



Gitanmaax Band Council Deals with Unauthorized Construction on Kisgegas Reserve

FOR RELEASE JANUARY 11, 2010

Gitanmaax Band Council has demolished unauthorized construction on Kisgegas Reserve. Kisgegas Reserve covers approximately 1,000 acres on the Babine River at the mouth of Shedin Creek and is administered by Council for the exclusive benefit of members of Gitanmaax Band.

The demolition was achieved safely on January 9, 2010 in the presence of the fire department in the form of a controlled burn. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police was given prior notice of the demolition and were on standby to ensure that the event was peaceful. Mr. Clifford Sampare, who was responsible for the unauthorized construction, was not in attendance.

Gitanmaax Band Council previously tried to restrict construction on Kisgegas Reserve by asking Mr. Sampare respectfully to stop construction, by starting a lawsuit for trespass on the Reserve, by bringing the RCMP in to negotiate an agreement to stop construction, and by installing a security gate to stop non-members of Gitanmaax from entering the Reserve without permission. None of these measures put an end to construction on the Reserve.

"A controlled burn was our last resort," said Chief Councillor Marj McRae, "They have completely disregarded all the verbal agreements and have elected not to accept our offer to try and find some common ground. The destruction of our security gate and the removal of the 'no trespassing' signs was the last straw."

Gitanmaax Band members passed a general resolution at the last Annual General Meeting that requires Band Council to take all necessary steps to protect Kisgegas Reserve from unauthorized uses including construction.

"The Band is entitled to control construction on Kisgegas Reserve, including the power to demolish unauthorized construction on the Reserve," said Councillor Richard Wright. "The Band resolved not to allow this activity and non-band members wanted to test our resolve. Hopefully it is now clear to Mr. Sampare and his backers that unauthorized construction will not be tolerated."

Non-members of Gitanmaax Band can make a legal claim to Kisgegas Reserve using the Specific Claims process, the process for creation and amalgamation of Reserves under the Indian Act, and by making a claim for hereditary title in Court.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Chief Councillor McRae: 250-847-0393

Councillor Richard Wright: 250-842-8960

Jason Gratl (lawyer for Gitanmaax Band): 604-317-1919