



Access to Kisgegas Reserve Limited to Gitanmaax Band Members

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Gitanmaax Band Council took steps yesterday to limit access to Kisgegas Reserve, which covers approximately 1,000 hectares on the Babine River at the mouth of Shedin Creek. Effective Sunday, December 13, 2009, access to Kisgegas Reserve will be limited to Gitanmaax Band Members. Persons who are not Band Members will require authorization from Gitanmaax Band Council or from the Executive Director of Gitanmaax Band to enter Kisgegas Reserve.

Gitanmaax Band has installed a security gate at the access road to the Reserve. The installation of the gate was necessitated by unauthorized construction and logging activities on Kisgegas Reserve by Clifford Sampere, who is a member of Gitsegukla Band. Members of Gitanmaax Band passed a General Resolution at the last AGM directing Gitanmaax Band Council to take all necessary steps to restrain such activities on Kisgegas Reserve.

Mr. Sampere was advised by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that Kisgegas Reserve is under the administration and control of Gitanmaax Band, and that there are lawful means of authorizing construction on Kisgegas Reserve, but Mr. Sampere is unprepared to use lawful means to do so.

"We mean no disrespect to the Hereditary Chiefs, and we continue to invite them to use lawful means to claim an interest in the land," said Chief Councillor McRae, "But it is unfair to ask the Band Council to step away from our obligations to administer the land for the benefit of the Band members who elected us."

Mr. Sampere claims that his construction activities are an assertion of his hereditary right to the land within the boundaries of Kisgegas Reserve, but Mr. Sampere has not provided Gitanmaax Band any explanation as to why his construction cannot occur on hereditary land outside the Reserve boundaries.

"This conflict is entirely unnecessary," asserts Richard Wright, a Gitanmaax Band Councillor, "There is no need for them to build right now and no need for them to build on the Reserve. They are picking a fight and then pretending to be the victim."

Gitanmaax Band has repeatedly asked Mr. Sampere to build on hereditary land off the Reserve unless otherwise authorized. Mr. Sampere persists in his activities, despite a lawsuit commenced by Gitanmaax Band against him in November of 2009 for trespass and unauthorized logging. Mr. Sampere is supported in his activities by the Gitxsan Treaty Office, which is engaged in litigation with Gitanmaax Band and others regarding the legitimacy of its treaty negotiations and opaque financial dealings with the Treaty Commission.

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