



Wilps li'ligit  
"Feast hall"



Community members of all ages were involved in the CCP process



Over **140** members completed 2 CCP surveys about what they want to see for the future of Gitsegukla



## 7. Gitsegukla's Top Community Development Priorities

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Throughout the CCP process, Gitsegukla community members identified many excellent community ideas that would contribute to community wellness and prosperity. The complete list of community priorities is listed in the body of this document.

To help focus resources, time and energy in the short term, Gitsegukla members have identified several ideas that they feel should be the short term priorities. The CCP team has developed a top ten list that specifies the short term priorities of the community. While this list is not in a particular order, it does point to the areas of greatest interest among community members. This list includes:

1. Establish a Gitsegukla Cultural Centre that promotes Sim'alyax language and Gitksen culture
2. Build a new state of the art children's playground facility that integrates Gitksen teachings and crests
3. Develop new and enhanced home support programs for Elders and explore the building of a long term care facility in the community for Elders
4. Develop partnerships between the Gitsegukla Band and Simgiigyet
5. Design and deliver more after school programs for children and youth



## Gitsegukla's Top Community Development Priorities (continued)

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6. Explore using a Gitksan Wraparound approach (centered on Gitksan Ayook) to caring for people that want to transition from social assistance to employment
7. Develop a Gitsegukla Gas Station and Convenience Store
8. Develop the new sub-division and new housing for families and individuals
9. Explore the feasibility of solar, wind and geothermal energy options for powering our homes and buildings
10. Complete an inventory and needs assessment for fire equipment and acquire the necessary items and infrastructure to ensure that the community can respond to fires and other emergencies
11. Develop our governance and management so Gitsegukla is completely self-determining

## 8. Gitsegukla Goals and Pathways

This document expresses the goals and pathways that members have shared in the community engagement process of the Comprehensive Community Planning project in Gitsegukla. The following sections are organized according to the following seven community development areas:

1. Gitksen Culture
2. Community Infrastructure
3. Band Governance and Administration
4. Jobs and the Economy
5. Lax̱ yip hl Gitsegukla (Gitsegukla Lands)
6. Health and Safety
7. Social Development and Education

It is hoped that this document will provide a useful starting point for the ongoing conversation about how community members and decision makers can work together to create a healthy, prosperous, safe community where members can achieve their dreams.

Continuing to build on the strengths and focus on distinctly Gitksen ways of being was a central focus for nearly all community members. To honour the centrality of Gitksen culture in Gitsegukla, the first set of goals and priorities aim to enhance the strong Gitksen traditions that live among and through the people living in Gitsegukla.

**Dim sii wilaks dim hla gyedi hl  
Gitsegukla, yukw dim dax̱ gyethl  
ga didils diit**

*“We will teach the members of Gitsegukla strength within their lives.”*



## **Gitksen Culture**

Gitksen culture is a sophisticated and highly advanced culture that continues to grow in daxgyet through each generation. It is comprised of “Wilphl Gitksen – each of which has its wealth - inherited assets that are gwelhl ye’enswx’ (real and not real - handed down from generation to generation forever, never diminished or extinguished). Wil’natehl, limx oo’y, wee’m t’aa, gwelhl ye’enswx are all part of the Gwalyeinswx held by the Wilp and Huwilp, and collectively as a nation.”<sup>2</sup>

A central part of the Gitksen culture is the Li’ligit (feast) system and the role of Sim’oogit (Chief) in the Wilps li’ligit (feast hall). As expressed in the world famous Delgam Uukw court case (along with Sim’alyax words), power of Gitksen culture is “carried in my Wilps (house’s) histories, limx (songs), miiluxw (dances) and ayukws (crests). It is recreated at the Li’ligit when the histories are told, the limx and miiluxw performed, and the ayukws displayed. With the wealth that comes from respectful use of the lax yip, the Wilps feeds the name of the Sim’oogit in the Wilps li’ligit. In this way, the law, Sim’oogit, lax yip, and the Li’ligit become one. The unity of the chief’s authority and his house’s ownership of its lax yip are witnessed and then affirmed by the other Sim’oogit in the Li’ligit .” (Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw 1992: 7-8)

### **Goal 1: Our programs and services are organized around our Gitksen Ayook**

Pathway 1.1. Host more feasts that involve opportunities for members to learn their place and role in the feast hall

Pathway 1.2. Include more food gathering and preserving activities on the lax yip

Pathway 1.3. Use the smoke house as a venue for teaching and learning Gitksen values

Pathway 1.4. Encourage all programs to use our language

Pathway 1.5. Build a home for children in care that is in the community

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved on May 9, 2017 from: <http://www.gitksan.com/culture>



**Goal 2: All community members are rooted in their Gitksen citizenship, know their clan, wilp and are fluent in Sim'algayx**

Pathway 2.1. Create more opportunities for Elders to teach students in school with a focus on Gitksen games to make learning culture fun

Pathway 2.2. Develop early childhood programs that involve immersion into Sim'algayx

Pathway 2.3. Establish more enjok, or culture camps, based on the lax yip that promote knowledge transfer from Elders and personal and family healing

Pathway 2.4. Continue to ensure Gitksen laws and protocols are followed by community members

Pathway 2.5: Design and deliver classes for Sim'algayx language for adults with an emphasis on practicing speaking the language and having fun together

Pathway 2.6. Create easy to access opportunities and a simple resource guide booklet for community members to learn about Simgiigyet and their lax yip, what food gathering is permitted and when and where to harvest traditional medicines

Pathway 2.7. Support student assessments for learning needs and develop individual learning plans and supports based on the assessments

Pathway 2.8. Establish a guidance councilor position in the school to support youth in decision making about educational and vocation choices, as well as to help youth transition as they pursue educational opportunities

Pathway 2.9. Work to prevent suicide attempts by investing in prevention initiatives

Pathway 2.10. Assess and address mental health and wellness issues that community members are facing

Pathway 2.11. Identify all the main ayukws (crests) and houses (wilp) that originate from Gitsegukla

**Gitsegukla Simgiigyet**

*"Gitsegukla Hereditary Chiefs"*



**Goal 3: Every person in the community has a unique Gitksen cultural role that they share with the community and pass on to younger generations**

Pathway 3.1. Create a drum making program

Pathway 3.2. Provide more opportunities for people to learn Gitksen Dance

Pathway 3.3. Create a project so all streets, places and buildings are given Gitsenimx names that are clearly marked on beautiful sign posts

Pathway 3.4. Build a community long house with a carving room where people can learn carving skills

Pathway 3.5. Organize regular hunting opportunities for community members, ensuring that everyone has a role in the preparation for the hunts and learn the proper protocols on entering the lax yip.”

Pathway 3.6. Continue to standardize Sim'alyax language so it is accessible to everyone who wants to learn



**pts'aan**  
*totem pole*

**t'ilix**  
*oolichan oil*

**sim gan**  
*cedar*



## Community Infrastructure

Gitsegukla is an innovative community that has and continues to enhance its build environments in a way that supports healthy living. While there remains challenges with road quality, lack of community gathering spaces, and chronic housing shortages, community members and leadership are resolved to keep moving forward in positive directions.

As a point of pride and accomplishment, Gitsegukla is home to one of the most beautiful schools. It boasts powerful Gitksen paintings and carvings throughout this vital community space that helps students achieve and families thrive. Gitsegukla is also a powerful sports and recreation centre with a long history of supporting a diverse range of successful athletes. In support of these successes are a diverse range of sports fields and amenities that support active living. In light of these context factors, Gitsegukla aspires to reaching the following goals.



### **Goal 4: We have the highest quality community facilities**

Pathway 4.1. Assess the water treatment needs of the community and upgrade facilities as required

Pathway 4.2. Complete an inventory and needs assessment for fire equipment and acquire the necessary items (e.g., new fire truck) and infrastructure to ensure that the community can respond to fires and other emergencies in the community

Pathway 4.3. Develop an updated physical development plan that attends to the items in the list below

Pathway 4.4. Re-open the conversation with CN about the implementation of the MoU between CN and Gitsegukla with a view to setting out the types of contributions that CN can make to help improve community life, focusing on building new roads, beautifying community space, expanding the grave yard, etc.

Pathway 4.5. Upgrade the soccer and ball fields in the community

Pathway 4.6. Create a race track and bike trails that can be used to encourage youth to engage with the lax yip in an active way

Pathway 4.7. Explore the feasibility of building a skateboard park

Pathway 4.8. Explore the feasibility of building a swimming pool



Pathway 4.9. Build a new state of the art playground facility that integrates Gitksan teachings and crests for children in the community

Pathway 4.10. Develop a program for people with mobility limitations to access the gym and participate in physical activities

Pathway 4.11. Create a new position to support children and youth use the gym more often in a fun and supported way

Pathway 4.12. Build a new Band office that can accommodate the governance and administration needs of the community, including addressing the accessibility issues that create barriers for members with mobility limitations



Source: Edwin Holgate, Totem Poles, Gitsegukla, 1927

**Goal 5: Our community has adequate, appropriate and affordable home ownership options**

Pathway 5.1. Remove homes that are condemned and replace with needed housing in the community with a focus on housing for signal people and families

Pathway 5.2. Continue to renovate houses so everyone has a safe, warm and dry home that is fitted to their needs

Pathway 5.3. Address the chronic shortage of housing for our people, starting with the development of a housing plan that will assist the community address issues of overcrowding

Pathway 5.4. Continue to engage in partnership dialogues with Gitsegukla Simgiigyet whose *lax yip* are adjacent to the reserve lands and explore working together in the creation of new sub divisions for new community housing

Pathway 5.5. Increase the number of single person dwellings to address overcrowding and hidden homelessness

Pathway 5.6. Address the flooding issues affecting the community and help make sure the community is well prepared for flooding season



**Goals 6: The condition of our roads is the envy of other communities in the region**

Pathway 6.1. Develop a road improvement strategy and implement the strategy over time to gradually enhance the community road conditions

Pathway 6.2. Provide training to community members in basic road maintenance to help address small road issues

**Goals 7: We have a world class Gitsegukla Cultural Centre that meets our cultural needs and attracts thousands of tourists each year**

Pathway 7.1. Develop a feasibility study and business plan for a cultural centre in Gitsegukla that has relationship to the development of a new subdivision for the community

Pathway 7.2. Subject to that pathway, engage in fund raising and capital project planning to build a Gitsegukla Cultural Centre

Pathway 7.3. Ensure that the Cultural Centre has an area for community members to sell their art, learn Gitksen teachings, practice language, and beautiful displays of historical Gitsegukla art, dancing, songs and carving

