \$41 million and construction is slated for completion in 2005.

In 2000, most work took place on the Lava Lake section which is approximately ten kilometres in length. Paving of this section is scheduled for completion by the end of 2003 and will improve access to the Nass Valley for the Nisga'a people and for all British Columbians. A local hiring policy throughout the construction process ensures a high percentage of Nisga'a workers. Training opportunities were also provided. Twenty Nisga'a were employed on the project in 2000.

“Chief Gosnell proclaimed that the Nisga’a canoe has landed. Were local interests toppled in its wake? Certainly not. Through careful construction of a treaty, recognition of many areas of mutual interest, and similar political and economic development aspirations, the Nisga’a and the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine should arrive safely at their chosen destinations. And though we may be travelling in separate canoes, we may very well find it to be the same destination.”

— Joanne Monaghan, Chair, Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine

Kincolith Extension Project

The Nisga’a people are looking forward with anticipation to linking Kincolith (Gingolx) to the rest of the Nisga’a Nation. Access to this village has always been difficult. The north coast of British Columbia has famously rough weather (outside of summer months) and there have been numerous accidents. After years of planning for the Nisga’a Highway link to Kincolith, construction finally began in 2000 and will be substantially completed on or before December 31, 2002. The extension is being built under a separate tripartite agreement between Canada, British Columbia, and the Nisga’a Nation.

The \$34 million Kincolith Extension Project will create a two-lane 29 kilometre all-weather gravel road. The 24.4 kilometre section from Mill Bay to Laxgalts’ap represents significant geotechnical and environmental challenges as it traverses steep slopes with very high fisheries and wildlife values. The road will be owned by British Columbia and jointly paid for by the three governments. Thirty Nisga’a have been hired for this project.

The road to an ice-free port for shipment of forest products and goods will offer new economic opportunities — and enhance historic ones. When the road is complete, the Nisga’a people will enjoy easy access to Fishery Bay during the rich oolichan run.



