



GLMO's Open Forum

Gitxsan Laxyip Management Office held an Open Forum at Gitanmaax Hall on April 25, 2024 and had an open invitation to all Gitxsan members. The intent was let all Gitxsan voices be heard via the community discussion. Whether they had concerns, complaints or innovative solutions, we wanted to hear it all. Our gathering was a platform for everyone to share their thoughts, engage in constructive dialogue, and work together towards solutions.

The discussion covered various topics such as technical support, watershed management, land use planning, resource utilization, and community concerns within the context of Gitxsan governance and resource management. Participants expressed their perspectives on issues ranging from traditional practices to contemporary challenges like pipeline development and environmental conservation. Key points included the role of the Gitxsan Laxyip Management Office (GLMO) in facilitating communication between Simgiigyey (Gitxsan chiefs) and external entities, the importance of inclusive decision-making, and the need for effective resource management strategies to safeguard Gitxsan lands and heritage.

Key Points:

1. The Gitxsan Lax Yip Management Office (GLMO) facilitates communication between Simgiigyey (Gitxsan chiefs) and external entities regarding technical support and resource management.
2. Concerns were raised about the lack of involvement in controversial issues within specific Huwilp (clans) and the need for more proactive engagement.
3. Participants emphasized the importance of traditional values, such as respect for the land and sustainable resource management, in decision-making processes.
4. Issues discussed ranged from land use planning and revenue sharing to concerns about environmental impacts from activities like logging and pipeline development.
5. There was a call for greater transparency and accountability within the GLMO, including the need for clear communication channels and strategic planning.
6. Suggestions were made for action items such as legal support, community engagement initiatives, and partnerships with other Indigenous organizations for resource management and advocacy.

Action Items:

1. Improve communication and engagement processes between the GLMO, Simgiigyey, and external stakeholders.
2. Enhance transparency and accountability within the GLMO through clear communication channels and strategic planning.



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3. Explore legal support options to strengthen Gitxsan rights and title, particularly regarding land use and resource management.
4. Develop community engagement initiatives to ensure all Gitxsan voices are heard in decision-making processes.
5. Foster partnerships with other Indigenous organizations for resource management and advocacy efforts.
6. Implement monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to protect Gitxsan lands and heritage, including addressing issues such as poaching and environmental degradation.

The establishment of GLMO stems from the collaboration of Simgiigyet who signed on with GLMO to protect their respective Lax Yip. This initiative is not about privileging certain individuals; rather, it's aimed at benefiting the entire Gitxsan Nation. Financial statements will be shown at the AGM for transparency, and it's important to note that the office's budget is allocated for specific purposes, such as implementing strategies like the Old Growth Strategy and Cedar Strategy and identifying culturally significant indicators like medicinal plants, berries, and mushrooms. The Guardians program is another crucial aspect focused on wildlife conservation, documenting catches, and identifying habitats. The intention is to ensure that the benefits of these initiatives reach all members of the Gitxsan Nation, in alignment with the principles of collective well-being and stewardship of our lands and resources.

The government's approach to engaging with the Simgiigyet and their Huwilp is by outlining multiple stages and levels of engagement, including analysis and Early Engagement (EE), within very specific timeframes. Throughout this process, GLMO plays a crucial role as a technical support entity, offering expertise and guidance to safeguard the integrity of the Lax Yip. By providing essential technical assistance, GLMO aids Simgiigyet in comprehensively understanding the implications of proposed developments or initiatives within their territories. This support enables Simgiigyet to engage effectively in decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights are respected within the broader context of environmental stewardship and sustainable development.

Gitxsan Laxyip Management Office (GLMO) maintains a steadfast policy of non-interference with internal Wilp affairs, firmly rooted in respect for indigenous sovereignty and self-governance. This principle extends to refraining from involvement in any controversy within a Wilp, whether it be disputes over territory, resources, or internal governance matters. GLMO's commitment to neutrality ensures that it does not take sides in inter-Wilp conflicts, fostering trust and autonomy. If a Simoogit requests technical support and meeting with proponents, the GLMO can be involved at that level. GLMO serves as the technical body for participating Simgiigyet, advocating for their interests while respecting the autonomy of each Wilp. GLMO is not involved in the decision-making processes within any Wilp. This ensures that the traditional governance structures of the Gitxsan remain respected and empowered, while GLMO focuses on broader advocacy and coordination efforts on behalf of the Simgiigyet. For those Simgiigyet and Huwilp who are non-participatory, this means that government agencies and proponents will contact and deal with them directly.



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Simgiigyet and their Huwilp have demonstrated their commitment to collaboration by signing Inter-Wilp agreements, affirming their willingness to work together as a cohesive watershed and address shared concerns collectively. These agreements serve as a testament to the importance placed on unity and solidarity among the Gitxsan in the management of their Lax Yip. Additionally, each participating watershed and Simgiigyet have formalized their expectations regarding consultation processes through signed Consultation Agreements, outlining clear protocols for engagement with government entities and project proponents. These agreements ensure that the voices and perspectives of the Simgiigyet are respected and integrated into decision-making processes that may impact their Lax Yip and resources. Furthermore, the participation of Simgiigyet in these agreements is reinforced by their formal endorsement through signed agreements with GLMO. Notably, the funding supporting these endeavors emanates from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR), reflecting a collaborative effort between government and Simgiigyet to foster meaningful dialogue, respect indigenous rights, and promote sustainable development within the Lax Yip.

The SEA (Strategic Engagement Agreement) was originally structured on a per-watershed basis, with a budget allocation of \$50,000 designated to cover facilitator costs, expenses related to meetings, and per diems for participants from each watershed. The current agreements are substantially larger and based on GLMO as a whole. This financial support was crucial for ensuring effective engagement and collaboration among stakeholders within the watershed. The Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) mandated that a majority of Simgiigyet from each watershed had to be in agreement for the process to move forward, underscoring the significance of indigenous leadership and consensus-building in decision-making processes. Additionally, a portion of the funding for GLMO operations is derived from industry contributions, constituting 4% of the organization's overall budget. This financial support is essential for sustaining GLMO's day-to-day operations and facilitating the development of various programs aimed at enhancing indigenous governance and resource management. Examples of these programs include Gitxsan Connect, which fosters community engagement and communication, GIS Mapping services, which assist in Lax Yip management and planning, and initiatives such as the Guardians program, which focuses on environmental stewardship and protection. By leveraging industry contributions, GLMO can further its mission of empowering Simgiigyet and their Huwilp and promoting sustainable development while maintaining financial sustainability and independence.

It's understandable to feel concerned about the absence of representation from Gitsegukla, Suskwa other Watersheds, however, it's important to note that Gitsegukla is actively engaged in the stewardship of their watersheds and is taking proactive steps to ensure their interests are addressed and is being led by Don Ryan. Suskwa does have a Simoogit and their Wilp on the watershed table as well. This means that GLMO provides technical support to the affected Simgiigyet in Suskwa. Currently, our focus includes collaborating with the Kispiox TSA (Timber Supply Area), with work in the MacKenzie TSA already completed and plans to commence in the Nass TSA soon. Non-participatory Simgiigyet and their Huwilp are always welcome to engage with GLMO and sign on at any time.



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Some of the Simgiigyet in attendance commended how good work has indeed been accomplished to ensure that they are equipped to make well-informed decisions regarding their respective Lax Yip. Djogaslee emphasized that he respects the sovereignty of other Chiefs' Lax Yip, emphasizing that each Simoogit is responsible for decision-making regarding their respective Lax Yip. In this capacity, GLMO's role primarily revolves around offering technical support to facilitate informed decision-making processes. It's crucial to highlight that GLMO maintains a strict stance of non-interference in Wilp affairs, irrespective of their nature, whether controversial or not. He emphasized the need for increased engagement with GLMO, stressing the importance of recognizing the extensive work being undertaken by the organization. He also clarified that while GLMO does not intervene in Wilp affairs, they do actively engage with those Wilp that have signed agreements, underscoring the organization's commitment to respecting Wilp governance structures and autonomy. Xhliiyemlaxha emphasized that the decision to participate in a watershed initiative lies solely within the prerogative of each Simoogit. This underscores the fundamental principle that every Simoogit retains sovereign authority over their Lax Yip, with the freedom to determine their involvement in collaborative efforts such as watershed tables. This approach acknowledges the diverse perspectives and priorities among Simoogit, recognizing that each has unique considerations and responsibilities within their Lax Yip. By upholding the autonomy of the Simoogit, the initiative promotes a respectful and inclusive approach, fostering cooperation while honoring the inherent rights and responsibilities of the Simgiigyet within the Gitksan Nation.

XGwoimtxw had concerns about the waste from clearcutting and wondered if there was potential for the Wilp to make some revenue. Kevin provided insights into the waste and residue utilization processes within the Babine watershed, highlighting that utilization efforts are overseen by the district. Waste from clearcutting is measured and assessed for stumpage fees, taking into account various factors such as the species of trees left on the side. Discussions surrounding waste utilization are ongoing, with government officials receptive to community concerns and input. Some proponents have implemented practices such as leaving four inches of the tree to facilitate new growth, demonstrating a growing awareness of sustainable forestry practices and the importance of balancing economic interests with environmental stewardship. These discussions reflect a collaborative effort to explore innovative solutions for waste management within the forestry industry, potentially offering opportunities for additional income generation while promoting ecosystem health and resilience.

Kevin also addressed concerns regarding pipelines going through the Gitksan Lax Yip. The PGRT pipeline is on the shelf. GLMO partnered with Gitksan Watershed Authority (GWA), and Gitanyow to put in a collaborative response regarding the Ksi Lisims/LNG. These partnerships have allowed for proactive engagement with pipeline projects, with responses submitted to address potential environmental impacts, concerns, and consultation. While pipeline proponents are waiting on an Environmental Assessment Certificate extension, GLMO, along with Gitanyow and GWA, has taken a proactive stance in advocating for the protection of Gitksan Lax Yip indicating ongoing efforts to ensure that the interests and concerns of the Gitksan Nation are effectively addressed in the decision-making process surrounding pipeline developments. November is the due date for the Environmental Assessment.



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During discussions regarding concerns about fishing depletion and practices such as fish gates and seine fishing, Kevin reassured attendees by highlighting the commendable efforts of the GWA (Gitxsan Watershed Authority) in data collection and management. He emphasized that GLMO actively works to mitigate impacts on fish-bearing creeks and address issues like drought, enabling Simgiigyet to incorporate these concerns into their land use plans. By collaborating with organizations like GWA, GLMO ensures that comprehensive data is available to inform decision-making processes regarding fisheries management. This proactive approach underscores the commitment to preserving the ecological integrity of Gitxsan Lax Yip while empowering the Gitxsan to address environmental challenges in a holistic manner.

Kevin responded to concerns about poaching by explaining that the guardians have not yet been deployed to monitor the river, indicating that this Land Guardian initiative is still in its early stages of development. While acknowledging reports of non-natives continuing to fish despite restrictions, Kevin clarified that guardians have not yet been positioned to address such activities directly. He noted that fishing persists in some areas where it remains open, highlighting the complexity of enforcement efforts amidst ongoing regulatory changes. This response underscores the ongoing efforts to establish effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms while navigating logistical and operational considerations.

Kirby Muldoe shared a poignant exchange with an elder, reflecting on the urgent need for indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. When he asked "When are we going to get a piece of the pie?", the elder's response was, "We own the pie, when are we going to have a piece of our pie?" This encapsulates the essence of the struggle faced by indigenous communities, where ownership of land and resources is acknowledged, yet access to the benefits derived from them remains elusive. This sentiment resonates deeply with the mission of the GLMO office, which seeks to empower Simgiigyet in reclaiming control over their Lax Yip. Kirby emphasized the inadequacy of settling for a handful of jobs and urged collective action to assert authority over the Lax Yip. He underscored the irony of claiming to manage one's Lax Yip while external forces continue to exploit its resources without genuine consent. Referencing UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, he advocated for utilizing legal frameworks to assert indigenous rights and sovereignty. Reflecting on the landmark Delgamuukw decision, he called for renewed efforts to reclaim and assert indigenous authority, signaling a rallying cry for the Gitxsan to unite and demand the rightful ownership and control of their "pie".

Tracey Woods provided updates on the administration processes of GLMO, highlighting the organization's commitment to accountability and transparency. With nearly two years under their belt, Woods stressed the importance of implementing processes to ensure that all inquiries and communications are addressed promptly. The mission of GLMO is firmly rooted in accountability and transparency, with plans for an upcoming audit scheduled for May 6th, 2024, followed by an Annual General Meeting (AGM). Furthermore, Tracey emphasized the significance of strategic planning, which will include feedback from Simgiigyet and community, ensuring that GLMO's initiatives align with the needs and priorities of the Gitxsan. She clarified that GLMO does not wield decision-making authority or sign agreements on behalf of Simgiigyet, respecting their autonomy over their respective Lax Yip. This



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commitment to transparency extends to clearly delineating the scope of GLMO's responsibilities, and fostering trust and collaboration within the Gitxsan Nation.

The perception that Simgiigyet would serve as the governing body of GLMO reflects an understanding that has evolved over time. While the structure and leadership dynamics within GLMO have shifted, it's essential to acknowledge the significant contributions made by Simgiigyet to the organization's foundation and ongoing operations. For example, the Cedar strategy, including referral software, and database, has stemmed from the insights, knowledge, and guidance provided by the Simgiigyet. This collaborative approach underscores the importance of indigenous leadership and traditional wisdom in shaping the direction and priorities of GLMO. While the governance framework may have evolved, the invaluable contributions of Simgiigyet continue to be integral to the organization's mission and success.

In conclusion, we want to clarify that GLMO has not received 10 million dollars from any source. However, it's important to reiterate that any funding received by GLMO is dedicated to supporting specific initiatives within the Gitxsan Nation. Specifically, funding is allocated to support the watershed tables and Simgiigyet, covering essential costs such as facilitator fees for each watershed table, as well as supplementing office operations. This funding is crucial for ensuring that Simgiigyet have access to the technical services and resources they need to make informed decisions regarding their Lax Yip. Additionally, these funds contribute to facilitating the consultation process, allowing Simgiigyet to actively engage with government and industry stakeholders. While the amount of funding may vary, every dollar is directed towards supporting the collective interests and well-being of the Gitxsan Nation, in alignment with our commitment to transparency and accountability.

GLMO thanks everyone who attended and came to learn about what we do and who also allowed us to clarify some public misinformation. We value your feedback and hope to continue to have these Open Forums.