

Gitksan Treaty Office

October 15, 2008

Open Letter to Neil J Sterritt

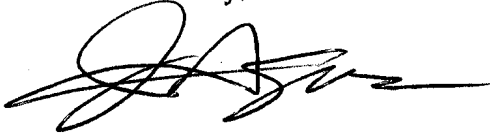
Dear Mr. Sterritt:

In order to ensure young people understand our history and have accurate information we offer the following points as clarification:

1. One should not confuse issues of law [in this case, law relating to the inherent, unextinguished rights of the Gitksan people as demonstrated in Delgamuukw] with the motivation of hereditary chiefs working at the community and Nation levels 30 years ago.
2. Our inherent rights and our Gitksan identity are rooted in the traditional political and legal system.
3. The Gitksan system is now recognized at law – the continuity of our system is how we push for further recognition of our rights.
4. Indian Act constructs [the band council system] is colonial and have been imposed on the Gitksan people and *is not a substitute* for our own traditional system
5. All the chiefs mentioned in the letter supported the case [Delgamuukw] because they believed in themselves as Gitksan people and in our identity as the Gitksan Nation *as manifested in traditional law*. Their actions were doubtlessly motivated by their legal obligation to the traditional Gitksan system because they were Gitksan hereditary chiefs.
6. Further, none of the Simgiigyets mentioned in the letter served the Gitksan Nation, the communities, attended the feast hall, or went to court to gain the legal recognition of the Indian Act system.
7. The history of the Gitksan people after European contact has been the struggle for the recognition of and respect for *the laws of our grandfathers* and all that these laws contain– laws for landholding, for names, for crests, for poles, for strict matrilineal inheritance and for cultural continuity.
8. For greater clarity for the young people, the struggle has not been nor is it now an effort to become numbers on a band list under the Indian Act.
9. We are the Gitksan Nation, not a series of Indian Act bands.

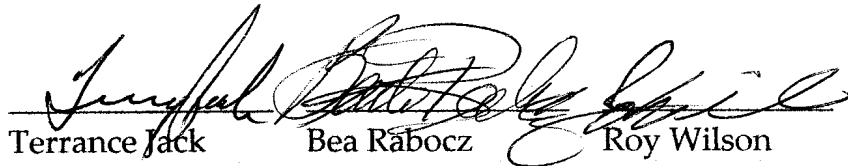
Please do not confuse the Simgiigyet engaged in the struggle to gain recognition of our collective rights years ago with those that would submit to an imposed colonial system specifically designed to break the continuity of our culture and force our assimilation into the wider society.

Yours truly,



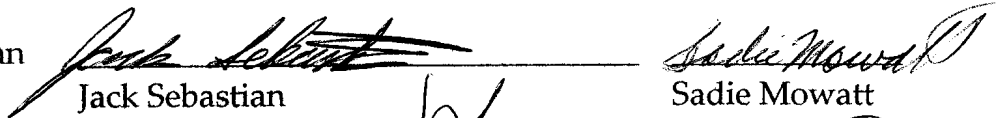
Jim Angus,
Chairperson

Wolf Clan



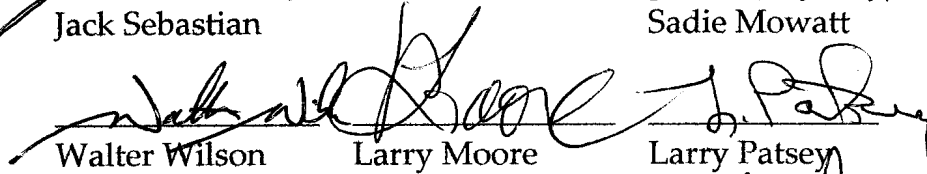
Terrance Jack Bea Rabocz Roy Wilson

Frog Clan



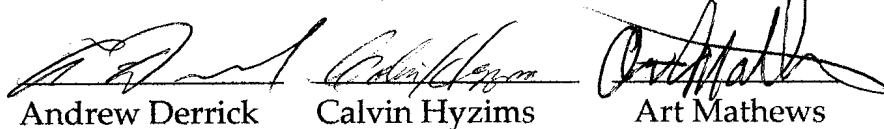
Jack Sebastian Sadie Mowatt

Fireweed



Walter Wilson Larry Moore Larry Patsey

Eagle Clan



Andrew Derrick Calvin Hyzims Art Mathews