

# Gitksan Band Councils & Gitxsan Gimlitwit Meeting

September 4, 2008

Gitanmaax



# Agenda

- Alternative Governance Model
  - Overview & Impact Analysis
  - Discussion
  - Alternatives Going Forward
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# Highlights of Alternative Governance Model

Report dated May 15, 2008 states:

- “We seek no special status nor any parallel society. We wish to live as ordinary Canadians”

# Alternative Governance Model

- “The Gitksan are not interested in the concept of treaty settlement lands”

# Alternative Governance Model

- “ Any agreement must of course end the application of the Indian Act, including the Band governance structure”

# Alternative Governance Model

- “The laws and services currently supplied by Indian Act Councils can be better and more efficiently provided by federal and provincial entities”

# Alternative Governance Model

- “the federal government should transfer money formerly given to Band governments for these purposes, to the provincial government upon acceptance by the Province of those responsibilities”.

# Alternative Governance Model

- “we wish to take our place as full citizens of British Columbia, paying for and receiving health, education and social services from the province in the same way as any others.”

# Alternative Governance Model

- “The Gitxsan are prepared to pay income and sales taxes just as other Canadians”.

# IMPACT

- Band Governments established under the Indian Act will disappear
- Membership in bands will cease
- Reserve lands established under the Indian Act will be eliminated
- No treaty settlement lands will be selected

# IMPACT

- Programs and services now provided by Bands will be provided by the provincial and federal governments
- Gitxsan people will pay taxes and local governments will not collect taxes

# Loss of Gitksan Ties to History and Identity

- Gitksan have lived in villages for thousands of years
- These lands will no longer be protected or set aside only for Gitksan people
- Under the *B.C. Land Title Act*, lands in Gitksan communities can be bought and sold by non Gitksan

# Loss of Gitksan Ties to History and Identity

- 809 individual land holdings on reserve will be impacted

# Possible loss of Fishing Sites

- Reserve lands generally situated at fishing sites.
- With loss of protection these lands could be held by non Gitxsan resulting in possible loss of access

# Language and Culture Threatened

- Gitxsan used in community settings
- With loss of communities language will tend to be used less
- Language and culture interconnected
- Loss of language = Loss of Culture

# Loss of Band Governments

- Right to self government is part of Aboriginal Peoples' inherent right
- Now two systems of government; Elected and Hereditary
- Band Council exercise right to self government
- Loss of Band Governments is loss of self government capacity

# Loss of Band Governments

- Elected system gives individuals an opportunity to participate in Gitxsan government decisions and voice concerns which they cannot in the hereditary system

# Loss of Tax Exemption

- Tax protection gives registered Indians more “take home “income
- Tax protection helps to increase amount of income to spend in the community
- Loss will cause financial hardship as 70% of Gitxsan are unemployed or employed in short term /seasonal jobs

# Loss of Protection against seizure

- Under Indian Act property cannot be seized
- Without protection Gitksan people who cannot pay loans or taxes can have property seized

# Loss of Programs & Services

- Gitxsan people will pay for:
- Health insurance premiums and health services
- Education, including post secondary education
- Housing construction and renovation
- Taxes charged to pay for community services and infrastructure

# Loss of Programs & Services

- GWES negotiates with school district for culturally appropriate programs and services; these would no longer be available
- Band operated schools on reserve will become part of B.C. school system; Board may close schools to balance budgets

# Loss of Programs & Services

- Loss of culturally appropriate education will lead to higher drop out rates
- Fewer people likely to attend college and university

# Negotiating the Alternative Governance Model

- Right to self government in Gitxsan communities not recognized
- Responsibilities and obligations of Band Councils not recognized

# Negotiating the Alternative Governance Model

- Responsibilities of Hereditary Chiefs to protect Gitxsan rights not taken into account
- Loans made on behalf of Gitxsan for treaty negotiation however no involvement by the Community