



git·se·guk·la  
PEOPLE OF SEGUKLA MOUNTAIN

# Gitsegukla Comprehensive Community Plan (2018-2023)

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ts'uuts  
"birds"

skanist  
"pine"

kooxst  
"maple trees"



# 1. Acknowledgements

## Ama Sa!

We are so thankful to you for picking up the Gitsegukla Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP). This plan was created because each community member holds a part of the big vision for our community. It is because of you and your willingness to share your ideas about the future that this CCP has taken the shape it has.

This CCP is by you, for you and seeks to help every Gitsegukla member participate in the implementation of projects and initiatives that will continue to strengthen our community. We are so grateful to every person that helped with the CCP project.

## T'yoxsi'm 'niis'm (*Thank you all*).

The CCP team would also like to thank Chief and Council and the staff in the community's administration for providing input and encouraging people to get involved in the development of a vision for the future of Gitsegukla.

The Gitsegukla CCP team also recognizes that Gitsegukla *lax̣ yip* are in relationship with the unceded territories of several Gitsegukla *Simgiigyēt* (Hereditary Chiefs). It is the intention of the Gitsegukla Band, both its staff and leadership, to continue to work toward positive dialogue about collaboration and partnership between the Gitsegukla Band and the Gitsegukla *Simgiigyēt* on projects that are of mutual benefit to the Gitksen people that call Gitsegukla home.

A special thank you is extended to Melida Argueta, the Gitsegukla CCP Coordinator and Facilitator. Melida worked very hard to invite everyone to get involved in the CCP process and did a great job helping children, youth and families have a say in the future of our community.

Finally, the Gitsegukla CCP presents an opportunity for all of Gitsegukla to work together in new ways, to talk and work together in new ways, to dance and make music that shows the *dax̣gyēt*(strength) of our community to make a future we are all proud of.

It is also important to express our thanks to all of the children and youth who helped create the Gitsegukla CCP. Throughout the CCP journey, we visited *Wilp sii wilksa* (schools) and hosted special gatherings for children and youth. When we invited children and youth to share their vision for our *gal ts'ep* (community) they always shared inventive and positive ideas. We have high hopes for the future of Gitsegukla because of the wise children and youth who call it home.

## Hasax̣, nax̣ ni'y hasax̣ (*Rattle, I hear a rattle*).

*Let's make and follow this new music together and create the community we all want for our children and Elders.*

## 2. Introduction

The Gitsegukla Comprehensive Community Plan is the last step in the CCP process. It expresses the main goals and pathways that Gitsegukla seeks to achieve and follow during the years between 2018 – 2023. As a five year CCP, this document aims to provide a framework for strategic investment of resources, time and money that will help Gitsegukla move toward the self-determination that community members are calling for.

In addition to the **Acknowledgements** (section 1), this **Introduction** (section 2), and a **letter from the Chief and Council** (section 3), the Gitsegukla CCP is divided into:

- **About Gitsegukla** (section 4) outlines a few key historical facts about the community and presents information about the *lax yip* (land base) of the community;
- **Methodology for Comprehensive Community Planning** (section 5) describes the approaches and numbers of people and events that were part of the CCP process;
- **Highlights of the CCP Engagement Process** (section 6) and **Gitsegukla's Top Community Development Priorities** (section 7) present a list of highlights and the most often mentioned community development priorities;
- **Gitsegukla Goals and Pathways** (section 8) expresses the complete list of directions and actions that community members identified as important focuses for future investment into the community's wellness and prosperity;
- **Gitsegukla CCP Implementation Framework** (section 9) explains the approach that Chief and Council will use to ensure that the specific priorities noted in the CCP are honoured and implemented in the years ahead.
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### 3. Letter from Chief and Council

Dear members of Gitsegukla,

We are pleased to present the Gitsegukla Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) - a visionary document that expresses our shared hopes for the future of Gitsegukla.

We would like to thank all community members, both those living at home and those living away from home, who provided valuable ideas about how we can continue to work together for a positive future for our children. Whether you came to a workshop, completed a survey, participated in interviews, you helped create the CCP and the shared pathways that will help us move forward in positive directions.

We believe that everyone has a role to play in implementing the Gitsegukla CCP. We would like to invite you to read the CCP, consider those pathways that you could contribute to, and get involved in this exciting journey of community development.

If we are to realize the goals in the Gitsegukla, then we will all need to work together. We have a strong tradition of honouring our Gitksen values and we can continue to honour our Gitksen values through the implementation of the Gitsegukla CCP.

In service to Gitsegukla,

Chief and Council



## 4. About Gitsegukla: A Strong Community with Proud Gitksen Traditions

Gitsegukla is located in the Skeena River Valley about 80 miles east of Terrace and 17 miles west of New Hazelton. Situated in a beautiful valley on the Git ksii yeen (Skeena River), the community (gal ts'ep) is surrounded by mountains, seek̓s (spruce), haawak̓ (birch), s̓kanist (pine), sim gan (cedar) and k̓oox̓st (maple) trees. The name Gitsegukla in Sim'alyax̓ means "People of Jigyukwhla", which is the name of a sharp pointed mountain nearby.

The gal ts'ep was first located below the present ansgiyest (graveyard) and was destroyed by fire in 1872. There are many stories passed down about this event. In 1872, prospectors en route to the Omineca gold rush started a fire, which destroyed the entire galts'ep. As an outcome, there was a protest by the people that resulted in an expeditionary military force being sent to put an end to the rebellion. (Source: [http://www.sfu.ca/brc/virtual\\_village/gitxsan/gitsegukla.html](http://www.sfu.ca/brc/virtual_village/gitxsan/gitsegukla.html))

The gal ts'ep was then moved further up the riverbank and rebuilt, including the construction of a church around 1900. Disagreements about religion resulted in movement of some families to Andimaul, others to Carnaby, with some remaining in the gal ts'ep.

In 1914, a major flood widened the Git ksii yeen, washing away some homes. Another flood in 1936 completely flooded the second gal ts'ep and washed away many pts'aan (totem poles) which remained. (Source: Adawkhl Gitsegukla, 1979.)

Gitsegukla is a Gitksen gal ts'ep, and part of a large, strong Nation. The traditional territory of the Sim'alyax̓-speaking people covers approximately 33,000 square kilometers in Northwest British Columbia. Located along the Git ksii yeen, upstream from the town of Terrace and the Kitselas canyon, are the seven Sim'alyax̓-speaking gal ts'ep: Gitwangak (Kitwanga), Gitanyow (Kitwancool), Gitsegukla (Kitseguecla), Gitanmaax (Old Hazelton), Ans'pa yaxw (Kispiox), Kisgegas and Kuldo.



Source: Unknown, Gitsegukla, 1954



Source: Michel Kluckner, Gitsegukla Church

In the past, each of the communities mentioned above functioned primarily as winter gal ts'ep on or near the Git ksii yeen, except Gitanyow, which was further north on a t'ilix (oolichan oil) trade route to the Nass River. The area has a rich ecosystem of ts'uuts (birds) and small ye'jasxw (mammals), smex (bears), metx (mountain goats) and salmon-bearing rivers for hunting and hun (fishing). The people also harvested and processed is (soapberries) for trade with the coastal groups in order to obtain hla kasxw (seaweed) and shellfish in return. (Source: [www.sfu.ca/brc/virtual\\_village/gitxsan.html](http://www.sfu.ca/brc/virtual_village/gitxsan.html)).

In terms of lax yip land base, the Gitsegukla Band holds four parcels, for a total of 1930.5 hectares, which includes the current site of the community.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 2: Name and Location of Lax Yip**

Number	Name	Location	Hectares
06771	ANDIMAUL 1	Cassiar District, lot 4857, on right bank of the Skeena River, 15 miles southwest of Hazelton	409.1
06772	GITSEGUCLA 1	Mouth of Kitsegucla River	1025.50
06774	GITSEGUCLA LOGGING 3	Hazelton District, left bank of the Skeena River, 5 miles below Hazelton	87.80
06773	NEW GITSEGUCLA	Hazelton District, on Skeena River about 7 miles south-westerly from Hazelton	408.10

It is also important to recognize that the Gitsegukla lax yip are situated on and are surrounded by the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of Gitksen Simgiigyet gant hl (and) wil'nat'ahl. Gitksen Simgiigyet and their respective Wilps. A detailed statistical profile of the community can be accessed in the CCP Community Engagement Summary Report.

<sup>1</sup> [http://fnp-ppn.aandc-aadnc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNReserves.aspx?BAND\\_NUMBER=535&lang=eng](http://fnp-ppn.aandc-aadnc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNReserves.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=535&lang=eng)



## 5. Methodology for Comprehensive Community Planning

### Phase 1: Creating Our Visions for the Future

**Phase 1** of the community engagement work in Gitsegukla included two major outreach activities, both of which aimed to invite community members to share their ideas for how to create a positive future for all Gitsegukla members. The online survey was administered through an online survey software and was open to all Gitsegukla members throughout the months of February, March and April. A total of 72 people participated in the online survey, which is the equivalent of 17% of the total population (n=431). The survey included a combination of open ended and close ended questions and was structured around the seven standard CCP theme areas as outlined in the CCP Handbook.

The second element of the community engagement method involved a combination of workshops and meetings led by the Comprehensive Community Planning Coordinator. A total of 5 community meetings or workshops took place in this first phase of engagement – ending April 2016. The workshops and meetings were designed to engage participants in activities that encouraged envisioning a positive future for Gitsegukla. A diverse range of people were engaged in the workshops and meeting process with a total of over 300 points of contact (some with the same person) achieved between the CCP Coordinator and the community in the first phase of the CCP project.

### Phase 2: Setting Priorities for our Future

**Phase 2** (May 2016-March 2017) of the community engagement work in Gitsegukla included a focus on targeted outreach and interviews with individuals that have not yet had an opportunity to be involved in the CCP process. Three main methods of data collection were used in Phase 2 of the CCP project. First, a total of seven (7) community engagement meetings and workshops were held. The workshops and meetings were designed to invite people to share their ideas for future vision of Gitsegukla. In addition, a total of five (5) key stakeholder interviews were conducted to ask key community leaders about their priorities for the next 5-10 years. In total, 182 moments of engagement with individual community members were achieved in the second phase of the CCP process in Gitsegukla. Also as part of the second phase of the CCP, a series of statistics were compiled to serve as an evidence base regarding the socio-demographic and economic realities of the people living in Gitsegukla.



**seek**  
"spruce"

**haawak**  
"birch"

### **Phase 3: Confirming Our Shared Directions and Planning for Implementation**

In the third and final phase of the CCP project, the planning team shared the main content of the CCP, engaging community members in a thorough review of the CCP through a priority setting and validation survey, as well as many meetings and face to face interviews with community members. To make sure everyone had the opportunity to review the CCP content and provide feedback, the planning team printed copies and hand delivered a version of the draft CCP to every household, with a letter inviting them to reach out to the CCP Coordinator. All 134 households received the draft plan and it was also available at the AGM and the health centre for review and feedback.

In addition to the development of the CCP document, the planning team also created an extensive list of funding opportunities that relate to each of the community development goals of Gitsegukla. This funding inventory was created to help with the implementation phase of the CCP project by identifying possible sources of funding that could be used to support community-driven projects.

During the course of the third phase of the CCP, the CCP Coordinator was also actively engaged in partnership development and supporting community events and outreach related to the CCP project. In addition to being available at key community events such as the Oath of Office and the Honouring Local Firemen and First Aid, the CCP Coordinator also helped develop and implement enhanced administrative support that aligned with community priorities for the Band Administration. Also, the CCP Coordinator also supported applied research and development work in collaboration with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC). This collaborative work with FNESC was undertaken to help ensure action toward the education goals started in CCP. Finally, the engagement work also included a focused workshop on local jobs and employment readiness. This workshop was undertaken to understand some of the daxgyet and employment interests among community members.

The main result of phase 3 was an updated and final CCP that emphasized a set of short term priorities that can be used to inform strategic planning and budgeting led by Chief and Council and staff of the Band, in collaboration where appropriate with Gitsegukla Simgiyget on whose territories Gitsegukla lax yip are located. In total there were approximately 300 moments of engagement in phase 3 of the CCP project. The work of implementing the CCP priorities is next community development step for Gitsegukla's.



miiluxw  
"dance"

## 6. Highlights of the CCP Engagement Process

The CCP process in Gitsegukla succeeded in hearing many community members. Here is a summary of the reach of the CCP project across all three phases of work.

Over **700**

moments of engagement about the future of Gitsegukla with community members

**26** community meetings were hosted with community members and leaders

