

One Hope, One Nation, One Year

Peace, order, and good government are cornerstones of Canadian society. Ensuring these principles remain strong for future generations requires a spirit of co-operation and a dedication to the common good. It also demands a tremendous amount of work.

Canada is a nation born not of rebellion but devolution. The birth of the nation was brought about through the commitment of those preparing to govern, the belief in the rightness of their cause, and the foresight of those transferring authority. As Westminster justly granted Canada the right to govern its citizens in 1867, so the governments of Canada and British Columbia return self-government rights to the Nisga'a people.

It took 113 years for the Nisga'a to achieve their dream. It was accomplished through persistence, patience, and faith that they would see justice within the Canadian system. The Nisga'a Final Agreement is a tribute to generations of Nisga'a who laboured tirelessly to secure the rights they enjoy today. It is also a tribute to their federal and provincial partners who have come together to offer the Nisga'a people a brighter future within Canada.

Selected Timeline

1887
Nisga'a Chiefs travel by water to Victoria to discuss the Nisga'a Land Question; they are turned away on the steps of the legislature by Premier William Smithe

1889
Aboriginal fishers are excluded from commercial fishing until 1923

1890
First Nisga'a Land Committee established

1910
Prime Minister Laurier promises to settle the Land Question

1913
Nisga'a Land Committee submits its Petition to the British Privy Council in London

1924
Nisga'a Nation allotted 76 square kilometres of reserve land

1927
Ottawa prohibits aboriginal people from organizing to discuss the Land Question

1949
Nisga'a Chief Frank Calder is elected to the B.C. legislature

1951
Parliament repeals provisions of the Indian Act that outlawed the Potlatch and prohibited land claims activity

1955
Nisga'a Land Committee is re-established as the Nisga'a Tribal Council; Frank Calder is elected first president

1960
Aboriginal people are granted the right to vote in federal elections

1973
The Calder Decision: the Supreme Court of Canada rules that the Nisga'a had held aboriginal title before settlers came but the judges split evenly on whether aboriginal title continued to exist

1976
Nisga'a begin negotiating with Ottawa, B.C. government attends as an observer; the federal government adopts a "comprehensive land claims policy"; the Nisga'a claim is the only one in B.C. started under this new policy

1982
Constitution of Canada recognizes and affirms existing aboriginal rights

1990
British Columbia formally enters Nisga'a negotiations

1991
A tripartite framework agreement is signed

1993
Delgamuukw Decision: B.C. Court of Appeal rules that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en people have "unextinguished, non-exclusive aboriginal rights, other than right of ownership" to much of their traditional territory

1996
On March 22, representatives of the Nisga'a Tribal Council, Canada, and British Columbia sign the Nisga'a Agreement in Principle, paving the way for a final agreement

1998
On August 4, the Nisga'a Treaty is initialed in Gitlakdamix, making news around the world

1998
On November 30, the Nisga'a Final Agreement (Bill 51) is introduced in first reading to the British Columbia legislature

1999
On April 26, Bill 51 was granted Royal Assent

1999
On October 19, the Nisga'a Final Agreement (Bill C-9) is introduced in the House of Commons; on December 14, it is referred to the Senate

2000
On April 13, the Senate approves the Nisga'a Final Agreement on third reading after an exhaustive review at committee stage; the Nisga'a Treaty is formally ratified and Bill C-9 is granted Royal Assent by the Governor General of Canada, Madame Adrienne Clarkson

2000
On May 11, Nisga'a Lisims Government formally comes into effect, constitutes itself, and passes first laws

2000
On September 14, Wilp Si'ayuukhl Nisga'a, Lisims government's new legislative and administrative building, opens as the formal seat of Nisga'a government in Gitlakdamix; a new era begins

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