



WET'SUWET'EN  
TREATY OFFICE  
ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025

# AGENDA

## 1. Opening

Master of Ceremony: Wha Dha T'se –  
Andrew Tom, Vice President

- Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Opening Prayer
- Acknowledgement of the Yintah

## 2. Adoption of Agenda

- Motion to approve the agenda

## 3. Adoption of Previous AGM Minutes

- Review and approval of 2024 AGM minutes

## 4. Reports

- Chair's Report (Dzī Ggot, Ron Austin)
- Executive Director's Report (Tse Ggit Tsakē, Sherry McKinnon)
- Financial Report (External Finance Controller, Lorna Wendling, MNP)

## • Department Reports

- Administration (HR & Office Coordinator, Monica Michell)
- Social Services (Manager, Sherry McKinnon)
- Child and Family Wellness (Jurisdiction Director, Kayla Mitchell)
- Fisheries & Wildlife (Manager, Samantha Vincent)
- Natural Resources (Manager, Leanne Helkenberg)

## 5. Special Presentation/New Business

- Returning to Our Original Intent – July 31, 2025 decision by Dinī ze' and Ts'akē ze'
- Title & Rights Strategy Overview

## 6. Closing

- Closing Remarks from Dinī ze' and Ts'akē ze'
- Door prize draws
- Closing Prayer

## 7. Adjournment

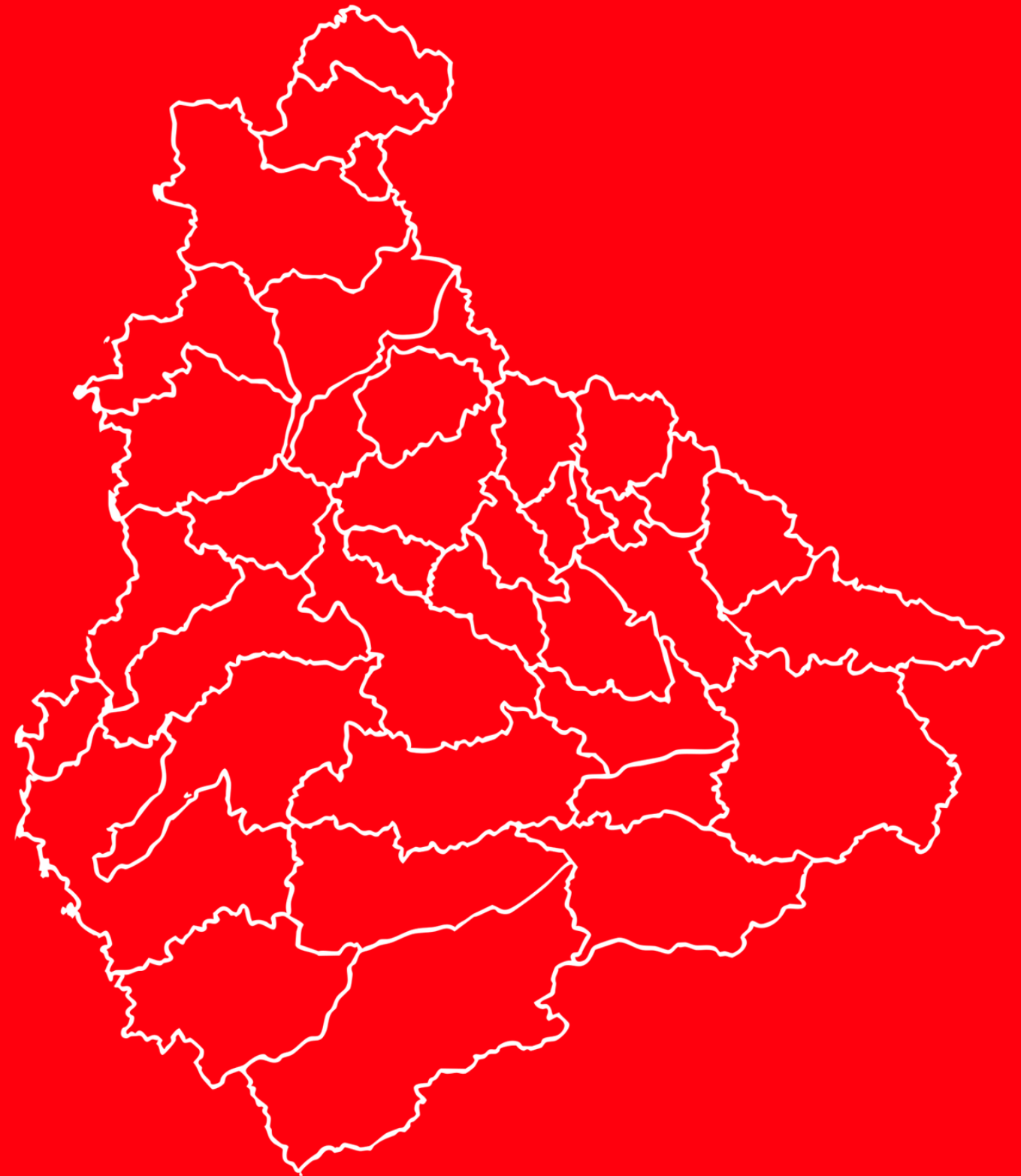


# ABOUT THE WET'SUWET'EN TREATY SOCIETY

The Wet'suwet'en Treaty Office was established in 1994 following the Delgamuukw court case, which brought Wet'suwet'en hereditary governance into the Canadian legal system. The hereditary chiefs created the organization as a vehicle to participate in the BC Treaty Process, advance recognition of Wet'suwet'en title and rights, and provide an administrative foundation rooted in the feast system. The Treaty Office represented a crucial step in asserting Wet'suwet'en self-determination through traditional governance rather than the Indian Act system.

In the years that followed, the organization expanded its mandate and became known as the Office of the Wet'suwet'en. This shift reflected a growing role in delivering programs and services beyond treaty negotiations, including lands and resources stewardship, fisheries management, and social development initiatives. While this expansion provided important services to Wet'suwet'en citizens, it also carried the risk of drawing attention away from the organization's original purpose: the protection of Wet'suwet'en title, rights, and governance.

In recent years, the hereditary chiefs have guided the Office of the Wet'suwet'en back toward its original intent. The 2020 Memorandum of Understanding with Canada and British Columbia affirmed that Wet'suwet'en rights and title are held collectively under the hereditary system. Building on this recognition, the Office is renewing its focus on governance, stewardship of the yintah, and supporting unity across all clans and Houses. As we move forward, our work remains grounded in the feast system and guided by the vision of the hereditary chiefs: to uphold Wet'suwet'en authority, protect the land, and strengthen the nation for future generations.



*We are proud, progressive Wet'suwet'en dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of our culture, traditions and territories, working as one for the betterment of all.*

# TITLE & RIGHTS STRATEGY

LED BY SATSAN (DR. HERB GEORGE)



The Office of the Wet'suwet'en (OW) was established as a direct result of the Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa court case; a landmark decision that affirmed our Dinī ze' and Ts'akē ze' (Hereditary Chiefs') authority, Wet'suwet'en title, and the integrity of our traditional governance system.

This was more than a legal victory. For the Wet'suwet'en, it was a declaration of who we are: niwh'it'en (the people of the land). The Supreme Court of Canada's 1997 decision in Delgamuukw v. British Columbia affirmed that Aboriginal title exists and that the Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan legal systems and oral histories are valid and integral to Canadian law. Our yintah is not simply land to be managed or negotiated, it is the heart of our identity and governance.

The intent behind the creation of the Office was to support our hereditary leadership and provide a vehicle to move forward on matters of Wet'suwet'en rights and title. Initially, the Office entered into the BC Treaty Process to explore that path. However, after many years of community engagement and data gathering, our Nation made the collective decision that the treaty process was not in alignment with Wet'suwet'en values, anuk 'nu'at'en (laws), and governance.

Since then, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en has functioned under the BC Societies Act to deliver programs and services that support our members, families, and communities.

## RETURNING TO OUR ORIGINAL INTENT

On July 31, 2025, at 1:20 pm, the Dinī ze' and Ts'akē ze' made a historic and unified decision to return the Office of the Wet'suwet'en to its original intent as envisioned in the Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa court case. This decision reaffirms our commitment to uphold and implement our hereditary governance system, strengthen our Yex (Houses), and continue the work toward full recognition and exercise of Wet'suwet'en title and jurisdiction.

This moment marks a turning point in our Nation's history. While the Office has delivered important programs and services under the BC Societies Act, this renewed direction realigns us with the purpose defined by our hereditary leadership during Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa: to advance Wet'suwet'en title and rights in accordance with our anuk 'nu'at'en (laws) and traditional governance.

The decision also reflects decades of work carried by Dinī ze', Ts'akē ze', staff, community members, and allies. It is not a departure from this work, but a return to the kungax (the vision, voice, and songs of our Yex) ensuring that the foundation of our governance remains true to the teachings of our niwhts'ide'nī (ancestors).

### Title & Rights Strategy

At the direction of the Dinī ze' and Ts'akē ze', Satsan (Dr. Herb George) is leading the Title & Rights Strategy to advance the recognition and implementation of Wet'suwet'en title and jurisdiction. This strategy builds upon the foundation of Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa and ensures that our hereditary governance system, Houses, and laws remain at the center of all negotiations and decision-making. It is a path grounded in Wet'suwet'en values, history, and authority, carrying forward the vision of our niwhts'ide'nī (ancestors).





# GOVERNANCE BOARD



- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Dinī ze' Woos         | Frank Alec       |
| Dinī ze' Kloum Khun   | Alphonse Gagnon  |
| Dinī ze' Smogelgem    | Warner Naziel    |
| Dinī ze' Caspit       | Patrick Morris   |
| Tsakē ze' Madeek      | Sheri Green      |
| Tsakē ze' Legiiboo    | Dolores Bazil    |
| Tsakē ze' Wila'at     | Sue Alfred       |
| Tsakē ze' Ahkot       | Darlene VanTunen |
| Dinī ze' Knebeas      | Warner William   |
| Dinī ze' Gisday'wa    | Fred Tom         |
| Dinī ze' Wha Dha T'se | Andrew Tom       |
| Dinī ze' Dži Ggot     | Ron Austin       |
| Dinī ze' Neekupdeh    | Deron George     |
| Dinī ze' Hagwilnegh   | Ron Mitchell     |

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Dini ze Dzi Ggot, Ron Austin

The work carried out by the thirteen (13) House Chiefs of our five (5) Clans continues to be rooted in our existence on the land. The Chiefs provide direction to staff on natural resources, fisheries, and human & social services programs. Above all, governance remains the primary role of our Chiefs.

Our membership looks to the Chiefs for leadership in addressing the many impacts on the Wet'suwet'en traditional territories. From municipal, regional, provincial, and federal governments, this office takes on a significant workload to ensure concerns affecting our existence and rights to the territories are addressed. Our goals continue to uphold the human, social, political, and economic interests of the Wet'suwet'en people.

As Wet'suwet'en, we have always stood firm in land management and protection. Most importantly, we continue to take a stand on critical land decision matters. This work is not without challenges, but with the continued support of our members, it will move forward. Fisheries remain another inherent right we must protect. With the assistance of the Canyon Committees, staff, and our members, we were able to celebrate another successful fish run. While fish supply depends on abundance, we were fortunate this year to share with many families across our communities.

We have also continued to expand services in human and social development. In particular, we are building a Wet'suwet'en-led program, Anuk Nu' At'en Ba'glh'iyi z'ilhdic (ANABIP). This area remains a challenge, but it is vital that we draw on our family lineage and strengthen this work through our own Wet'suwet'en laws and traditions, ensuring strong and healthy families for the future.

Our commitment remains to the betterment of all. Through our vision, we encourage all members to support their Chiefs and delegates, whether by serving on committees or attending meetings for their families.

In the year ahead, I encourage all workers, Chiefs, and Clans to collaborate and improve our systems in every way possible. Our communities extend from François Lake to Witset, and our lineage binds us together. If we are to move forward as a people, we must formalize our relationships through our governance structures. Our future generations depend on us.

In closing, I extend my appreciation to all the Chiefs, staff, and members of the Wet'suwet'en for their dedication and continued support.

*Dini ze Dzi Ggot – President*

*Ron Austin*



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

It is an honor to present this report in my new role as Executive Director, following my transition from Human & Social Services Manager earlier this year. Since April 2025, I have had the privilege of serving in this capacity, carrying forward the vision of our Hereditary Chiefs, our Board, and our nation.



I want to begin by extending my sincere gratitude to David de Wit, who provided steady leadership as Acting Executive Director prior to my appointment. His service during a period of transition ensured continuity and stability for our Nation and organization, and I thank him for his dedication and contributions.

As I step into this new role, I do so not only as a professional but as a Wet'suwet'en woman. My traditional name is Tse Ggit Tsakë (Woman on Top a Flat Rock) of the Laksilyu Clan. I am the eldest child of Knedebeas, Warner William and, Hadakamih Christine William. These teachings and responsibilities guide me in the work I do each day and remind me of the importance of serving with balance, humility, and accountability.

## **My focus as Executive Director has included:**

Strengthening accountability and communication across teams, ensuring our work remains transparent, coordinated, and aligned with Wet'suwet'en values.

Supporting staff and program evaluations to better serve children, families, and communities.

Advancing Title & Rights priorities by ensuring Wet'suwet'en voices are respected in regional and provincial forums.

Representing the Office of the Wet'suwet'en on community safety and wellbeing initiatives, creating pathways for solution-based outcomes that reflect our jurisdiction and responsibilities.

This transition is not just a professional milestone but also a sacred responsibility. I am committed to ensuring that the Office of the Wet'suwet'en continues to stand as a strong and united organization, one that honours our niwhts'ide'ni (ancestors), serves our present needs, and creates a thriving future for generations to come.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Board, our Hereditary Chiefs, and all of our staff for your ongoing support, guidance, and trust. Together, we will continue to walk forward in unity, strengthening our Nation from the ground up.

Respectfully submitted

*Sherry McKinnon*

**Sherry McKinnon, BSW** Executive Director

# ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE DEPARTMENT

## Executive Director

**Sherry McKinnon, Laksilyu Clan**

As Executive Director, Sherry works closely with the Board of Directors to ensure the organization continues to move toward its mission and long-term vision for the Wet'suwet'en Nation. Her role is to provide direction, support, and accountability across all areas of the organization — from programs and staff development to strategic financial planning. Sherry's leadership helps guide the team in becoming stronger and more self-reliant as an organization.

## Human Resources & Office Coordinator

**Monica Michell, CIHRP, CAPA, Tsayu Clan**

**Start Date: January 2025**

Monica joined the Administration team to strengthen our Human Resources supports and to ensure our policies and systems reflect the needs of today and tomorrow. She has been working on updating historical personnel files, reviewing our human resource policy, and ensuring our compensation scales are fair and current. Monica is especially focused on performance coaching and creating learning and development opportunities for staff, helping to grow confidence and capacity across the team.

## External Finance Advisor

**Lorna Wendling**

Lorna has been supporting the Society with her financial expertise, especially through some of the biggest transitions we have made in recent years. She guided the team through the implementation of our new Payworks payroll system, which allows staff to access timesheets, leave requests, and paystubs online. She also supported the selection and roll-out of Sage Intacct accounting software, which officially went live October 1, 2024. This was a major project that involved the patience and hard work of the whole team, and it has set us up with better reporting, digitization, and internal controls for the future.

## Jr Finance Controller

**Sonya Lee Michell, Tsayu Clan**

**Start Date: January 2018**

Sonya's journey with the Office of the Wet'suwet'en started

as the on-call receptionist. Through hard work and dedication, she grew into the role of Finance Clerk and has now stepped into her new position as Junior Finance Controller. Sonya has been with the organization for over 6 years, covering payroll and other financial operations. She is passionate about supporting the Finance Department's growth and has been key in helping with the transition to new financial systems.

## Finance Clerk II – Accounts Payable

**Riley McKinnon, Laksilyu Clan**

Riley joined the team in 2024 and quickly took on responsibility for accounts payable. Riley ensures payments are handled smoothly and accurately and supports other areas of finance when needed. By stepping into this role, Riley has helped balance responsibilities within the finance team, giving others space to focus on payroll and broader accounting work.

## Communications/IT Supports

**James Gallant**

James has been part of the team for three years, supporting both communications and technology needs. His role includes managing the Office of the Wet'suwet'en's website, social media, and digital accounts, while also upgrading IT systems to make things more secure and user-friendly for staff. Over the years, James has:

- Improved the security and management of fuel cards and staff cellphones
- Centralized fleet vehicle insurance policies
- Reduced recruitment costs while increasing applicants through a better Indeed job portal
- Assisted with the setup of our new digital accounting system and internal server
- Upgraded office spaces and boardrooms for better meetings and remote conferencing
- James is now leading the work of rewriting the website with modern tools and introducing new IT practices to strengthen digital security and daily operations.

## Hereditary Chiefs Secretariat

**Barb Seredocka**

**Start Date: February 2024 (Natural Resource Admin), July 2024 (Chiefs Secretariat)**

Barb first joined as the Natural Resource Administrator but was soon asked to step in as Chiefs Secretariat while the team was short-staffed. She fell in love with the role, the staff, and

especially the relationships with the Hereditary Chiefs. When the position became available permanently, Barb was eager to continue. She has been carrying forward the important work of her predecessor Judy Walton, ensuring meetings, travel, and schedules are managed, while supporting the Chiefs in their governance responsibilities. Barb shares that every day she feels grateful to work with such amazing people.

## Main Office Receptionist

**Phillistine Olson, Laksilyu Clan**

Phillistine is often the first face people see when they visit the Office of the Wet'suwet'en. She provides reception services, supports all departments, and helps keep the office running smoothly. Her role ensures visitors feel welcomed and staff have the support they need.

## Key Accomplishments

- Successfully implemented Payworks payroll system, moving HR records and pay to a secure digital platform.
- Launched Sage Intacct accounting system in October 2024, bringing stronger financial reporting and digitization.
- Established a Finance & Audit Committee to review and advise on key financial issues.
- Completed a new Human Resource Policy Manual and began updates to the Finance Policy Manual.
- Successfully completed the 2025 fiscal year audit during a year of major system changes.
- Introduced performance coaching, updated compensation scales, and supported staff professional development.
- Improved IT infrastructure, including a new internal server, upgraded office spaces, and stronger digital security.

## Future Priorities

- Streamlining the annual budgeting and workplan process.
- Further developing Sage Intacct dashboards and reporting tools.
- Completing the Finance Policy Manual and creating a new Investment Policy.
- Continuing to build HR supports, including fair compensation and staff development plans.
- Expanding IT tools and systems to keep staff secure and connected.



# SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

## **SOCIAL SERVICES**

**HSS Manager: Sherry McKinnon**

The Social Services Department (previously known as Human and Social Services) is a source of holistic care and support within our Wet'suwet'en communities. It encompasses the Early Childhood Development Program, Anuk Nu'At'en Ba'glh'iyi z'ilhdic (ANABIP) Family Services and Prevention Program, and the Gitxsan & Wet'suwet'en Unlocking Aboriginal Justice (GWUAJ) Program. Our department is committed to improving the quality of life for all we serve.

In our pursuit of comprehensive well-being, we offer a range of services including family support, parental education, youth and elder support. Each program is deeply rooted in Wet'suwet'en culture, ensuring a meaningful connection to our heritage.

Our dedicated staff brings genuine commitment to every aspect of our services, fostering an environment of care, understanding, and empowerment. Join us in this collaborative journey toward building stronger, more resilient communities—where the spirit of Wet'suwet'en culture is celebrated and the quality of life is elevated for all.

### **Programs Under the Social Services Department**

ANABIP Program

Urban ANABIP Prevention Program

Gitxsan & Wet'suwet'en Unlocking Aboriginal Justice

Early Childhood Development

# Social Services

## **Anuk Nu'At'en Ba'glh'iyi z'ilhdic (ANABIP)**

### **Family Services & Prevention Program**

**Program Coordinator:** Diana Vantunen

**Administrative Assistant:** Megan Mitchell

**Frontline Workers:** Julie Vantunen, Jeremy Dumont, Joanne Mitchell, Russell Lewis Jr.

**Number of Staff:** 6

**Program Funded By:** MCFD

Rooted in Wet'suwet'en governance, customs, values, and laws, ANABIP provides culturally relevant services to the communities of Smithers, Witset, and Hagwilget. While ANABIP is not a Wet'suwet'en Delegated Agency, ongoing negotiations are underway to reclaim child welfare jurisdiction. Child protection roles and responsibilities currently remain with MCFD.

ANABIP balances community education with direct family support, focusing on a select number of families to refine processes alongside cultural experts. The program also offers community-wide cultural education opportunities, such as workshops and mock ANABIP processes, contributing to broader cultural enrichment.

### **Urban ANABIP Family Services & Prevention Program**

**Program Coordinator:** Trish Naziel

**Cultural Planner:** Alicia Michell

**Frontline Workers:**

**Vancouver:** , Dylan Michell, Vanessa Euverman

**Prince George:** Bonita Seymour Howard-

Gibbon, Kari Ann Hay, Janeane Pascale, Nathan

Blackler **Burns Lake:** Vacant

**Number of Staff:** 8

**Program Funded By:** MCFD

The Urban ANABIP Program mirrors the core principles of ANABIP, extending culturally relevant services to families in the interior and southern regions of British Columbia. It is grounded in Wet'suwet'en governance, customs, values, and laws.

Although not a Delegated Agency, the program is actively engaged in negotiations to reclaim child welfare jurisdiction. Child protection responsibilities remain with MCFD. The Urban ANABIP Program works closely with cultural experts to maintain a strong cultural focus and provides community-wide cultural education opportunities to ensure families in urban areas benefit from ANABIP's cultural enrichment.

## **GITXSAN & WET'SUWET'EN UNLOCKING ABORIGINAL JUSTICE (program of HSS)**

**Program Coordinator:** Lisa Mowatt

**Aboriginal Justice Worker:** Marilyn Wright

**Youth & Victim Justice Workers:** Ross McRae & Ashley Vantunen **Number of Staff:** 4

**Annual Budget:** To be completed

**Program Funded By:** Department of Justice, MCFD, and Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General

The Gitxsan & Wet'suwet'en Unlocking Aboriginal Justice program provides a holistic and restorative approach to justice for our Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en members, deeply rooted in our cultural traditions. Our program embodies restorative justice principles, focusing on prevention, intervention, rehabilitation, and support.

In alignment with restorative justice values, we emphasize repairing harm, promoting healing, and fostering meaningful connections within our community. By integrating Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en culture and traditions, our program

seeks to address the root causes of conflicts, working towards restoring balance and harmony.

Through our restorative justice initiatives, we aim to transform the Western justice system narrative by providing a culturally sensitive alternative that prioritizes community well-being. The Gitxsan & Wet'suwet'en Unlocking Aboriginal Justice program is committed to creating a space where individuals can find healing, understanding, and resolution while upholding the values of our unique cultural identity.

## **Early Childhood Development (ECD)**

**Coordinator:** Tara McKinnon

**Family Support Worker:** Charlene Hunt

**Infant Toddler Teacher:** Dianna Johansen

**Preschool/Infant Toddler Assistant:** Jolicia

Naziel **Pre-School Assistant:** Louise Alfred

**Number of Staff:** 6 **Program Funded By:** MCFD and Aboriginal Service Innovations-Early Years (ASI)

The Early Childhood Development Program works in partnership with our families, promoting the healthy growth and development of all urban aboriginal children from preconception to six years. We encourage the entire family to work with the children to build better communication skills thus providing them higher literacy and better social skills giving them positive relationships with their peers and allowing children to mature into high self-esteem, achieving adults.

### **Licensed Infant Toddler Program:**

Operates 4 days a week, Monday-Thursday-9am-4pm There is 4 infants as per licencing

### **Licensed Preschool Program:**

Also operates 4 days a week, Monday to Thursday- 9am-4pm.

There are 16 children in the preschool program as per licensing. We have 4 of our children that

participate at Walnut Park a few hours a day to get our Pre-k's ready for the Kindergarten transition. Our students do tours of the public schools and meet the principle and kindergarten teachers and do gym time to get the feeling of the bigger schools.

### **Thomas Robinson Consulting:**

We have a worker that helps 2 of our children that need extra support in our Preschool. Peter helps is here helping 4 days a week.

### **Child Development Centre:**

We have Ellen Anderson doing monthly visits with our infant toddler program as we have 1 toddler that needs the extra support with development.

### **Elders:**

We have 3 elders that participate in our Preschool Program and Infant Toddler program 4 days a week to teach our children Wet'suwet'en language.

### **Fridays we have Parent-tot Kitchen:**

Our program provides the ingredients and our families cook a meal to enjoy together.

### **Parent groups:**

We offer parent groups three days a week. Our parents do crafts, learn different parenting styles, learning to deal with difficult behaviour, nutrition, traditional parenting with elders, self-care, harvesting food in the summer months- fish, berries, medicine harvesting. Etc.

# Natural Resources Department

**Manager:** Leanne Helkenberg

**Administrative Assistant:** Manika Wahdwa

**Project Assessment Coordinator:** Julia Onderwater

**Assistant Project Assessment Coordinator:**

Adewale Adewunmi

**Project Coordinator:** Teagan O'Shaughnessy

**Project Coordinator/GIS Specialist:** Casey

Engstrom

**Referrals Coordinator:** Vacant

## Clan Liaisons:

Gilseyhu- Theresa Lapalme

Gitdumden- Diana Wilson

Tsayu- Vacant

Laksilyu- Vacant

Laksamshu- Evangeline Alfred

**Lead Technician:** Kimberly Alec

**Environmental Technician:** Tieasha Pierre

**Environmental Technician:** Vernon Joseph

**Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum (ESI)**

**Secretariat:** Nikki Ogen

**Project Manager:** James (Jimmy) Morgan

## Department Purpose

To protect all lands and resources of Wet'suwet'en territory for the benefits of the Wet'suwet'en, develop capacity for economic development of our communities and to preserve these resources for our children and generations to come.

The Natural Resources Department is responsible for establishing an information base of the Wet'suwet'en territory, to provide updates to membership, seek direction

from the Hereditary Chiefs and liaise with the appropriate ministries and organizations in regard to land use activities.

## Key Accomplishments 2024/25

Telkwa Mining Ltd.- Tenas Coal Project Assessment Agreement

The OW NR staff, with the help of The Firelight Group, have been working with the Hereditary Chiefs, Clans and Houses on the facilitation and implementation of the Wet'suwet'en Assessment Process. Several sessions, both in-community and online, have been hosted where information has been gathered for the purpose of a Rights Impact Study, Well Being Study and a Cultural Use Study. The Wet'suwet'en Assessment Process differs from the BC Environmental Assessment Process (BCEA), which is happening concurrently, where it looks directly at how the project will impact the nation members rights to the land and its resources. The next step is for the Houses/Clans to work through the traditional decision-making process, honoring the Wet'suwet'en Anuk'nu'at'en, where the proponent, via the Project Assessment Agreement, has agreed to honor the decision.

## BC Hydro- North Coast Transmission Line Project Assessment Agreement

BC Hydro is proposing a new 500kV, 170km transmission line spanning from Glenannan to Terrace (Phase 2). The OW, Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs and BC Hydro were successful in signing a Project Assessment Agreement, where like the Tenas Coal Project, BC Hydro has agreed to the implementation of the Wet'suwet'en Assessment Process and honor the Wet'suwet'en Anuk'nu'at'en by upholding the Wet'suwet'en decision through the traditional decision-making process.

## Forest Landscape Planning Processes, Lakes Resiliency Plan and Bulkley Morice FLP

The goal of the Forest Landscape Planning processes is to develop forest license plans and land use objectives that, when implemented, will establish a resilient forested land base, conserve and facilitate cultural and ecological values, address wildfire risk, and ultimately contribute to community stability. This also includes the creation of legal objectives that will better protect Wet'suwet'en (First Nation) Values. The OW NR staff have been a part of this work from the beginning to ensure Wet'suwet'en values, via the Wet'suwet'en Territorial Stewardship Plan, management directives, stewardship documents and engagement sessions, are brought to the forefront and not an afterthought.

## Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI)- Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum (SSAF)

The Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum (SSAF) Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) is a collaborative process involving ten Skeena Nations and multiple Provincial agencies working together on environmental stewardship. The forum creates shared and trusted data through the collaboratively designed and implemented environmental monitoring of five shared values: medicinal plants, grizzly bear, fish and fish habitat, moose, and wetlands. Participating Nations include the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs, Gitksan Lax Yip Management Office, Lake Babine Nation, Witset First Nation, Office of the Wet'suwet'en (representing Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs) and Wet'suwet'en First Nation. This year SSAF has been working with proponents of major projects on incorporating SSAF values into their Cumulative Effects Assessments.

## Human Resources

NR has been successful in beginning to build our team to resource the various projects and activities. We were able to bring on another Project Coordinator and a Lead Technician to lead our team of environmental technicians. We are also bringing back Clan Liaisons to coordinate and liaise between the department and the Hereditary Chiefs Table. At the time of writing this, the department was also working on hiring an Assistant Project Assessment Coordinator, Administrative Assistant and Referrals Coordinator.

## Key Priorities for 2025/26

- Major projects- Project Assessment Agreements
- Continuing to build the Wet'suwet'en Assessment process and uphold the Wet'suwet'en decision making process
- Continued participation at the Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum
- Continued engagement at the Forest Landscape Planning tables
- Supporting Clan and House decision making processes
- Referral prioritization with Clans and House groups
- Human resourcing
- Building expertise in our environmental/technician team

## Action Plan 2025/26

### In 2025/26, the NR department will:

- Continue focusing on upholding Wet'suwet'en Anuk'nu'at'en by way of the Wet'suwet'en Assessments and supporting the Wet'suwet'en decision-making process.
- Support the Hereditary Chiefs Table by way of Clan Liaisons
- Continue to build the Natural Resource Department by building our teams in Project Management, Environmental/Technical expertise and GIS/Mapping expertise
- Build out, update and inform members on the Wet'suwet'en Territorial Stewardship Plan
- Focus on strengthening our relationship with the Fisheries and Wildlife Department by way of a Collaboration Agreement



# FISHERIES & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

**Fisheries & Wildlife Manager : Samantha Vincent**  
**Ranger: Gary Michell**

## Fisheries and Wildlife Primary Activities

Food Fish:  
 Community and Department Harvest for 2024

Sockeye	Chinook	Coho	Pink	Steelhead
3216	649	1385	3144	1349

Historical Returns for Salmon are based off estimates through the Mark and Recapture seasonal program and visual flights combined with the Nanika Snorkel.

Sockeye Returns for the last 6 years are estimated at:

	2019	2020	2021	2022:	2023	2024
<b>Sockeye:</b>	11,439	16,415	30,610	18,827	8,500	20,673
<b>Chinook:</b>	15,998	4,952	2,028	10,146	4,010	2,663
<b>Coho:</b>	14,421	13,808	14,527	39,160	70,459	27,911

## Special Projects

We would like to acknowledge and thank our partners of SkeenaWild Conservation Trust and Dr Micheal Price for their support in the following projects.

### Sockeye Recovery Project

This project started groundwork in 2020, focusing on Rebuilding the Sockeye in the Widzin Kwa. Gathering the history and studying the emigration of the Sockeye Smolts leaving Widzin Bin and tracking the adult return. Sockeye leave their spawning habitats in the river systems in the spring and live in a “nursery lake” for 1-2 years. The Smolt Project was a replication of the previous DFO project in the 60’s used to analyze emigration and nursery time periods. Widzin Bin is a glacial stream fed lake; through climate change we recognize that this watershed provides sanctuary and new habitat, protecting salmon from warming waters. Age class proportions shifted slightly. From the 1200 sockeye smolts that were caught in 2022, and 2400 in 2023, 15,000 plus in 2024. The age class proportions seem to have shifted from 50% 1-year olds and 50% 2-year-olds in the 1960’s to 80% 1-year olds and 20% 2-year-olds, though each year’s testing varies as we are still seeing a good proportion of smolts leaving at 2 years old.

Adult tracking of the Sockeye has identified the critical areas of spawning habitat, confirmed migration timing from Witset to the spawning grounds, and through scale sampling we see that the greater number of adult returns left the lake as 2-year-old smolts. This indicates that there is a higher survival rate for the Sockeye smolts that leave the lake at 2 years old vs. 1-year olds. This

nursery and holding patterns make it difficult to estimate population returns for the future. 2026’s returns could be a combination of the 2019-2020 brood.

### Indigenous Protected Conservation Area (IPCA)

The project aims to enhance Indigenous stewardship, safeguard climate-resilient salmon habitat, and identify restoration priorities for degraded critical salmon habitat. The overarching goal is to secure formal commitment for the Wet’suwet’en Nation’s proposed protected area for the upper Widzin Kwa from all levels of organization, including the Wet’suwet’en Nation, adjacent settler communities, and both the Provincial and Federal governments.

Still in the draft phase, this IPCA will focus on the Morice, Atna and Nanika Lake and river systems. It is with the utmost importance that the Wet’suwet’en Nation protect the headwaters for our Salmon. E-DNA testing throughout the upper watershed has shown that the glacial fed streams are new emerging salmon habitats.

More on this exciting new project to come! Keep an eye out for upcoming Nation Engagement Sessions focusing on the proposed IPCA!

# CHILD & FAMILY WELLNESS

## Honouring Our Ways

This year has been a time of growth, innovation, and renewal for our department. Guided by Wet'suwet'en laws and governance, we advanced key initiatives that strengthen Anuk Nuat'en (our laws), and intergovernmental relationships. Together, the Child & Family Wellness Jurisdiction work and the Honouring Our Ways (HOW) program are building a foundation for self-determined Wet'suwet'en child and family wellness. The following report highlights the progress made across programs, partnerships, and governance.

### Who We Are

Our work is anchored in Wet'suwet'en jurisdiction, supported by a dedicated team:

- Director: Kayla Mitchell
- Engagement Coordinator: maternity leave
- Cultural Alignment Advisor: Ian Michell
- Admin Assistant: Mika Supernault
- Reconnections Coordinator: sick leave
- Genealogist: Heather Harris

### Community Programs & Initiatives

- Throughout the year, we delivered and supported initiatives that strengthened connection, wellness, and identity:
- Hiring of Administration Assistant: Strengthened operations, coordination, and responsiveness.
- Kommunikit Application Launch: Expanded communications and outreach capacity.
- Unity Film Project: Advanced storytelling rooted in Wet'suwet'en ways of life.
- Sarah Panofsky (UNBC) – Bringing Our Children Back to the Home Fire: Collaboration on culturally grounded child and family wellness research.
- Youth Healing Lodge: Supported planning of a healing space rooted in Wet'suwet'en law and land.
- Smithers Skate Park Society – Community Partnership: Created recreational and leadership opportunities for Wet'suwet'en youth through community collaboration.
- DRIPA Capacity Development Meetings: Ensured Wet'suwet'en perspectives are reflected in provincial implementation of the Declaration.
- Jurisdiction Engagement Plan: Advanced Section 92.1 Wet'suwet'en jurisdiction pathways for children and families.
- Simpc Agreement – Traditional Trade: Reinforced Wet'suwet'en economic sovereignty through trade agreements.
- Victoria/Vancouver Wet'suwet'en 101 – MCFD/VACFSS: Strengthened cross-system relationships through education sessions.
- Matriarch Designation: Advanced recognition of matriarchal governance roles.
- IFOT Community of Practice: Contributed to knowledge sharing and family wellness practice development.
- ANABIP Camp support: Created space for urban

members to reconnect through community engagement and holistic wellness.

- OCOW Conference: Shared Wet'suwet'en perspectives at the Our Children Our Way provincial conference.
- Urban Bahlats: Affirmed governance and responsibilities beyond the territory.

### Child & Family Wellness Jurisdiction and HOW

The Child & Family Wellness Jurisdiction initiative and the Honouring Our Ways (HOW) program are the core of our work. Together they advance Wet'suwet'en authority at both the Nation-to-Nation and community/clan levels.

### Child & Family Wellness Jurisdiction

The Jurisdiction initiative is Nation-to-Nation in scope, advancing Section 92.1 authority over Wet'suwet'en children and families. It creates the legal and political framework for long-term, sustainable funding and recognition of Wet'suwet'en Anuk Nuat'en. Our laws are based around our matrilineal lineages, and our services are complementary in nature, ensuring no Wet'suwet'en child is left behind or falls in the cracks. Wherever jurisdictional overlap occurs, our laws have a way to work through this with wiggus.

### Honouring Our Ways (HOW) Program

HOW is rooted in Anuk Nu'at'en, Wet'suwet'en law. It operationalizes wellness through community and clan-based leadership, capacity building, and culturally grounded tools. Key activities included:

- Sustaining the Wellness Table for strategic coordination and leadership support.
- Co-creating a Wet'suwet'en Leadership Memorandum of Collaboration among hereditary and elected leaders.
- Developing dispute resolution tools.
- Undertaking prevention research and beginning draft Wet'suwet'en legislation.
- Supporting inter-nation working groups to build aligned approaches.

- Creating traditional parenting resources through engagement with knowledge holders.

The HOW program is laying the groundwork for Wet'suwet'en systems of wellness, ensuring jurisdiction is a lived reality for families and children.

### Strategic Planning and Governance Foundations

Strategic planning and governance work ensured that Jurisdiction and HOW are grounded in strong structures and community leadership.

### Technical Wellness Group (TWG) Meetings

The TWG provided a central forum for advancing work through strategic planning, advocacy for sustainable prevention funding, and the introduction of peace circle practices rooted in Wet'suwet'en ways. We hosted engagements with delegation and service providers from BC and Canada annually to educate on our governance system for the ways the laws intersect. We are actively engaged in rights recognition through equity-based relationships.

### Matriarchal Leadership

The formation of the Matriarchs group reaffirmed the matrilineal role in child and family wellness. This work emphasized youth inclusion, values-based leadership, and restoring matriarchal authority displaced by colonial systems. Matriarchs group is being re-established in regular meeting cadence this Fall.

### Acknowledgments

We extend gratitude to Wet'suwet'en matriarchs, hereditary leadership, staff, youth, and community members who guide this work. Our partnerships with universities, provincial ministries, and Indigenous organizations remain vital to our collective progress.



