

**APPENDIX 30-C  
GITANYOW FIRST NATION  
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND USE  
DESK-BASED RESEARCH REPORT**

---

Seabridge Gold Inc.

# KSM PROJECT Gitanyow First Nation Traditional Knowledge and Use Desk-based Research Report

SEABRIDGE GOLD



# KSM PROJECT GITANYOW FIRST NATION TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND USE DESK-BASED RESEARCH REPORT

August 2012  
Project #0868-006-20

Citation:

Rescan. 2012. *KSM Project: Gitanyow First Nation Traditional Knowledge and Use Desk-based Research Report.*  
Prepared for Seabridge Gold Inc. by Rescan Environmental Services Ltd.: Vancouver, British Columbia.

Prepared for:

**SEABRIDGE GOLD**

Seabridge Gold Inc.

Prepared by:



**Engineers and Scientists**

Rescan™ Environmental Services Ltd.  
Vancouver, British Columbia

# KSM PROJECT

## GITANYOW FIRST NATION TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND USE

### DESK-BASED RESEARCH REPORT

#### Table of Contents

---

- Table of Contents ..... i
- List of Figures ..... ii
- Acronyms and Abbreviations ..... iii
- 1. Introduction ..... 1-1
  - 1.1 Project Proponent ..... 1-1
  - 1.2 Project Overview ..... 1-1
    - 1.2.1 Project Location ..... 1-1
    - 1.2.2 Overview ..... 1-1
  - 1.3 Gitanyow Nation ..... 1-4
    - 1.3.1 Governance ..... 1-4
    - 1.3.2 Gitanyow Location ..... 1-4
    - 1.3.3 Fisheries Agreements ..... 1-7
- 2. Purpose ..... 2-1
- 3. Methodology ..... 3-1
  - 3.1 Approach ..... 3-1
  - 3.2 Desktop Ethnographic Information Collection and Analysis ..... 3-1
  - 3.3 Data Challenges and Limitations ..... 3-1
- 4. Results ..... 4-1
  - 4.1 Background ..... 4-1
    - 4.1.1 Traditional Territory ..... 4-1
    - 4.1.2 Language ..... 4-1
    - 4.1.3 Social Organization ..... 4-2
    - 4.1.4 Traditional Economy ..... 4-3
    - 4.1.5 Spiritualism and Ceremonies ..... 4-4
    - 4.1.6 After European Contact ..... 4-4
  - 4.2 Historic and Current Use ..... 4-5
    - 4.2.1 Fish ..... 4-5

4.2.2	Wildlife .....	4-6
4.2.3	Plant Use .....	4-7
4.2.4	Mushrooms .....	4-7
4.2.5	Travel .....	4-7
5.	Conclusion .....	5-1
	References .....	R-1

**List of Figures**

<b>FIGURE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Figure 1.2-1. KSM Project Location .....	1-2
Figure 1.2-2. KSM Project Layout and Road Access .....	1-3
Figure 1.3-1. Proposed KSM Project and Gitanyow First Nation Traditional Territory .....	1-5
Figure 1.3-2. Gitanyow Nation Indian Reserve Location .....	1-6

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

---

Acronyms and abbreviations used in this document are defined where they are first used. The following list of abbreviations will assist readers who may choose to review only portions of the document.

<b>AANDC</b>	Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada
<b>AFS</b>	Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy
<b>BC</b>	British Columbia
<b>BC EAO</b>	British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office
<b>CEA Agency</b>	Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
<b>CEAA</b>	Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, S.C. 1992, c.37
<b>DFO</b>	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
<b>EA</b>	Environmental Assessment
<b>EAA</b>	Environmental Assessment Act, SBC 2002, c. 43
<b>FSC</b>	Food, Social and Ceremonial
<b>GFA</b>	Gitanyow Fisheries Authority
<b>GHCO</b>	Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office
<b>KSM</b>	Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell
<b>the Project</b>	the KSM Project
<b>Rescan</b>	Rescan Environmental Services Ltd.
<b>SRMP</b>	Sustainable Resource Management Plan
<b>TK</b>	Traditional Knowledge
<b>TMF</b>	Tailing management facility
<b>TU</b>	Traditional Use

# 1. Introduction

---

This report has been prepared using desk-based research from publicly available information sources. The report is not comprehensive as it requires input from the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs' Office as well as Wilp Wiilitsxw-Txawokw related to their historical and current use downstream of the KSM project area (see below).

The Project is subject to an environmental assessment (EA) review under British Columbia's *Environmental Assessment Act* (EAA) and Canada's *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA). This report is intended to help Seabridge Gold Inc. (Seabridge) fulfill the requirements of the KSM Project Application Information Requirements issued by the BC Environmental Assessment Office (BC EAO) on January 31, 2011. Information from this report will be incorporated into the EA Application for the proposed KSM project.

## 1.1 PROJECT PROPONENT

Seabridge Gold Inc. (Seabridge) is the proponent for the proposed KSM Project (the Project), a gold, copper, silver, molybdenum mine.

## 1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 1.2.1 Project Location

The Project is located in the coastal mountains of northwestern British Columbia. It is approximately 950 km northwest of Vancouver and 65 km northwest of Stewart, within 30 km of the British Columbia-Alaska border (Figure 1.2-1).

### 1.2.2 Overview

The Project is located in two geographical areas: the Mine Site and Processing and Tailing Management Area (PTMA), connected by twin 23-km tunnels, the Mitchell-Treaty Twinned Tunnels (Figure 1.2-2). The Mine Site is located south of the closed Eskay Creek Mine, within the Mitchell, McTagg, and Sulphurets Creek valleys. Sulphurets Creek is a main tributary of the Unuk River, which flows to the Pacific Ocean. The PTMA is located in the upper tributaries of Teigen and Treaty creeks. Both creeks are tributaries of the Bell-Irving River, which flows to the Nass River and into the Pacific Ocean. The PTMA is located about 19 km southwest of Bell II on Highway 37.

The Mine Site will be accessed by a new road, the Coulter Creek Access Road, which will be built from km 70 on the Eskay Creek Mine Road. This road will follow Coulter and Sulphurets creeks to the Mine Site. The PTMA will also be accessed by a new road, the Treaty Creek Access Road, the first 3-km segment of which is a forest service road off of Highway 37. The Treaty Creek Access Road will parallel Treaty Creek.

Four deposits will be mined at the KSM Project—Kerr, Sulphurets, Mitchell, and Iron Cap—using a combination of open pit and underground mining methods. Waste rock will be stored in engineered rock storage facilities located in the Mitchell and McTagg valleys at the Mine Site. Ore will be crushed and transported through one of the Mitchell-Treaty Twinned Tunnels to the PTMA. This tunnel will also be used to route the electrical power transmission lines. The second tunnel will be used to transport personnel and bulk materials. The Process Plant will process up to 130,000 tpd of ore to produce a daily average of 1,200 t of concentrate. Tailing will be pumped to the Tailing Management Facility from the Process Plant. Copper concentrate will be trucked from the PTMA along highways 37 and 37A to the Port of Stewart, which is approximately 170 km away via road.



Figure 1.2-1



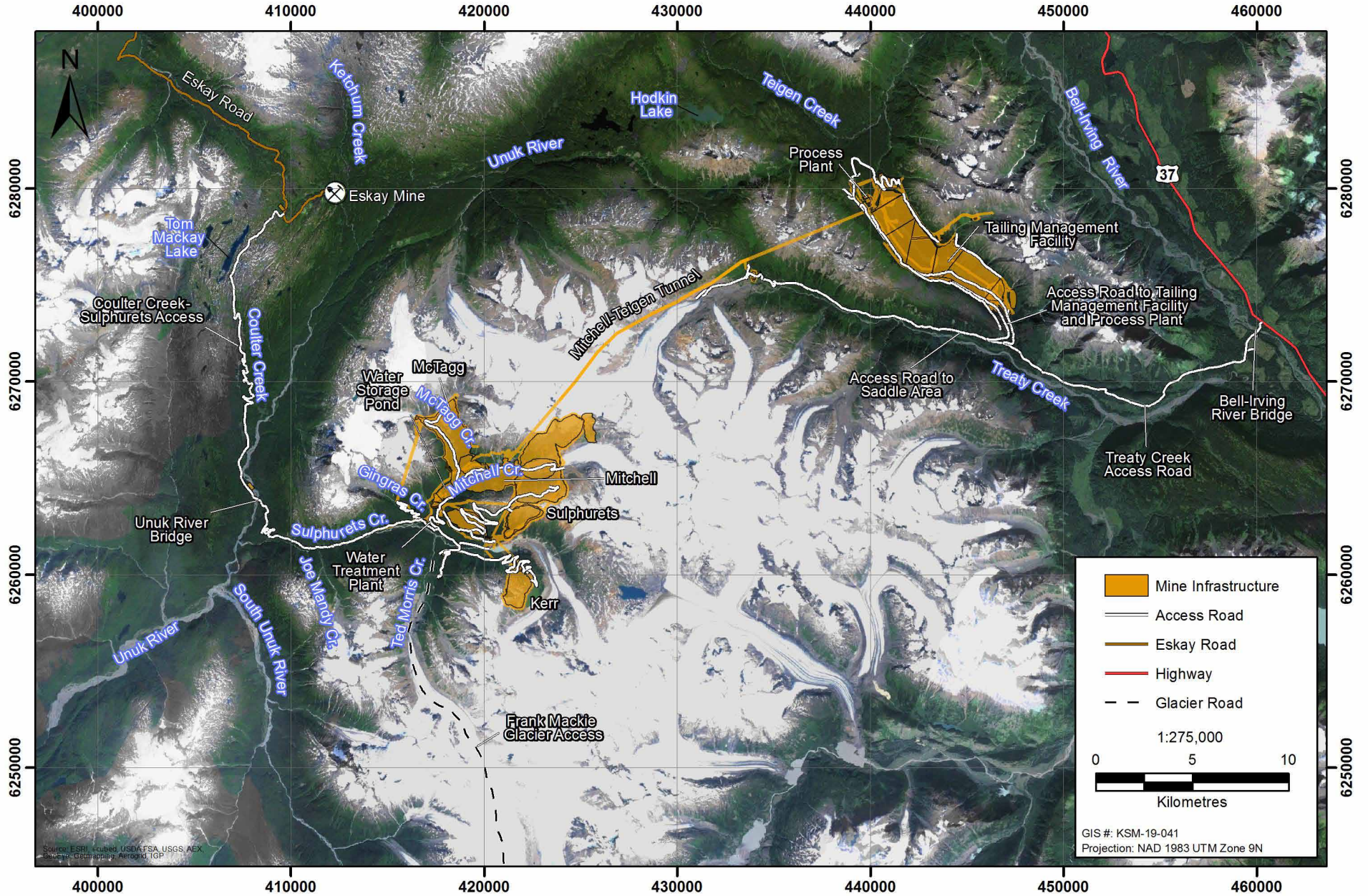


Figure 1.2-2

Figure 1.2-2

The mine operating life is estimated at 51.5 years. Approximately 1,800 people will be employed annually during the Operation Phase. Project Construction will take about five years, and the capital cost of the Project is approximately US\$5.3 billion.

### 1.3 GITANYOW NATION

The Gitanyow traditional territory is approximately 55,000 km<sup>2</sup>, located within the Skeena and Nass watersheds, approximately 20 km north of the Highway 37/Kitwanga (Gitwanga) junction and the south side of Bowser Lake (BC Treaty Commission 1993, GHCO 2007, 2008, Sterritt et al. 1998). The Gitanyow traditional territory follows the Nass River southward from its confluence with the Bell Irving River, including portions of the Cranberry River (Figure 1.3-1).

The Gitanyow (formerly known as Kitwancool) trace their cultural lineage closely through the Gitksan Nation and attribute much of their culture, language and social structure to a shared heritage within the upper Nass region. They have, however, remained independent of the Gitksan, and as early as the fur trade, Gitanyow *huwilp* dealt with issues of territorial boundaries and rights separately from the Gitksan Nation (Sterritt et al. 1998). Despite this separation, the Gitanyow were considered politically associated with the Gitksan Nation by the Government of Canada until 1993, when they officially declared themselves a separate group and began pursuing treaty negotiations independently. Gitanyow *huwilp* still maintain close ties with Gitksan communities (GHCO 2008).

#### 1.3.1 Governance

The Gitanyow's social organization is based on the *wilp* system. There are eight houses under two clans. Each Gitanyow member belongs to a *wilp* that has a traditional territory within the broader Gitanyow territory. The *wilp* is responsible for managing lands and resources within the *wilp* territory. Gitanyow *huwilp* include the Luuxhon, Malii, Haizimsque, Wii'litsxw, Watakhayetsxw, Gamlaxyeltxw, Gwass Hlaam, and Gwinuu. Each *wilp* is led by a hereditary chief. The Gitanyow's social organization is discussed further in Section 4.1.3.

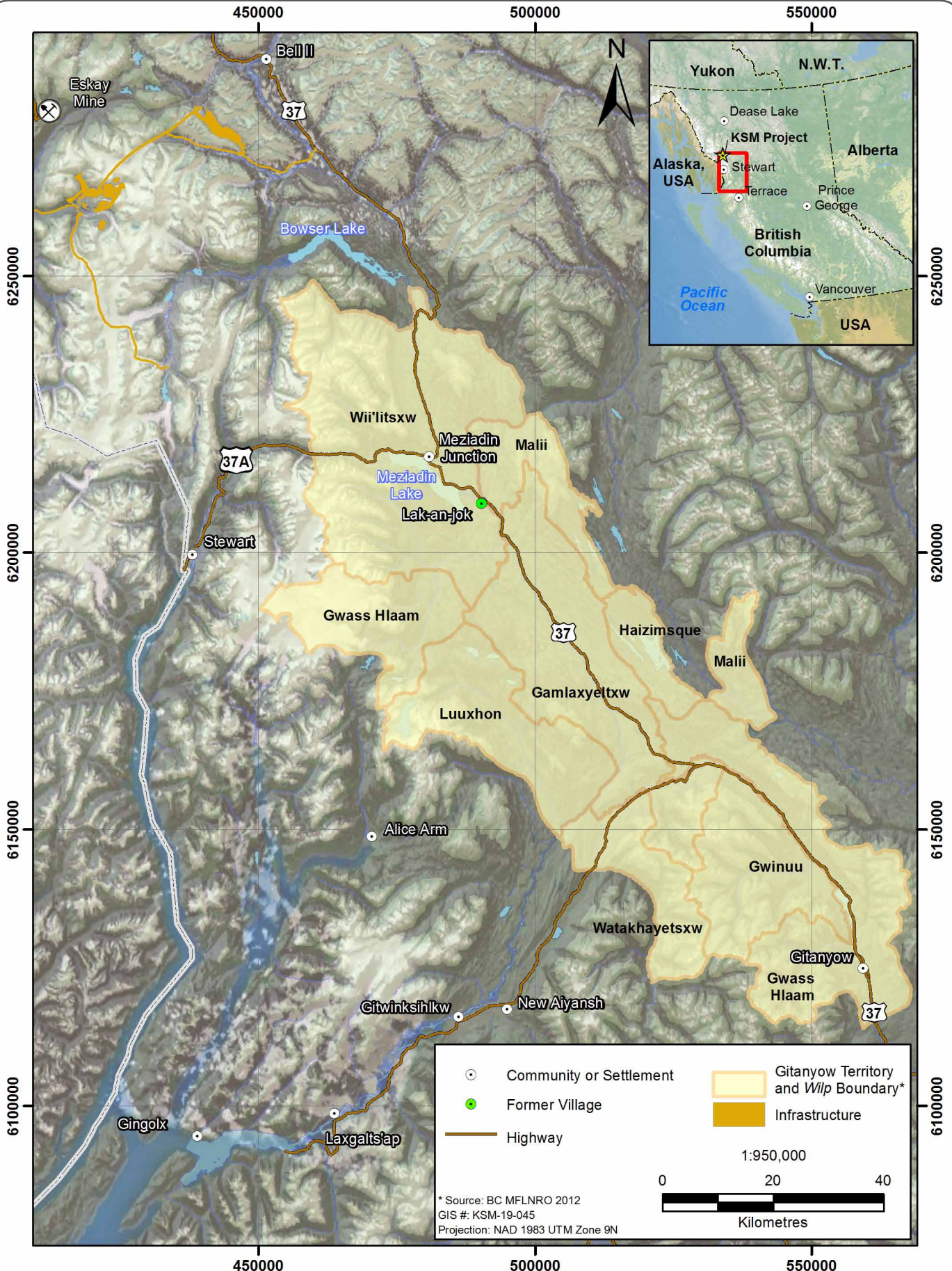
The Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office (GHCO) is the Gitanyow's governing body. The GHCO uphold Gitanyow *ayookxw* law and promote the involvement of *huwilp* in conservation, management and sustainable development of natural resources within their territories (GHCO n.d.). The GHCO has eight chiefs representing each Gitanyow *wilp*.

Gitanyow is a section 11 Band under the *Indian Act*. This means they use the *Indian Act* electoral system. The residential community at Gitanyow is governed by a chief councillor and seven councillors who are elected every two years. The Gitanyow Band, as opposed to the GHCO, is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Indian reserve and act as an agent of the federal Crown.

#### 1.3.2 Gitanyow Location

The primary Gitanyow Indian reserve is 463.1 ha, located on Highway 37 approximately 140 km northeast of Terrace (Figure 1.3-2). There are three reserves in total amounting to 850.4 ha (MARR 2012). There are 799 registered members on and off reserve (AANDC 2012). However the GHCO indicate that the figure may be closer to 1,200 members (GHCO 2007).

Figure 1.3-1 identifies KSM Project infrastructure in relation to the Gitanyow traditional territory. Figure 1.3-2 indicates the location of the Gitanyow reserve community. The Gitanyow traditional territory is downstream and outside of the KSM project area. Project related traffic will pass through the Gitanyow traditional territory as it travels to and from the project site along Highway 37 and Highway 37A to Stewart.



Proposed KSM Project and Gitanyow First Nation Traditional Territory

Figure 1.3-1

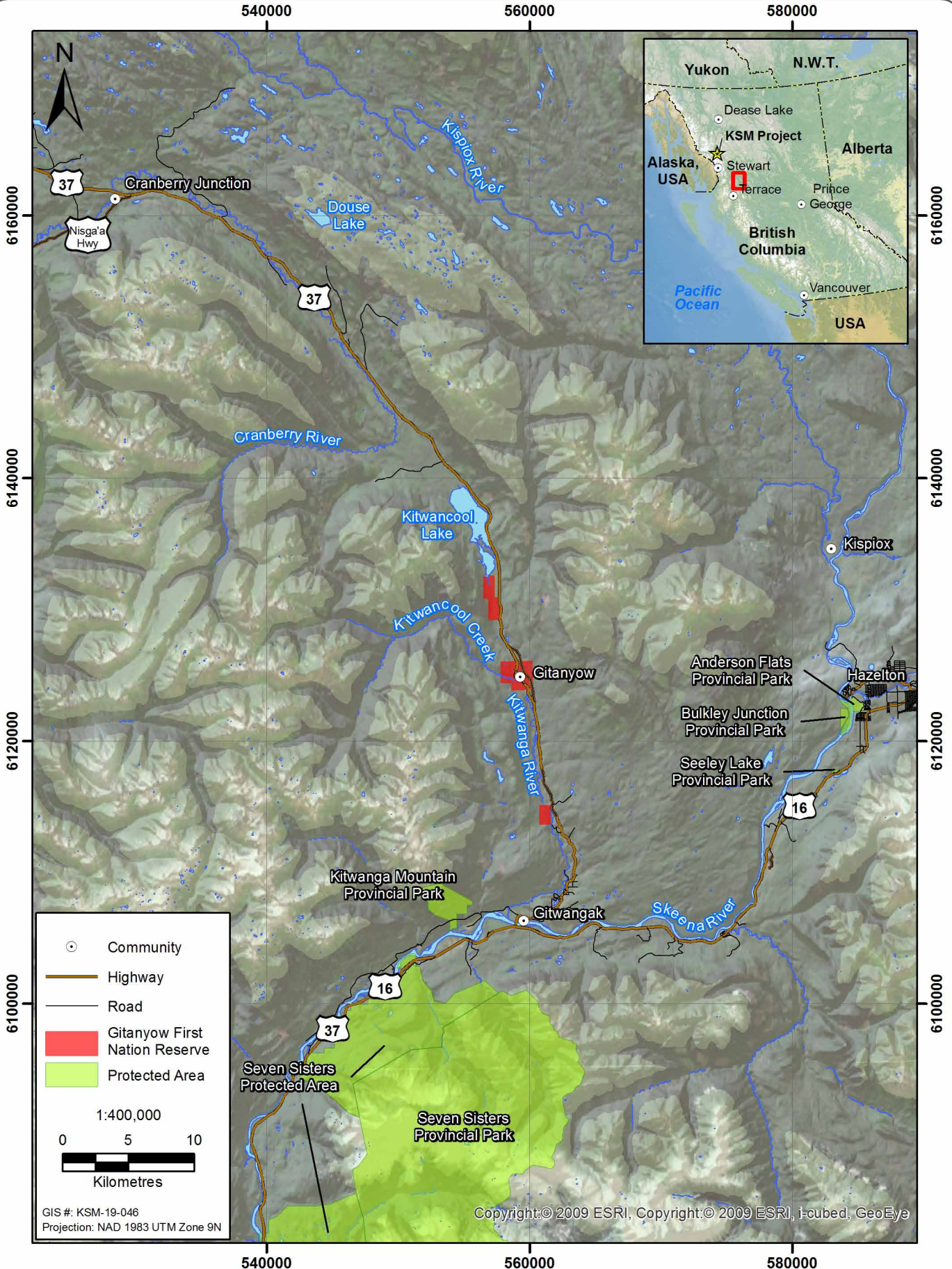


Figure 1.3-2

### 1.3.3 Fisheries Agreements

A Comprehensive Fisheries Agreement between the Gitanyow and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was signed on May 21, 1999. It provides the involvement of the Gitanyow in the management, protection and enhancement of fisheries resources and fish habitat in the area. The Agreement also outlines the provisions and process for a Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) Fishery<sup>1</sup> each season, and is supported by the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy<sup>2</sup> (AFS) of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Provisions in the Agreement stipulate how many fish (of each species) the Gitanyow are allowed to fish per year, as well as the creation of a Fishing Plan which sets dates and times when fishing can occur, and the waters in which the Gitanyow may fish. Salmon or other fish caught through the FSC fishery may not be sold, traded or bartered. DFO provides the Gitanyow with a Communal Licence to catch the species and quantity of fish set out in the Agreement. The Gitanyow designate who is allowed to fish under the Communal Licence and issue designation cards to that effect. They are also responsible for monitoring and enforcement of fishery provisions and reporting harvest data to DFO. DFO through this agreement also provides financial assistance to the Gitanyow to conduct fisheries management activities.

The Gitanyow began negotiations with DFO in 2005 to secure an economic allocation of salmon on the Nass River in their traditional territory for the Gitanyow *huwilp*. In 2009 an agreement was reached between the two parties. That same year, a fishing plan was developed and a small demonstration fishery was approved by DFO under an Aboriginal Communal Sockeye Salmon Fishing Licence (GFA 2010). Commercial allocations of salmon have been obtained by the Gitanyow since 2009, and in 2012 have included the obtaining of voluntarily-retired offshore commercial fishing licences to use in the Meziadian River. The 2011 commercial allocation of 3,000 salmon will be increased to as much as 10,000 or 12,000 with the obtaining of these licences (M. Cleveland, Pers. Comm., 2012).

The Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA) is run by the GHCO as a non-profit society that administers and implements the FSC Fishery as stipulated under the Agreement (GFA 2012), as well as the economic fishery allocation. The GFA also operates the Kitwanga River Salmon Enumeration Facility which creates type and species counts of migrating salmon along the Kitwanga River. Spawning ground restoration and enhancement programs were also conducted by the organization and were completed in 2006.

---

<sup>1</sup> As opposed to a commercial fishery, in which fish can be sold, bartered or traded.

<sup>2</sup> The AFS, in response to the 1990 Supreme Court of Canada ruling on the *Sparrow* case (that Aboriginal groups had the right to fish for food, social and ceremonial purposes), was created to provide stable fishery management in areas of Canada where land claims settlements have not already put a fisheries management regime in place. The objectives of the AFS are to provide a framework for the management of Aboriginal FSC fisheries, provide Aboriginal groups with the opportunity to participate in the management of fisheries, and to contribute to Aboriginal economic self-sufficiency, among others.

## 2. Purpose

---

Traditional Knowledge and Use (TK/TU) studies can provide important information on First Nations' interests and elucidate technical, academic, and indigenous information about the traditional and contemporary use and knowledge of areas within the vicinity of the KSM project. The overall purposes of the collection of TK/TU information are to document and understand the pre-contact, historic and contemporary Gitanyow activities, practices and uses of the area downstream of the proposed location of the KSM Tailing Management Facility Area, located in the Nass watershed, and along the Project traffic route.

This report is based on desk-based research using publicly available sources. This report is not comprehensive as it is intended to be reviewed by the GHCO as well as Wilp Wiiltisxw-Txawokw.

## 3. Methodology

---

### 3.1 APPROACH

The study involved a desktop review of available ethnographic information for the Gitanyow Nation (including Wilp Wiilitsxw-Txawokw) as well as northwest British Columbia.

### 3.2 DESKTOP ETHNOGRAPHIC INFORMATION COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Bibliographic and internet sources, including *adaawks* (oral histories), were searched to identify references for applicable ethnographic information. Topics for information collection included cultural setting (history, social organization, family and kinship, and language use), economic life, subsistence strategies, and spiritualism and ceremony. All identified journal articles, books and book chapters, reports and proceedings, as well as information from government and organization web sites, were reviewed. The analysis included studying pre-contact culture and historic patterns that occurred in northwest BC through to the modern period.

Publically available documents produced for environmental assessments for other Projects, such as the Northwest Transmission Line were also reviewed for TK/TU information relevant to the Gitanyow (Rescan 2009). Based on the results of the review, an analysis and synthesis of the available ethnographic information was prepared.

### 3.3 DATA CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Historical secondary ethnographic information from published sources has limitations and should not be considered conclusive or complete, or necessarily reflective of the values, interests, and concerns of Aboriginal groups in the vicinity of the Project. Ethnographic observations were recorded by Euro-Canadians in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; these observations were largely informed by a western worldview. Nevertheless, this work provides important accounts into daily life, social and political structures, and subsistence methods employed by members of the related First Nations. Similarly, First Nations typically passed on their history through oral stories (*adaawks*) which, though they may not provide complete accounts of past use and traditions, are still important sources of information, particularly from the point of view of the First Nations who lived in the area.

Data gaps within this study are expected due to a lack of site-specific information. It is acknowledged that there are unpublished primary source materials, including archived recorded oral history interviews, which may provide additional information on traditional knowledge and use areas downstream of the Project area. Historical and cultural overviews provide useful information, but are often broadly scoped, providing information about culture, land use, and travel with relatively few details regarding specific locations downstream of the KSM Project area.

## 4. Results

---

### 4.1 BACKGROUND

#### 4.1.1 Traditional Territory

The Gitanyow traditional territory is located in the Upper Nass area. The Gitanyow assert they have existed since time immemorial. This position has been maintained through oral histories, carved poles and songs which explain how ancestors of modern Gitanyow settled into specific territories along areas of the northern Nass watershed (GHCO 2007). This territory has been recorded through the accounts of Gitanyow knowledge holders, and knowledge of its boundaries maintained through these traditional means, as well as through a number of maps created by European explorers and Gitanyow community members through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Sterritt et al. 1998).

Gitanyow traditional territory is primarily located within the Englemann Spruce-Subalpine Fur and Interior Cedar Hemlock biogeoclimatic zones, which contain areas with high levels of precipitation, high snowpack in the winters, dense forest and underbrush, as well as alpine and sub-alpine areas (GeoBC 2012).

Wilp Wii'litsxw-Txawokw territory extends south of Meziadin Lake (T'ax'matsiiadin) to south of Bowser Lake, including sections of Bell Irving River between Bowser Lake and the Nass River (Figure 1.3-1). Territory in the Meziadin Lake area, according to the Gitanyow, came into possession of Wilp Wii'litsxw-Txawokw at approximately 1860 following a peace ceremony and justice transfer of territory between Gitanyow and Tsetsaut in the area (Sterritt et al. 1998, BC Hydro 2010).

The GHCO broadly defines the territories of the other *huwilp* as follows (GHCO n.d., GHCO 2008):

- Gwaas Hlaam extends from 9 mile creek (near the 15 km post on Highway 37) to Derrick Lake and includes the Kitwanga River, and the eastern shores of Kitwancool Lake and Cranberry River. The Gitanyow village/reserve is within this *wilp* territory;
- Malii includes from the Sweeten River to the Brown Bear and Kwinageese River; defined alternatively as a portion of the Kispiox River and part of the Nass River to the north.
- Haizimsque includes Swan Lake and encompasses the Swan Lake Provincial Park;
- Gamlaxyeltxw includes a portion of the Cranberry River near its confluence with the Nass River and the east and west sides of the Nass River to just south of Meziadin River;
- Luuxhon is in the Kinskuch River watershed, including the Kinskuch River and the eastern portion of the Nass River into which it flows;
- Gwinuu extends from the western shore of Kitwancool Lake and the Kitwanga River, to the Cranberry River, in the upper Cranberry River and 26 mile area;
- Wataxhayetsxw is on the eastern side of Kiteen River, bounded by the Kiteen River, Kiteen Ridge and the Nass River.

#### 4.1.2 Language

The traditional language of the Gitanyow is the Gitwangak dialect of the Gitsenimx language in the Tsimshianic language family.. Gitsenimx is also spoken by the Gitxsan Nation (First People's Heritage,



Language & Culture Council 2010). Publications regarding the Gitsenimx language family include Hindle and Rigsby (1973) and Rigsby (1986).

According to the *Gitanyow Wilp-Based Socio-Cultural Needs Assessment Final Report* (Marsden 2010), 25% of all Gitanyow *wilp* members speak the Gitsenimx language fluently. Just over half of them (52%) have a partial speaking ability or only understand the language, and 23% have no working knowledge. Approximately 45% of Gitanyow youth do not speak the language, but many of them (55%) know some words and phrases, and 25% are taught Gitsenimx in school. Some of the children are learning parts of the language through songs, drumming, singing and dancing groups. Eighty percent of youth surveyed said they would like to learn their language.

#### 4.1.3 Social Organization

The Gitanyow *wilp* tenure system is one of the most important aspects of Gitanyow culture and social organization. The *wilp* system regulates the use of territorial resources, and decisions are made on behalf of *wilp* members by a hereditary chief (*Simooghet*), who carries the *wilp* name. Each *wilp* has a *Sigidimahanak* who is usually the mother or aunt of the head Chief. Wing Chiefs, usually the brothers of the head chief, also hold authority under him. Gitanyow history is kept through *adaawk* (oral traditions), which document important events such as the acquisition and defence of territory, disasters and important social events within a *wilp* (GHCO 2009).

Eight *huwilp* exist in Gitanyow society: Luuxhon, Malii, Haizimsque, Wii'litsxw, Watakhayetsxw, Gamlaxyeltxw, Gwass Hlaam and Gwinuu. These *huwilp* once existed within three exogamous<sup>3</sup> matrilineal clans (*pdeek*)- Lax Gibuu (Wolf), Lax Ganeda (Frog) and Fireweed (Duff 1959; GHCO 2007). The Fireweed *pdeek* however did not control any territory and as a result the Frog and Wolf *pdeek* historically emerged as the dominant clans in Gitanyow society (Duff 1959). Each Gitanyow *wilp* is today associated with either the Frog or Wolf *pdeek*.

Use of *wilp* territory is protected by Gitanyow law (*ayookxw*) and is considered exclusive to *wilp* members unless permission is granted by the hereditary chief. This arrangement is formalized within Gitanyow society in the Constitution of the Gitanyow Huwilp (GHCO 2007). Gitanyow law holds that permission must be granted by the chief for any activity that is to take place within a *wilp*'s territory. This requirement extends to all trespassers who in the past would have been expelled or killed following a warning.

The structure of the *wilp* serves to reinforce community through the sharing of *adaawk* (oral histories), which support the knowledge of territorial boundaries, family names, *ayuuk* (*wilp* traditional crests), *git'mgan* (totem poles) and *limx'oy* (songs- GHCO 2007). *Adaawk* are kept within a *wilp* and recount *wilp* histories as well as past feasts and status in order to preserve *wilp* title over time. This history is physically represented and preserved on *git'mgan*. *Ayuuk* also serve to symbolize a *wilp*'s history and are kept for exclusive use within the house.

Traditional social organization and governance remains present in the Gitanyow communities. Marsden (2010) notes that 59% of all Gitanyow *wilp* members attend feasts, and another 40% attend them regularly. As for youth, only 5% regularly attend feasts, but 70% attend feasts occasionally. A notable majority of youth (75%) can name their *wilp* chief, while 35% can identify their *wilp* territory.

---

<sup>3</sup> Exogamous, in terms of marriage practices, means marrying outside of one's clan.

*Huwilp* are presently governed by a central body called the Gitanyow Huwilp Society<sup>4</sup> who represents them in matters that affect more than one *wilp*. Five institutions operate within the Gitanyow Huwilp Society including the Assembly of the Huwilp, Simgigyet'm Gitanyow, Office of the Speaker, Gitanyow Huwilp Administrative Board and Ge'ex gans Be'xhl Ansxw (GHCO 2007). The capacity of these organizations serve to organize the overall direction of *huwilp*, provide forums for the exchange of ideas, formulate political and legal strategies, develop resource management strategies, manage *wilp* capacities, ensure Gitanyow *ayookxw* is upheld, and provide dispute resolution, among numerous other responsibilities.

#### 4.1.4 Traditional Economy

Gitanyow traditional economy closely follows the patterns of other groups living within the Nass watershed, including a focus on fishing, wildlife harvesting, trapping, and medicinal and food plant gathering. Rich plant resources are and were traditionally common in Gitanyow territory and red cedar was available for use (Daly 2005). Traditional resource procurement strategies follow a seasonal cycle that is focussed on seasonal salmon fishing sites within the Nass watershed. The Hanna and Tintina drainages in the Meziadin watershed were, and remain, the most significant areas for salmon for the Gitanyow traditional economy (GHCO 2008; G. Martin, pers. comm.).

Historically, supplies of subsistence resources, including salmon, were important not only for survival but for maintaining traditional social structures, trade and relationships between *huwilp* as well as with neighbouring trading partners. Gitanyow settlements were typically located at highly productive salmon fishing sites which were utilized in conjunction with hunting territories (Daly 2005). Salmon, usually dried through smoking, could be traded and consumed throughout the season. During the early spring, beaver would be hunted until the seasonal salmon runs commenced. In the summer, the Gitanyow saw rich sockeye, spring, and coho salmon and steelhead runs in the Meziadin watershed area, including the Hanna and Tintina drainages (Rescan 2009). Traditional fishing techniques typically included the use of weirs. Prior to the banning of bush burning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, mid-elevation berry picking was a common practice during this period of the year (Daly 2005).

Much of the Gitanyow traditional annual cycle relates to the seasonality of resources in the region. In the autumn, for example, an abundant coho run occurs in the Bell Irving River in the Bowser Lake area as well as at the confluence with the Nass River. Grizzly bears were typically snared in the autumn as they provided a rich source of fats to be processed through the late winter (Daly 2005). Blueberries would also be picked above the tree line in autumn prior to the arrival of heavy snow packs. The feasting season would typically begin in late autumn and early winter. Steelhead ice fishing would also occur in the winter.

Oils rendered from animal and fish fats were a significant historic resource for Gitanyow (Daly 2005). Species important for this resource included beaver, goat, bear and salmon. However the most significant source of oil was oolichan which was obtained from the coast through trade or travel down the Nass River, typically during the late winter and early spring (Halpin and Seguin 1990). The Tsetsaut were traditional trading partners for oolichan and the Meziadin Lake area was a common trading ground (Barbeau and Benyon 1950).

Historically, traplines were used mostly following snowfall in the region, and trapping was most common in January following periods of feasting (Daly 2005). A single Gitanyow trapline, covering their entire traditional territory, was registered by 1930 (Sterritt et al. 1988). Trapping rights are regulated by traditional *huwilp* governance.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Gitanyow Huwilp Society is synonymous with the GHCO. It is a registered society under the provincial *Societies Act* to receive and administer funding from BC and Canada for treaty negotiations. The purpose of the Society, according to GHCO (n.d.) is to coordinate and administer treaty negotiations on behalf of the Gitanyow, among other things.

#### 4.1.5 Spiritualism and Ceremonies

Among the Gitanyow, establishing and maintaining supernatural power and well-being was the responsibility of the hereditary chiefs. Their religious responsibilities included demonstrating respect for animals and spirits in all activities (such as hunting, fishing, and the consumption of animal foods), and also during the particularly volatile periods around rituals, birth, and death (Halpin and Seguin 1990).

Gitanyow hereditary chiefs were responsible for the conducting of ceremonies and dances. In their role as house chiefs they were active in ritual occasions such as feasts and naming ceremonies; at these occasions they wore their crests and ceremonial robes and headdresses. In their role as, *naɣnóɣ* or “power” dancers they dramatized and validated the powers of their ancestors and their house by masked dances and dramas. As *smhaláit* or “real dancers” they initiated young people into ritual roles. As a *wihaláit* or “great dancer”, he was the leader of four secret societies, into which many of the people were initiated (Halpin and Seguin 1990).

Feasting is a significant event in Gitanyow culture and is filled with ceremony and symbolism. Resource management has historically been significant for the success of the *wilp*, and the social institutions of wealth and status have traditionally been closely tied to a system of feasting. The gifting of resources during feasts, particularly food from within one’s territory, is considered a significant act that affirms the status of a *wilp* and demonstrates its success. Social standing can be gained through this process and serves as an important element of determining power within and between Wolf and Frog *pdeeks*. As a result, the social organization of *huwilp* could be influenced through the feasting process. Chiefly status and even power sharing could be demonstrated in the orientation of seating during this time. Chiefs with high social standing within any *wilp* command respect across all *pdeeks*.

A significant feast occurred following the death of a chief and would provide an occasion to stabilize the community by selecting a successor who would assume the name of the former chief (Duff 1959). Power and prestige would be gained during feasts and they were developed through generosity observed during the gathering. In modern feasting, gifts typically take the form of financial contributions, partly due to restricted harvesting rights (GHCO 2008).

A chief’s role in ordering sacred relations was complemented by the activities of specialists called *swánsk haláit* or “blowing shamans”, who were particularly active during serious illness or times of “bad luck” such as the failure of a salmon run. Illness was believed to be at least partly due to spiritual weakness or impurity, and the practices of the shaman marshalled the spiritual resources of the community to strengthen and purify the spirits of the patients, who were symbolically cleansed by the shaman sucking “dirty” objects from them and rubbing them with clean substances. The *swánsk haláit* were not a separate social stratum and in fact some hereditary chiefs were shamans as well (Halpin and Seguin 1990).

#### 4.1.6 After European Contact

During the expansion of Euro-Canadian exploration and development in northwestern BC, the Gitanyow had strained relationships with settlers in the region. Through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, conflicts occurred between Gitanyow community members and surveyors and explorers attempting to utilize resources in Gitanyow territory. The Gitanyow during this period attempted to assert their rights and title to their traditional territories, which held strength in claim though generations of territorial knowledge captured in a number of historic maps (Sterritt et al. 1998).

The expansion of outsider influence in the Nass region during this period resulted in dramatic changes in the traditional land use of all Gitanyow *huwilp*. Fur trade forts established in the region, including Skeena Fork (Hazelton) in the 1860s, facilitated the settlement of the region. Following the discovery of gold in the Skeena area in the 1870s these locales served as base locations for prospectors. By the

time of the construction of the Skeena railway between 1907 and 1914, settlement in the region had grown considerably (MacDonald 1989).

During the expansion of Euro-Canadian influence in the region, the protection of forestry and subsistence harvesting rights was very important to Gitanyow communities, as outsider interest in developing resources was intensifying (Sterritt et al. 1998). This expansion of influence was reflected in the provincial government's focus on industrial growth in the region through the 1950's, as policies were enacted that allowed industrial clear cutting to occur in Gitanyow territory (Sterritt et al. 1998, Neilson 2008).

Gitanyow *huwilp* were often employed as guides and trail builders during periods of development in the region, however integration into the wage economy was hastened by the development of canneries in the Skeena area during the 1870s (Halpin and Seguin 1990). Though this transition would strain Gitanyow reliance on traditional practices, the prohibition of the potlatch system with the 1884 *Indian Act*, and the education of Gitanyow children in residential schools, had a more substantial effect on the transmission of Gitanyow culture (Fisher 1977, Inglis et al. 1990)

## 4.2 HISTORIC AND CURRENT USE

Gitanyow *huwilp* historically lived off of the land and continue to rely on traditional resources within their asserted territories. This reliance includes subsistence harvesting, and economic and cultural uses of fish and wildlife. Within Gitanyow territory there are a number of traditional use sites, including areas for fishing, hunting, trapping, water retrieval, and gathering of plant resources, as well as areas for ceremonial use (GHCO et al. 2010). The Meziadin watershed, in particular, is described as the “heart and lifeblood” of Gitanyow *huwilp* territories (GHCO et al. 2010). A major historic settlement of the Gitanyow was at Lak-an-jok, a village site south of Meziadin Lake that served as a major Aboriginal trade centre in the region (see Figure 1.3-1). The Gitanyow still use the site as a summer village during salmon runs in the Meziadin watershed (GHCO 2010).

Marsden (2010) states that 20% of Gitanyow *wilp* members had cabins or smokehouses in their house territories. A small percentage reported that they previously had one, but that it had been either damaged or destroyed by outsiders. More than two-thirds of those who did not have cabins or smokehouses said they would like to build one if they had the means to do so, or had the support of the hereditary chief.

Most Gitanyow *wilp* members retain a close connection to their environment and the natural resources within it. One-quarter of Gitanyow *wilp* members consume traditional foods on a daily basis, while an additional 56% of *wilp* members consume traditional foods once or twice a week. Over 30% of Gitanyow families consumed between 100 and 200 salmon per year, and another 24% consumed 50-100 salmon per year (Marsden 2010).

Of the youth surveyed in Marsden's report, 95% reported going out fishing or helping with fish preparation; 45% had gone hunting or were involved with the processing of game; and 60% had gone berry picking with family or helped in the preparation of berries (Marsden 2010).

### 4.2.1 Fish

Fish is the largest food component that Gitanyow currently rely on (T. Morgan. pers. comm. 2011). Salmon species that are important dietary staples to the Gitanyow include sockeye, chinook and coho. Historic methods for harvesting included the use of pronged spears, weirs and basket traps, gaffs, conical basket traps, waterfall traps and nets. Currently fish are typically caught with gill nets (Daly 2005).

River fishing has traditionally been a dominant activity in spring and summer. The tributary from Meziadin Lake (Meziadin River) that feeds into the Nass is of particular importance. Fishing activities traditionally occur at the confluence of the Meziadin and Nass rivers (T. Martin pers. comm. 2010b).

Some of the most significant areas for the Gitanyow are the watersheds of Hanna and Tintina creeks in the Meziadin watershed. This area is located near the Bell Irving watershed and has historically provided, and currently provides, the majority of Gitanyow salmon as well as the majority of Nass River sockeye salmon (GHCO 2008). Sockeye salmon harvested from these watersheds have served Gitanyow populations throughout their history and provide for essential subsistence, ceremonial and social status needs.

The Hanna/Tintina area is considered sacred and is listed as critical habitat to “keystone” salmon species in the draft Nass South Sustainable Resource Management Plan (SRMP-ILMB 2012). An ecological reserve in the Hanna and Tintina watersheds is also proposed under the Nass South SRMP, intending to protect its rich resources by limiting the types of development allowed in the area. The Hanna/Tintina area is home to many wetland complexes that are the main hunting, fishing and trapping areas of Wilp Wii'litsxw and are considered to be of high cultural significance (GHCO 2007, 2010). According to the Gitanyow Chiefs, Hanna and Tintina creeks provide 95% of Gitanyow salmon food fishing and are considered to be integral to the survival of the Gitanyow people (GHCO 2008).

Along the Bell Irving watershed, Bowser and Oweege Lakes have also been identified as having high fisheries value for the Gitanyow, as well as the confluence of Meziadin and Nass Rivers (M. Cleveland and G. Rush pers. comm. 2008; T. Martin pers. comm. 2010b).

Oolichan grease was also a historically important resource, particularly in the winter when fresh food was difficult to harvest. Oolichan grease was usually obtained through trade with Tsetsaut from the coastal areas or Nisga'a groups along the Nass (Daly 2005).

The protection of salmon spawning habitat is also of particular importance to Gitanyow *huwilp*. High-value fish spawning habitat is identified by the Gitanyow to include streams that are located in close proximity to swamps, wetlands and high water tables (GHCO 2008). Significant spawning locations include areas along the Cranberry and Kiteen rivers, as well as Brown Bear Creek in the southern areas of Gitanyow traditional territory.

In recent years, the Gitanyow have signed fisheries agreements with federal authorities with provisions for FSC and commercial allocations. Section 1.3.3 provides further details on these agreements.

#### 4.2.2 Wildlife

Wildlife harvesting is an important traditional activity to Gitanyow *huwilp*. Specifically, moose, goat, black bear, grizzly bear, deer, waterfowl and marmots are highly valued species (Rescan 2009). When hunting big game, as much of the harvested animal is used as possible. Trapping is also common within *huwilp* territories, and the Gitanyow have owned a single registered trapline that covers all of their traditional territory since 1930 (Sterritt et al. 1998). Common fur-bearing animals that are harvested include mink, marten, beaver and fox (Halpin and Seguin 1990).

Traditionally used areas within Gitanyow territory for hunting include terrain surrounding the Meziadin Lake area stretching as far north as the confluence of Surveyors Creek and Bell-Irving River. These areas provide rich habitat for many species including moose, grizzly bear and mountain goat (GHCO et al. 2010). The abundant salmon runs along the Hanna and Tintina watershed support a high-value grizzly bear habitat in the area (ILMB 2012; M. Cleveland and G. Rush pers. comm. 2008). While moose are much less present today and caribou have migrated away, Gitanyow still rely on marten in the winter and rabbits, as well as beavers (T. Morgan. pers. comm. 2011). Of great concern to Gitanyow *huwilp* is the preservation of grizzly bear, moose and deer habitats, as well as winter moose range (ILMB 2012).

#### 4.2.3 Plant Use

Traditional plant use in Gitanyow territory includes the harvesting of devil's club and water lily among other species. A wide variety of plants are important for food, medicine and technological uses (GHCO 2009). More recently, Wilp Wiilitxw-Txawokw members observed that prospectors in the White River area, which flows into the Nass just south of Meziadin Lake, have damaged the natural environment, including riverbeds which are important areas of medicinal plant growth (T. Martin. pers. comm. 2011).

Seasonal berry picking is still actively pursued (G. Martin pers. comm. 2011) and is an important aspect of the seasonal harvest cycle. Harvested species include blueberries, wild cranberries and soapberries. Blueberries were historically harvested following summer salmon runs, and in the autumn in higher alpine zones. Bush burns were used to actively enhance berry production until the practice was banned (Daly 2005).

Marsden (2010), in a survey of Gitanyow *wilp* members, notes that plants still used by the Gitanyow for medicinal purposes include: Devil's club, hellebore, Labrador tea, water lily roots, nettles, soapberries, balsam bark, red alder bark, and wild mint.

#### 4.2.4 Mushrooms

Mushroom harvesting is actively pursued by the Gitanyow (G. Martin pers. comm. 2011). Pine mushroom harvesting is an economic practice conducted in some areas of dense coniferous forest growth in Gitanyow traditional territory. Areas of highest production of pine mushrooms areas are those where soil is coarse and rapidly drained, often associated with Western hemlock and Lodgepole pine forests (GHCO 2008).

#### 4.2.5 Travel

A number of historic and modern trails are found throughout Gitanyow traditional territory. These trails connect fishing, hunting, gathering and trapping areas, camps, villages, and heritage areas such as the locations of culturally modified trees (Collier and Rose 2007).

The Kitwancool Trail, for example, starts in Gitwangak, heads north to Kitwancool Lake, eventually veers west to the Cranberry River's junction with the Nass, and continues on to Aiyansh (this trail appears to be the same as the *Genim Sgeenix* of the Nisga'a- see MacDonald 1989). Gerry Gunanoot, the nephew of David Gunanoot, describes a travel route to Stewart from Hanna Ridge, which passed along Hanna Ridge, up to the top of Meziadin Lake along a glacier bed and then travelled about 14 miles (22.5 km) toward Stewart, as far as the road ran from Stewart in the winter months (Delgamuukw v. The Queen 1988).

## 5. Conclusion

---

The Gitanyow assert that they have resided in the upper Nass River area since time immemorial. They are culturally linked to their Gitksan and Nisga'a neighbours. The Gitanyow have used, and continue to use, their traditional territory for a wide range of activities. These activities include hunting, fishing, trapping, and berry and plant gathering.

Traditional food and harvesting sources in Gitanyow traditional territory are pivotal to the subsistence economy, as well as the social structures of Gitanyow society, as the distribution of resources during feasting is a significant factor in the establishment of status and wealth within the community. Specifically, salmon are of the highest significance as a subsistence and social resource. As a result, the historic development of the Gitanyow annual cycle was closely related to the seasonal availability of salmon resources, and the success of a *wilp* was closely tied to its access to, and the abundance of, the many species of salmon that ascend the Nass and Bell Irving rivers.

Significant salmon runs occur in the Hanna and Tintina watersheds every summer. These runs were historically, and are currently, an important seasonal resource closely tied to the health of the Gitanyow community. Animal resources found in this area offer sources of food and materials to the Gitanyow, including grizzly bear. The success of the grizzly bear population in the area is closely tied to the availability of salmon. As a result, the health of harvesting areas near Meziadin Lake is the primary concern of the Gitanyow community as a whole. North of Meziadin Lake, areas along the Bell- Irving watershed are also rich in subsistence resources for the Gitanyow. This includes areas around Surveyor's Creek, Bowser Lake, Oweegee Lake, and the confluence area of Bell-Irving and Nass Rivers.

Historically, moose were hunted and highly sought-after as a food source in Gitanyow territory. However, alterations to their habitat, and the increasing human presence in the area, have reduced their numbers in the territory through attrition or out-migration. Of great concern to Gitanyow *huwilp* is the preservation of grizzly bear, moose and deer habitats, as well as winter moose range.

The Gitanyow have played a prominent role in the development of plans and agreements related to the management of fisheries and wildlife in their traditional territory. In particular, the Comprehensive Fisheries Agreement, and commercial allocations under that agreement, have allowed for the conservation of salmon species while maintaining traditional use of the resource and improving the economic outlook for the Gitanyow.

## References

---

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). 2012. Gitanyow- Registered Population. [http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx? BAND\\_NUMBER=537 &lang=eng](http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx? BAND_NUMBER=537 &lang=eng) (accessed July 2012).
- Barbeau, C. M. and W. Beynon. 1950. *Raven Clan Outlaws of the North Pacific Coast*. Ottawa: Unpublished Manuscript, Folklore Division, National Museum of Man (Canadian Museum of Civilization).
- BC Treaty Commission. 2012. *Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs*. <http://www.bctreaty.net/nations/gitanyow.php> . (accessed July 2012).
- BC Treaty Commission. 1993. *Statement of Intent - Traditional Territory Boundary Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs*. [http://www.bctreaty.net/nations/soi\\_maps/Gitanyow\\_SOI\\_Map.pdf](http://www.bctreaty.net/nations/soi_maps/Gitanyow_SOI_Map.pdf) (accessed January 2011).
- Collier, R. and M. Rose. 2007. *The Gitxsan model: A vision for the land and the people*. N.p.: The ESRI Conservation Program. <http://www.conservationgis.org/test/tribal/native2.html> (accessed April 2010).
- Daly, R. 2005. *Our box was full: An ethnography for the Delgamuukw plaintiffs*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Delgamuukw v. The Queen. 1988. *Cross Examination on Affidavit of Gerry Gunanoot, no. 0843, December 9, 1988*.
- Duff, Wilson. (ed.). 1959. *Histories, Territories, and Laws of the Kitwancool*. Anthropology in British Columbia Memoir no. 4. Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria.
- First Peoples' Heritage, Language & Culture Council 2010. *First Peoples' Language Map of British Columbia*. <http://maps.fphlcc.ca/about> (accessed October 2010).
- Fisher, R. 1977. *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- GeoBC. 2012. iMap BC Database. <http://archive.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/geobc/index.html> (accessed July 2012)
- Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA). 2010. *The 2009 Gitanyow Demonstration Fishery*. Kitwanga, B.C. Prepared for the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
- Gitanyow Fisheries Authority (GFA). 2012. Website. <http://www.gitanyowfisheries.com/> (accessed July 2012).
- Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office (GHCO). N.d. Website. <http://www.kermode.net/gitanyowchiefs/Welcome1.htm> (accessed July 2012).
- Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office (GHCO). 2007. *The Gitanyow Ayookxw: The Constitution of the Gitanyow Huwilp*. On file with the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office. Gitanyow.
- Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office (GHCO). 2008. *Report on the Potential Impacts of the NTL Project on Gitanyow Territories & Resources*. Report prepared for BC Hydro, Aboriginal Relations and Negotiations. On file with EAO
- Gitanyow Office of the Hereditary Chiefs (GHCO). 2009. *Traditional Use Study - Medicinal Plants used by the Gitanyow, Draft Research Document* in Draft 1.8 Gitanyow Policy Manual for Management of Cultural Heritage Resources.



- Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office (GHCO), BC Hydro and Rescan. 2010. *Proposed Northwest Transmission Line Project: Hanna-Tintina Route Alternatives Evaluation Report*. Vancouver, BC: Prepared for BC Hydro by Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office, BC Hydro and Rescan Environmental Services Ltd. July 2010
- Halpin, M. and M. Seguin. 1990. Tsimshian peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nishga, and Gitksan. In *Northwest Coast*. Vol. 7 of *Handbook of North American Indians*. 267-84. Washington: Smithsonian Institute.
- Hindle, Lonnie and Bruce Rigsby. 1973. A short practical dictionary of the Gitksan language, *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes* 7.1.1-60. Moscow, Idaho.
- Inglis, G. B., D. R. Hudson, B. R. Rigsby, and B. Rigsby. 1990. Tsimshian of British Columbia Since 1900. Margaret Seguin, ed. In *Handbook of North American Indians Vol 7: Northwest Coast*. Ed. W. Suttles. 285-93. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.
- Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB). 2012. *Nass South Sustainable Resource Management Plan - Public Review Draft - March 2009*. [http://archive.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/srmp/south/nass/docs/Nass%20South\\_SRMP\\_Draft\\_Plan\\_\(vers.5.2\).pdf](http://archive.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/srmp/south/nass/docs/Nass%20South_SRMP_Draft_Plan_(vers.5.2).pdf) (Accessed July 2012).
- MacDonald, George F. 1989. *Kitwanga Fort Report*. Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull.
- Marsden, Tara. 2010. *Gitanyow Wilp-Based Socio-Cultural Needs Assessment- Final Report*. Prepared for the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office.
- Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (MARR) 2012. Office of the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs. <http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/firstnation/gitanyow/default.html> (accessed July 2012).
- Neilson, Madam Justice. 2008. *Wii'litswx v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)*, Reasons for Judgment. Supreme Court of British Columbia, Vancouver Registry, Docket S076420. <http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca/Jdb-txt/SC/08/11/2008BCSC1139.htm> (Accessed July 2012).
- Rescan. 2009. *Northwest Transmission Line Project: Gitanyow Traditional Use and Knowledge Report*. Vancouver: Prepared for British Columbia Transmission Corporation.
- Rigsby, Bruce. 1986. *Gitksan Grammar*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Queensland, Australia.
- Sterritt, N. J., S. Marsden, R. Galois, P. R. Grant, and R. Overstall. 1998. *Tribal boundaries in the Nass Watershed*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

#### Personal Communications

- Cleveland, M. and Greg Rush 2008. Gitanyow Fisheries Authority, March 6, 2008
- Cleveland, M., Gitanyow Fisheries Authority, August 7, 2012.
- Good, D. and Glen Williams, February 25, 2010.
- Martin, G. 2011. Matriarch, Gitanyow Wilp Wii'litswx. Personal Communication: Meeting between Gitanyow Wilp Wii'litswx and Seabridge Gold Inc. April 13, 2011.
- Martin, T. 2011. Wing-Chief of Gitanyow Wilp Wii'litswx. Personal Communication: Meeting between Gitanyow Wilp Wii'litswx and Seabridge Gold Inc. April 13, 2011.
- Martin, T. 2010a. Wing-Chief of Gitanyow Wilp Wii'litswx, February 25, 2010a.
- Martin, T. 2010b. Wing-Chief of Gitanyow Wilp Wii'litswx, June 15, 2010b.
- Morgan, T. 2011. Chief Councillor, Gitanyow Band. Personal Communication: Meeting between Gitanyow Wilp Wii'litswx and Seabridge Gold Inc. April 13, 2011.