

NLG-Council of Elders & Gitlaxt'aamiks Village Government

Nisga'a Elders-Youth Gathering: Bridging the Generations

October 4 – 6, 2011, Gitlaxt'aamiks Recreation Center;
Group Discussions — Day I & Day II, and Day III

The information presented in this document is for information purposes only and does not purport to represent the final word on any of the topics discussed in the above-captioned gathering.



Nisga'a Lisims Government

Booklet Prepared by Nita Morven, Researcher
[Ayuukhl Nisga'a Department](#)

Table of Contents

1. Nisga'a Identity	3
2. Language & Culture	5
- How do we preserve ...? Other Concerns (p. 9); Other possible solutions (10)	
3. <u>Adaawak</u>	13
4. <u>Xts'ihl̓niinak'amskw</u>	18
5. The Dinner Table / Feast Protocols	21
↳ Settlement & Stone-Moving Feasts	
- <i>T'il-luulak'</i> feeding family (p. 24); Host (25); Paying Cooks (26); Proper Seating (27)	
- <i>Hlimoomiskw</i> (32); Other Financial Concerns (34); Other Feast-Related Concerns (36)	
6. Simgigat & Sigidim Haanak'	40
- Roles & Responsibilities; Traditional Line of Inheritance (41);	
7. <u>Ayuuk</u>	45
- Respect (p. 46); <i>Yuuhlimk'askw</i> (47); <i>Hawahlkws</i> (49); <u>K'aats</u> (51); Other (55)	
8. Hobiye	58
9. Nisga'a Women (p. 61); Youth (62); On Leadership (66)	
10. Residential School (68); Healing (69); Spirituality (70)	
11. Nisga'a Cultural Calendar (p. 70); Feast book (71); Minutes of Gathering (72)	
12. Priorities & Recommendations (Resolutions submitted in writing)	73
13. Elders Speeches/Other	82
14. Day III: Nisga'a Youth Panel (p. 89); WILP: Healing ... (103); N.H.P. Society (107)	
Endnotes	113

Suggested Topics for Day I & II (but not restricted to following topics)

Break Out Sessions—Determining Solutions:

- Are we having too many feasts today?
- Simgigat & Sigidim Haanak'
 - Roles & responsibilities; who they are; dealing with Wilp matters, etc.
- Feast Related Concerns: *hlimoomiskw*, *t'il-luulak'* duties, *xts'ihl̓niinak'amskw*....
- Are we sincere about preserving our language?
- *Yuuhlimk'askw* – indicators that this practice is lacking ➤ *Hawahlkws*
- Nisga'a Spirituality; Hobiye; Nisga'a Women (respect/acknowledge)

- The following information reflects the two-day group discussions combined and reordered by topics.
- The tables *Re Adaawaḱ* and *Xts'iniinak'amskw* hopefully illustrate how the information may be viewed to facilitate decision-making.

NISGA'A IDENTITY

- Each of us has an identity; we belong to a “tribe” and a “Wilp”.
 - We need to understand “which tribe we are in” and “who we shouldn't be dating”.
 - We need to understand our family structure to learn who we are, and where we come from, and teach it to our children.
 - And [to keep] reinforcing it by talking and sharing.
- **Why do we have a crest system?**
 - The crest system is the foundation of our culture; it's part of our identity.
 - Crests tell the story in regard to a particular Wilp and its *ango'oskw*.
- Wilp structure is very important in our culture.
 - In Nisga'a culture, parents teach connections with family members by placing titles in front of their names, e.g., Uncle _____, Auntie _____, etc.
 - Referring to family members this way also teaches Respect.
- The uncle's responsibility to his nieces and nephews is very important.

Who are we [today]?

- [The Nisga'a] land base – has moved from “communal” to “community”.
- We've disconnected youth from our elders.
- There's a common fear of speaking Nisga'a in public; [because] it's important to know what you're talking about.
- We are being raised in both worlds—[Nisga'a and K'amksiiwaa].
- The treaty puts language and culture first, while the government is pushing it aside and putting the K'amksiiwaa way first.
- The authority of the elders [has been] diminishing ... after the treaty was implemented.
- We need to recognize the changes [to our way of life], and adapt.
 - [Researcher's note: to “adapt” effectively to change requires us to take into consideration cultural knowledge, beliefs and values.]
- Our actions are a reflection of our families. Respect comes from the home.
- Awareness – of who you are as a Nisga'a person [is important].
 - Don't forget—you were born Nisga'a.
 - You are a part of everything in the land.
 - You own one-third of the lower part of the Nass River Valley.
- It's important to keep our Nisga'a identity – our language and our culture. If we lose it, where will we be? Who will we be?

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

- We need to preserve the language; it's a major part of our identity.
- Language is integral to the survival of our culture.
- Culture is what you are born into.
- **Sim'algax** – the Nisga'a translation means “**true language**”.
- In earlier days when Nisga'a was the only language spoken, we learned to speak Nisga'a first in our homes.
 - **The home was the classroom ... it still is** – but [today] we learn English first.
 - We need to go back to our ways of teaching in the home.
- **We need to understand that we're not losing our language, we're neglecting it.**
- Rebuilding and strengthening the language and culture will lead to positive, healthy living.

How do we preserve our Language and Culture?

- Elders need to get together more often.
 - **Agendas are too long at [planned] meetings and makes for a long day, then there's not much accomplished.**
- We have to give the authority back to the elders – [by empowering them to] use our language in the homes.
- It shouldn't have to cost money to do these things. We are the Nisga'a nation and we're [a] self-governing [nation] ... and **Nisga'a language and culture is at the top of our [priority] list.**

- Nisga'a language should be taught from birth – children learn best in their early [years] – they soak up language.
- Happy to hear everyone express what is in their hearts; agree that teaching of language and culture must start in the home when children are still small.
- There should be open immersion for pre-school aged children especially in the urban areas.
- Nisga'a language should be mandatory to grade 10.
- We have Nisga'a school material required for English and other subjects. [To] learn our identity [more thoroughly],
 - **Incorporate Nisga'a language and culture in all school curricula.**
- Elders suggested inventing Nisga'a words/phrases to match how the young kids talk, i.e., *Aamhl dim wilt* – do it or else: *Dim k'ap wilt* or *K'ap dim wilt*.
- The Nisga'a Phrase Dictionary can be used as it has information that is helpful in the use of the language.
- There are many different levels of language; how did [this] come about?
- Any work regarding Nisga'a language and culture should only be done by Nisga'a people, do away with consultants.
- [Regarding the mandate of] the Nisga'a Heritage Preservation Society:
 - Their task is to vet (examine) the language—to edit, authenticate language to make sure spelling and grammar is accurate and consistent.
 - [In School District 92—Nisga'a Language and Culture Program], they are the language experts in Nisga'a pronunciation, spelling & grammar.

- **There should be a Nisga'a Language Authority.**
 - [Researcher's note: It's important to note that a resolution to this effect was put forth in the 2007 Elders Gathering; was subsequently passed with direction provided by the Executive on July 23, 2008; update required....
(copy of Executive Resolution attached).
- We have people who have obtained degrees in Nisga'a language but they are not fluent speakers, and their pronunciation is not accurate.
 - This affects spelling and grammar, and these are people who are said to be qualified to teach our children, because they've passed the language course at the local university.
- It would be helpful if fluent Nisga'a speakers would volunteer in schools to assist with proper pronunciation.
- We need to change the way the language is being taught.
- We need to go back to the telling of stories to the children; sharing stories and [life] experiences at the dinner table.
 - You absorb everything [you hear] while you're eating.
 - Focused learning [happens at the dinner table].
- What is important [is to listen].
 - To LISTEN is to LEARN. You learn from what is being said at the supper table or at the feast.
- Nisga'a [used to be] the only language spoken in feasts.
 - Only recently [did] we start using English in the feast hall ... in consideration of those who don't understand Nisga'a.
- It would be good [to go back to] using only Nisga'a, and have one or two

fluent Nisga'a people at each table [in the feast] – mentoring.

- Make the time in feasts for the person mentoring to provide explanations to the people at his/her table.
- Attending and participating in all cultural events is a way of preserving the language and culture.
 - ... Because when you listen, observe and participate, you learn.
- Even the very young are to be encouraged to attend and participate in all functions ... [they hear], learn and understand.
 - It's up to us to accommodate that [process], to make room [in our lives] for the younger people and to engage them in everything we do.
- **Mock feasts is a way to learn [and reinforce the learning of the feast] protocols.**
- To [participate in preserving] language and culture, WE need to take the initiative to [utilize and strengthen] existing programs, and to empower our elders.
- Integrate language and culture with modern teachings – outside programs.
- We need to promote the use of the Nisga'a language in our daily lives, whether it is in the workplace or in our personal lives.
 - When you make the effort to practice consistently, your confidence in using the language will increase.
- Nisga'a language should be a mandatory professional development for all Nisga'a institutions.
- In regard to Nisga'a language, it's important to know the basics so we could communicate with our elders, especially in emergency situations.

- It's said that there's a different greeting used when greeting men, than when greeting women – what is it?
- The Simgigat should designate people to visit the schools to engage with students; designate role models [to speak] on specific topics/issues.
- Education is life long – we're always learning.
- Personal time spent with elders is an opportunity to learn.
 - Acknowledge our elders.
- Life doesn't start tomorrow – it's NOW.
- **As someone who is to be an elder one day, I need “footprints” to follow.**

Other cultural matters of concern

- It's important that the Council of Elders explores options regarding land and the Ayuuk, regarding *amnigwootkw*.
 - There is confusion around land ownership or usage where a person continues to go hunting, etc., on the land that he **used to have the right to hunt on** with his father.
 - It's the Sim'oogit of the Wilp who is responsible for the land.
 - **A workshop on this would be useful for everyone.**
- Children need to learn and understand the *adaawak*, as the *adaawak* has purpose ... meaning.
- Young people need to know the importance of Fishery Bay – a book should be published regarding Fishery Bay.

- Youth are writing books for all levels of education – this should open doors for all people to start writing.
- Sample story on Fishery Bay:

I can remember, when as a youth, we used to walk with my dad from Old Aiyansh to Fishery Bay. The entire trip took us eighteen hours. We would leave Old Aiyansh at 4:00 a.m. and arrive at Fishery Bay in the evening. It would be great if we could eventually go back to doing that.

When we arrive at our host's camp, we would not just take the oolichans, and leave. We would stay and help them fish, carry and process the oolichans, we'd help to get wood, help to look after the fire and cook as well. The host would be the one to tell us when it's enough, "You have helped a lot. Take all the oolichans you want and you can leave." When we went back home, we had four 10-foot sleighs filled with sacks of oolichans, and our supplies for the trip.

Other Possible Solutions

- We should have "**Ayuukhl Nisga'a Night**" – so we're all on the same page.
- **We need a "community table" to learn about our language and culture.**
- **Families should have monthly meetings in the church;** it's an opportunity to speak to everyone, and to allow everyone to speak.
- **We should develop new ways of teaching** – use technology-to-technology; TV, radio, computer are excellent forms of communication.
 - Change the way we live. Technology and other things (other forms of change) are here, they won't go away, so we may as well make the

best of them.

- As far as technology goes, First Voices is working on a new application called “Nisga’a Language App”, which we’re hoping will be available before Christmas. This will enable Nisga’a language to be downloaded from First Voices to your Ipad, or computers.
 - **The Nisga’a Language App is here—as of January 20, 2012—and we hear the young people are downloading, and repeating....**
- Concerning our youth and language [learning in the Prince Rupert schools] – **only Ts’imsan is taught; it would be good if Nisga’a was also taught there.**
- **As a Nisga’a school teacher would like to obtain cultural resources.**
 - Very much want to teach the *Hawahlkws* in our school; to teach how to take care of food; to teach about the different stages of life in the Nisga’a way – so that students can learn the values in our traditional practices.
 - We need to have a list of all the elders who are fluent speakers and who wouldn’t mind being resource people to the youth.
 - Students utilize technology; Ayuukhl Nisga’a Department can put a list of elders on the Nisga’a website so that youth know who they can go to; also put the map of *ango’oskw* on the website....

Also take into consideration:

- [To be more understanding of ourselves] ... Residential Schools changed everything.
 - Everything seemed to have been taken away, i.e., our stories [*adaawak*],

our language, our traditional ways, our pride in 'who we are'.

- The barriers that we're encountering today stem from the residential school era – where we were punished if we spoke our language.
- Some of our relatives moved out of the community for education or employment purposes and have never returned.
 - Because they live in an English speaking environment there's no opportunity for them to continue using the Nisga'a language, and they eventually lose the ability to speak and understand it.

And there are other ways we can become more informed and stay connected to aspects of Nisga'a life as it is today:

- Use the database at our Nisga'a Eligibility and Enrolment Department to link online to fellow members in regard to *Ayuukhl Nisga'a*.
- Have workshops on the [Nisga'a] Treaty using the Treaty book – [to learn more about] the reserve lands, Core Land, community land, real estate.
 - The treaty was meant to change the nation [for the better].
 - [Instead] they stopped public education on the treaty [after] it was signed; yet they should [be enhancing] public education [to further our understanding of the treaty].
- There's also a new movement happening across Canada in regard to Churches, whereby the [*Aluugigat* / indigenous peoples] are taking back their authority within the churches.
 - There will be no more Dioceses, only area missions.

ADAAWAK

- *Adaawak* relates to our oral history, our stories, our legends, and is a crucial part of our culture; it tells about who we are as a people, our authority.

There are two types of *adaawak* – **one type pertains to families, the Wilp *adaawak*, and should only be told by the family**; the other is universal, more general, and anyone in the culture can talk about the story/legend. (Read more about *adaawak*ⁱ in endnote.)

- **It's important to revive the most important part of the feast, the [Wilp] *adaawak*.**
 - When passing on the [Sim'oogit] name, the *adaawak* regarding the *ango'oskw* /Wilp territory needs to be shared because without the *ango'oskw*, we wouldn't have names.
 - The names stem from the *adaawak* about the *ango'oskw*.

<p>1. Wilp Adaawak</p>	<p>The Wilp <i>adaawak</i> is told only by the family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [by the Sim'oogit, Sigidim Hanak' or other senior member of the respective Wilp] <hr/> <p>A problem exists here: Someone is telling another family's Wilp story/song/legend ... on the internet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This has to be monitored and set straight. <hr/> <p>The Adaawak to our names is very sacred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There's always a history – an Adaawak – to a Sim'oogit or Sigidim Hanak' name. <p>It's very important to know the significance of your Nisga'a name; it's very sacred;</p>
-------------------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Especially as it regards the Sim’oogit name which is tied to the land and everything on the land that is owned by the Sim’oogit [and his Wilp]. The <i>adaawak</i> is what draws Respect for the Sim’oogit and Sigidim Hanak’. - Even our geographic place names have an <i>adaawak</i> that explains why it is called, e.g., Gingolx – place of skulls [/scalp(s) stuck on pointed wooden posts & shown to the enemy ... by our <i>adaawak</i>].
--	--

<p>2. Creation Stories</p> <p>e.g., Txeemsim Adaawak</p> <p>& other universal / generic stories: Flood, Volcano & various teaching <i>adaawak</i></p>	<p>Document and use these <i>adaawak</i> as teaching material in schools ... to upload /or download on to computers.</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed #000;"/> <p>Stories should be published and “copyrighted” to the Nisga’a Nation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You see many books about other nations in the book stores; not many on the Nisga’a. - Publishing books makes history and it’s a statement about ‘who we are’ and what we do, how we do things and why. <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed #000;"/> <p>In response to the question posed, there is a booklet on Txeemsim entitled, <i>Origins</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This volume is part of the eight <i>Land Ownership and Occupancy Study</i> volumes (aka <i>Ayuukhl Nisga’a Volumes</i>). - Study conducted between the years 1982 – 1984, a government requirement to prove Nisga’a title to our traditional lands.
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four of the L.O.O.S. volumes were reproduced by WWN, though yet in DRAFT form. - The copyright belongs to the Nisga’a Tribal Council; now Nisga’a Lisims Government on behalf of the Nisga’a Nation.
Other	<p>An elder from Gingolx drafted a book regarding <i>adaawak</i> and it’s just sitting in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nisga’a Lisims Government should work towards publishing the book, as it is important.

3. Adaawak Protocols	Nisga’a Lisims Government Council of Elders should develop protocols so stories are authentic, and are “Nisga’a”.
	We do not want anyone, or people off the street, to be writing books which do not have authentic Nisga’a content – Nisga’a <i>Adaawak</i> .
	Only when a request is made, and permission is granted, either by Nisga’a Lisims Government or by a specific family/Wilp, can <i>adaawak</i> or other Wilp property be used.
	- We need to put a stop to the ‘open use’ of things that are sacred.
	When using <i>adaawak</i>, acknowledge the family that it comes from, the Sim’oogit, the <i>pdeek</i> (clan/tribe), the <i>wilnaat’ahl</i> (family/Wilp), etc.

Adaawak
Protocols
cont'd

The *Lim'ooý* (dirge) is part of the Adaawak & Wilp property.

- It was shared that one was searching the web (internet) and came across a song – it was a *lim'ooý* – and **not just anyone can sing the *lim'ooý*.**
- It was on the web for everyone to see, and yet **it's very sacred.**

It's important to remember to acknowledge the song writer /the composer.

When singing [e.g., in ceremonial dance performances], **acknowledge whose song you're singing**, and whether or not permission was granted, **and from whom you obtained that permission.**

No longer should we accept that permission is granted by talking to a couple of Simgigat (chiefs) in the Wilp/House.

- **Permission has to be granted by the family/Wilp through a family/Wilp meeting** – that way everyone knows and agrees to it.
- It's important to invite all family members to, and encourage them to participate in [family/Wilp] meetings.

The tribal feast is where the law should be laid down so that we don't make mistakes.

- We learn from our mothers and her family. Some of our laws and ways are universal, and others are specific to the family/Wilp.

<p>4. Funding</p>	<p>We should request funding from Nisga’a Lisims Government so that workshops can be available where people can learn the <i>Adaawak</i>.</p>
<p>/purpose</p>	<p>The concern is that when an elder dies, the <i>adaawak</i> goes with him/or her. Knowledge is lost and diminishes each year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some of us have talked to people who should know the <i>adaawak</i>, and they don’t.

<p>5. Other Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There’s a book of <i>adaawak</i> entitled, Tsimshian Narratives; found [<i>adaawak</i>] in above book ... written by grandfather. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take everything that is Nisga’a and labeled Tsimshian – and change it back to Nisga’a. - Barbeau, in his time, took all nations and put them together, and labeled everything Tsimshian or Tsimshian-Nisga’a. - [Franz Boas was the first <u>K</u>’amksiiwaa Anthropologist to do this, referring to the “Language Family” of the Nisga’a, Ts’imsan proper, and Gitksan as “Tsimshianic”. It’s the misinterpretation of this labeling -- especially by our neighbours -- that is concerning. (Late) Frank Calder used to refer to this as the “Ts’imsan Misnomer”.] <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed #000;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerning Artists in Vancouver who are Nisga’a; they have their own Wilp, and they’re doing Nisga’a art—not Tsimshian ... Nisga’a is Nisga’a.
--

XTS'IHLNIINAK'AMSKW

➤ “**Clear Direction**” is needed in regard to Xts'ihl̄niinak'amskw

1. Xts'ihl̄niinak'amskw

The giving of gifts to the members of the tribe hosting the *Mak'am-Lo'op* – it provides encouragement; helps to minimize the burden of the work and encourages “working together”.

2. **Traditionally** (six comments)

- Only the wives of the host Simgigat used to xts'ihl̄niinak'amskw and they didn't each do the whole hall or the whole tribe.
 - The first Sigidim Hanak' would give out her gifts, the next Sigidim Hanak' carries on from where the last one left off.
- Only the “wives of the hosts” xts'ihl̄niinak'amskw:
 - The *Sim'oogit's* wife starts, handing out her gifts; when she's finished,
 - The [the wife of the] next-in-line continues from where she left off, and so on.
- The host's spouse would give out her gifts first, and the next person carries on from where she left off.
- Tribal feasts were much different in the olden days; less materialistic therefore less expensive.
 - A group participant recalled an aunt giving out gifts [in the tribal] feast: She had a big bolt of material and would go from table to table giving out an “arm's length” of material to the ladies.

“Traditionally” cont’d

- In the olden days the ladies who x̣ts’ihl̄niinak’amskw used to buy a bolt of material and give each lady about 3 yards. When she’s done, the next lady gives out towels – each lady thereafter gives out 25 towels.
-
- In tribal feasts years ago, ladies gave out an “arms-length” (a yard) of fabric to each woman—measuring from tip of nose to fingertips, and then ripping....
 - By x̣ts’ihl̄niinak’amskw in the olden days, one lady would go as far as she could in giving out her gifts, and where she left off, the next lady would start.

3. Concerns/Observations/Comments

... to take into consideration when deciding on a directive to provide the Nisga’a nation.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>X̣ts’ihl̄niinak’amskw</u> is getting out of hand. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggest that we go back to the way things were done; it must be corrected now ... or what kind of future will our grandchildren have. |
|--|--|

- Concern was raised regarding the extravagance of gifts given at tribal feasts.

- It’s been said that it’s getting out of hand and burdensome because ladies are starting to give out expensive gifts and it makes others feel obligated to do likewise.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did feasts become so commercialized? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will we ever go back to the way things used to be carried out? |
|---|---|

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The [traditional] practice must be revived. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only give out the bare essentials and one item only. - Only do the best you can with what you have.
<p>4. Other Comments....</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Xts'ihlñiinak'amskw</u> needs to be planned way ahead of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It can be used as an opportunity to teach someone younger. - One lady's mother-in-law stated that it's OK to pair up when you <u>xts'ihlñiinak'amskw</u>.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Xts'ihlñiinak'amskw</u> is being abused now. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some people who receive gifts don't follow through with their duties the next day.
<p>5. Women's Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to recognize and acknowledge help from the spouse – these women expend large amounts of money to help their husbands when there's a feast and they're not acknowledged, even just a tiny bit. • It's taken for granted that they're going to give away all the money that they give, because we've moved away from the traditional way of supporting the host clan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [The traditional acknowledgement is usually expressed to the spouses, in our language, by the Sigidim-nak'; perhaps, this observation stems from not understanding our language.] 	

NOTE: In 1999 a directive re Xts'ihlñiinak'amskw was issued in the form a memo....

THE DINNER TABLE

- The greatest thing we have lost in our way of life is the Dinner Table; it's been replaced by TV, sports, computers, etc.
 - Loss of the dinner table means loss of family togetherness; “family” is the root of culture....
- **Whenever we have work to do as a Wilp, we eat together—this means the Dinner Table is still there.**

FEAST PROTOCOLS

Yukw

- There was a question about the different names for feasts: *Yukw*, *Mak'a'am-lo'op*, *Haniitxooxgum Ganwiyitkw* – which is it?
 - **Why do we have so many terms for our feasts today?**
 - The *Yukw* is the Feast of Law.
- *Haniitxooxgum Ganwiyitkw* [feast of grieving/sorrow]; it is not a celebration. *Mak'a'am-Lo'op* is the stone-moving feast and it marks the end of grieving.
 - Revisit old protocols and distinguish protocols between the two types of feasts.
- It's important that we know the protocols between the “Yukw” and “stone-moving” feast; make the distinction and teach it, and learn.
- *Yukw* is a time for grieving, and we shouldn't mix anything else within this event. That is:
 - i. **refrain from visiting** and getting reacquainted [with family and friends] in the *Yukw*, it's distracting; and ii. **no** surprises in this feast such as **birthday announcements**, etc.

- In some cultures, there's no clapping at all in the settlement feast.

Settlement & Stone-Moving Feasts

- The Simgigat used to have the authority to address any matters in the feast hall. We don't hear this anymore. How can we bring this back?
- Are feasts becoming a financial burden today?

.....

- The question might rather be, "Why are we having settlement feasts?"
 - The discussion was that feasts are held to honor the *t'il-luulak'*, the undertakers; if we stop having feasts we will also be stopping how we honor the *t'il-luulak'*.
 - The *t'il-luulak'* used to build the casket for the deceased. The settlement feast is to acknowledge the work of the *t'il-luulak'*.
- **Are we having too many feasts?**
 - Feasting is part of our system; it's the foundation of our culture.
 - Changing how we do feasts or changing how often we have feasts would mean changing our *Ayuuk*, and we cannot change our *Ayuuk*.
- In regard to settlement and stone-moving feasts, **did our ancestors have feasts for [each and] everyone**, or was it just for the Simgigat/Chieftains and Sigidim Haanak'/Matriarchs?
 - For the Sim'oogit/Chief; because the Sim'oogit name was the title to the land and in those days, a totem pole was raised; we did not have gravestones.
 - Many changes occurred after contact with the *K'amksiiwaa*.

- Even in the early days after contact, they did not have a stone-moving feast for each and every Wilp member; only when the Sim'oogit died.
- Feasts can be a lot of expense but it doesn't have to be.
 - **What we can do as a nation is exercise reasonableness in regard to financial contributions given at a feast, tone it down, simplify it.**
- [It's important to also take into consideration, that] elders i.) stockpile all the goods that they accumulate in their lives and they ii.) save money to cover the expense at their own funeral ... rather than going out and enjoying their lives which they should be doing, now that they're finished their work.
 - They do this so that their descendants don't have to expend too much on their account when they die, and it's **because our feasts have gone to such an extreme** – the elders don't take time to relax.
- Another response to the question, 'are we having too many feasts?' was "Yes, agree we are being burdened with too many feasts."
 - Recall a time when the stone-moving was only for the Sim'oogit. Since gravestones became more accessible, things have changed.
 - More public education is needed to explain how everything works.
- Recommend having "I" stone-moving feast, possibly every 2 - 3 years—when feast is for Sim'oogit.
 - It seems that we always want to get everything over with; no thought given as to the "underlying meaning" in why we do things the way we do, as in our feasts.

- Support moving gravestones together, by Wilp;
 - If Sim'oogit advises Wilp that this is what we must do, we have to listen ... is the reason Sim'oogit is spokesperson.
- It was noted in another group that **“we are having too many feasts.”**
- Another response to the question, “Are we having too many feasts?”
 - Perhaps when families are from the same Wilp the feasts should be combined.
- In another group, concern was raised that Huwilp are combining “stone-movings” into one feast so that one Wilp isn't having so many feasts in one season. It waters down the Respect that we are paying to the individuals.

Also:

- With respect to *t'il-luulak'* duties,
 - Have mixed feelings regarding the undertakers – the *t'il-luulak'* – **feeding the [bereaved] family.**
 - In the past, across the old village, they did [prepare meals and] feed the family ... but **they did not have to provide groceries.**
 - Is correct; *t'il-luulak'* don't have to bring the food ... just prepare the meals.
 - Also, when there was a death, traditionally, only 5 - 6 *Wilksilaks* were chosen to be *t'il-luulak'*. [Also meaning that these were the only ones required to be compensated in the feast].
- We all need to understand the importance of participating in and supporting all cultural events, so that when it is our time to host a traditional event, we will then be supported in return.

- All it takes is interest, and we should all challenge each other to learn by practicing together.
- In the Nisga'a nation, no family stands alone, and that's the meaning and the effect of *k'e'em-goot* and *sayt-k'ilim-goot*.
 - The tribe, the Wilp and family are always there to help.
 - It's said that if you support others by attending everything and make yourself visible in society, people will see that and they'll be more inclined to support you.
- Members of the tribe support the Wilp that is hosting the feast. For example:
 - If the feast is for a member of the Wolf clan, the Wolf tribe attends and contributes to the feast in any way they can (setting and serving tables, financial contributions, handing out envelopes, etc).
 - This is to show *k'e'em-goot* (compassion) and *sayt-k'ilim-goot* (of one heart), and the help is always returned.

Traditionally:

- **The person who hosted a feast supplied everything. In order for him to take the [Sim'oogit] name and the angoskw, he must purchase the [grave]stone and bear the cost of the feast – you don't just get a name, you earn it.**
 - And only the host read the names and amounts of the help he gets; [Because in the past, as **Host who shouldered the cost of the gravestone of his predecessor & feast expenses ... he was also the only one who received help** – often in the form of food].

- Things have changed; today the host's Wilp members contribute to the cost of the feast.
- The question raised from this discussion is, **“Should we go back to the way things used to be, or leave it the way it is—that is, continue to have [a number of] individual hosts?”**
- **In the olden days settlement feasts were held for Simgigat or Sigidim Haanak’ only.**
- **We did not have a big settlement feast when young children died – the family would provide a meal and settle the expense in their home.** Family members and sometimes tribe members brought food.
- When there was a death of a child, there wasn’t a big feast. The settlement of expenses was done in the home.
- Carrying out our feasts “as it was done in the past” provided meaning in our lives, and it made us feel good about ourselves, our accomplishments.

Paying Cooks

- The Host/Sim’oogit does not go out and ask for help; he does everything himself.
 - As hosts, paying our cooks is our own responsibility; it does not come out of the dish (feast bowl).
- Cooks should be paid by the people who ask them to cook, not out of the pot (feast bowl).
- The host selects members of his *Wilksilaks* (paternal family) to cook; therefore,
 - The host must be prepared to pay his cooks out of his own pocket as

that is the way it was done traditionally.

- Today, the cooks are paid out of the money contributed by the tribe and it's not right.

Proper Seating Arrangements

- **How do we know who the real Simgigat (chiefs) & Sigidim Haanak' (matriarchs) are?**
 - This goes back to the self-proclaimed Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak'.
 - Sometimes people who are not Simgigat or Sigidim Haanak' are seated at the Simgigat / Sigidim Haanak' table;
 - Because when the guest arrives at the door, the person [announcing in the guests] “asks” ... if he/she is a Sim'oogit/or Sigidim-nak', and
 - Sometimes the person says “yes” when it isn't so by our Ayuuk.
- We are trying to correct what is happening in our feasts.
 - So how do we handle a situation when a [guest], upon arrival at the feast door, states that he/she is a Sim'oogit / or Sigidim Hanak'?
- Learn who the Da-googam Simgigat are—the first/or head Simgigat; there are:
 - i) Head Chiefs (Ksgoogam Simgigat / Senior Chieftains) in each pdeek (clan/tribe); and
 - ii) sub-chiefs.
- Traditionally, in the longhouse, the Sim'oogit would seat his *Luu-Anyee* (Successor-to-be) in front of him during the feast.
 - The *Luu-Anyee* was the [next] eldest brother/or eldest nephew of the Sim'oogit.

- [The eldest nephew of the Sim'oogit is the eldest son of the eldest sister of the Sim'oogit.]
- Today, we need to make sure that the person is ready for the name.
- This can also be corrected within our tribal feasts. Take the time to explain to tribal members who the Simgigat are.
- It is very confusing today, as to whom we should refer to as the Sim'oogit in some of our Houses; for example,
 - We know who the Head of our clan is—our eldest uncle is;
 - We know who the Sim'oogit is of our Wilp in the village where we live, but our Sim'oogit has not lived in the valley for some time;
 - Added to this confusion are other changes that have occurred.
- **The seating of Sigidim Haanak'** is loopy goopy.
 - There's no recognition of the achievements of these women who have invested a lot of time and money transmitting the culture to the younger people and helping their husbands and their family. **They're just seated anywhere.**
 - It was acknowledged in the group discussion that K'eexkw corrects this when they have their feasts. Others should follow this practice.
- In one instance, as it was shared, the daughter of a *Sigidim Hanak'* was seated at the Sigidim Haanak' table with her mother. **This made the daughter uncomfortable.**
- When a mom walks in with her young daughter, they are both seated with the young people.

- **Who should be correcting this?**
- Improper seating causes conflict and hurt feelings.
- Sigidim Haanak' are given the same recognition as Simgigat, **in books that is.**
- The seating of a Sigidim Hanak' should be consistent with the seating of the Sim'oogit. For example,
 - The *Sim'oogit's* spouse would be seated at the Sigidim Haanak' table.
- Some host tribes (Laxgibuu – K'eexkw) note that when a Sim'oogit is not in attendance at a feast, the host will go to the nephew [-in-line / *luu-anyee*] and seat him at the Simgigat table.
 - The Host Sim'oogit walks around the feast hall and if he sees it necessary, he will move people around according to rank.

Suggested Solutions

Note in the following comments: Workshops; utilize tribal feasts for teaching & learning Ayuuk; utilize Mentoring/Grooming approach in the feast hall; provide list of Simgigat & Sigidim Haanak' Names to each Wilp; develop Template for Seating arrangements.

- It's been stated that the seating of Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' is a learning process, with **the teachers being the older more knowledgeable ones** who have the bigger responsibility at the door. And that
 - Each community has a different procedure, but the protocol is the same.
- Suggestion to coordinate **Workshops** so that we can learn proper seating arrangements at feasts, and [learn other] feast protocols.

- Revisit and revitalize the “original” protocols. It’s important to implement the protocols to ensure proper seating of Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak’.
 - **Workshops** are a very effective way to teaching and learning.
- A person has to earn the right to be seated at the Simgigat or Sigidim Haanak’ table.
 - This protocol should be discussed at the tribal feast; reinforce *Ayuukhl Nisga’a* at the tribal feast ... as we cannot speak into the business of another Pdeek (tribe/clan) / Wilp (House).
- **Tribal feasts are also the place where we teach protocols.**
 - Encourage all Wilp members to attend tribal feasts. Learn the proper protocols.
- Need more education in our tribal feasts to address concerns re confusion as to who the real Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak’ are.
- There should be a list of Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak’ on the NNKN website, including a list of *ango’oskw*, and a list of *hawahlkws*.
- It’s imperative that everyone is seated in the proper place in the feast hall.
 - Suggested solution is to **develop a template of proper seating arrangements and distribute to all feast halls.**
- The person who greets and announces in the guests at the feast hall **must be knowledgeable in regard to “who is a Sim’oogit” and “who is a Sigidim Hanak’ ”.**
 - Maybe have two Simgigat at the door to greet and announce guests in.
- For the purpose of grooming, mentoring the younger men [is a way to learn the proper seating procedures in the feast]—by having the men work

side by side with the person who is announcing in the people as they enter the feast hall.

- **Mentoring** [is also a way to] help the **younger men learn the Nisga'a names and family structure.**
- [Being that] the strength of the Wilp is demonstrated through proper feast protocol & structure.
 - It was discussed that in order to advance a **Wilp**, each **Wilp** would **pick the strongest Wilp members to play key roles in feasts.**
- It was suggested that **when a Sigidim-nak' is announced in, into the feast hall, her Nisga'a/ Sigidim-nak' name should [always] be announced as well, just like they do with the Simgigat.**
 - This would also help to put a stop to those who are self-proclaimed **Sigidim Haanak'** because we are all familiar with the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' names.
- If a daughter comes in with her mother/or grandmother she should not be seated with the mother/grandmother at the **Sigidim Haanak'** table. This must be corrected.
 - Maybe **have the Sigidim-nak' from the host Wilp / tribe at the door who would escort the guest Sigidim-nak' to her seat.**
- **It was suggested that a database of Nisga'a names be developed and updated, and made available to all Nisga'a people. It's a good learning tool.**
- It was suggested that **each Wilp have a list Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' names.**

- An elder who taught at NESS, shared that they taught students the protocol for seating people in the feast; they practiced the Nisga'a prayer; the speech at the feast – “*haagwil ditxooxkwsim*” – hands-on learning. We practiced until the day of the feast event we were preparing for.
 - **Suggestion that this continue to be taught in the school.**

Also consider:

- In regard to seating Sigidim Haanak' in feasts, [a possible solution to the following circumstance]:
 - Some elders need someone with them at all times, not only to assist them as they're entering the feast hall but to be by their side always.
 - It could be a misperception, a misunderstanding that the younger person wants to sit with the elder [at the Sigidim Haanak' table].
- [Because] it is our responsibility to know “who our Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' are”, and “who our tribal members are,” it does help
 - **When one attends all cultural functions; we begin to learn who's who and proper protocols by “observing” and “listening”.**
- For the purpose of teaching and mentoring the younger generation in regard to feast protocols and purpose, they should be seated with the elders at the feast /[or tribal feast].
- Like the dinner table [at home], feasts are a place to *yuuhlimk'askw*—to give advice.

Hlimoomiskw – financial “help” for feasts

- It's been said that some are abusing the practice of *hlimoomiskw* intended for feasts. How do we correct this?

- It's been observed that friends help friends, which is okay but traditionally, it's been the *Wilksilaks* that help their *Wit'in*.
 - One observation was when a person's friend helped him/her with \$800. It's getting out of hand and needs to be discussed and resolved, because feasts are seen to be a competition, whereas that is not the intent.
- **It's important to be accountable** when help is received **by reading the name of the person helping you** and to **read each amount** given. Even if you received help from one person, it's important to make it public.
- To not put into the feast bowl "all" of the *Hlimoomiskw*—financial help one receives, constitutes fraud, not only in the western culture but in our culture as well. We refer to this as *lilkws-sa daala* (theft of money).
- When we don't account for every cent that's expended ... it upsets the very important Nisga'a principles of accountability and transparency in the feast. With respect to *hlimoomiskw*:
 - The total amount of *Hlimoomiskw* (financial help) received for the feast is added to the amount—out of your own pocket—that you have decided you are putting into the feast bowl. For example, let's say:

\$500	- is the amount I am putting into the feast bowl, in settlement of the death of one of our mothers.
+ <u>235</u>	- is the total amount of financial help I receive.
<u>\$735</u>	- is the Total Amount that goes into the feast bowl.
- **In every feast there are note-takers**; this is how it is known that there are instances when only the *Hlimoomiskw* is put in /or the total amount received is not being put into the feast bowl.
- *Hlimoomiskw* is not intended to replace your own money that you put into

the feast bowl.

- Our people need to understand the meaning of the help they receive from their in-laws and paternal relatives, and how it is returned in their time of feasts.
- Perhaps, one of the reasons why this has become a problem is that **we're not expecting everyone to read out the amounts that they receive as help.**
- It was shared that in one tribal feast, their Sim'oogit explained the purpose of *Hlimoomiskw* to Wilp members and cautioned:
 - "Don't embarrass us; to misuse the financial help that you receive reflects on our Wilp, and on the Sim'oogit & Sigidim Hanak' of our Wilp."
- The practice of *Hlimoomiskw* itself is also getting out of hand; that is, specifically, when, and who do we help?
 - There are times when, as *t'il-luulak'*, we have already expended monies to help the bereaved family and then we also put money into the feast bowl—expenses x 3 is what happens.
 - **When you are a *t'il-luulak'*, you don't have to put money into the feast bowl.** Is the reason we have no Nisga'a term for it.
- More discussion is required before we can come to a resolution on this issue alone. We won't be able to cover everything in this gathering.

Other Financial Concerns

- Don't agree with advertising a call for financial contributions toward one's feast.

- In one Wilp, only Wilp members contribute the groceries for their feast; they also prepare the food (cut meat and vegetables) themselves, as opposed to calling on the whole tribe to assist.
- The purpose of the Finance component in our feast needs to be thoroughly explained. **Families need to understand that there is a process in place that we must follow.** For example,
 - In the settlement feast, the first priority is to compensate the *t'il-luulak'*.
 - Family members can't come to the finance table and make demands like, "My cousin has to be paid," etc.
- With respect to stone-movings, **when did we start giving money to all Simgigat & Sigidim Haanak' ... to everyone?**
 - We must compensate the Sim'oogit for setting time aside to honor invitation to Yukw; we cannot ask a Sim'oogit to do something for nothing.
 - As explained by a (late) Sim'oogit, by our Ayuuk, it is *hawahlkw* to ask a Sim'oogit – who is the spokesperson for the Wilp – to do something for nothing, when called upon to witness the Yukw.
- According to my parents, in Gitlaxt'aamiks, it was not until 1931 when the decision was made to use money in feasts.
- In Old Aiyansh, some families were left at home, and the Sim'oogit would go door to door to ensure that everyone got money from the stone-moving feast.
- Before that, only food and material goods were given out in feasts. Today, it's dry goods and money.

- When there was a wedding the family would hire 2 - 4 boats, which would be loaded with bread, biscuits, fruit and other things that were given out at a wedding. At Alert Bay, they still practice this custom.
- **Today, people are coming to the stone-moving feast just to get money.**
 - **The young people, apparently, discuss this amongst themselves – about going to the stone-moving feast just for the money.**

Paying Spouses

- It's been observed that people who are married to members of the host tribes who provide a service to the tribe in relation to the feast are getting paid to provide that service; and [some spouses] are expecting to be paid.
 - Traditionally, it's been the spouses' responsibility to assist [each other] in these functions because you are married into the family.
 - When such a person gets paid [for doing] something for the feast [to assist one's spouse], it's like you're paying yourself – that's what it looks like.

Other Feast-Related Concerns /or Observations

- **Concern was voiced about settling over loved ones in the Urban areas.**
 - One of the reasons for the concern is that children of the deceased father, in some instances—not understanding our own ways—are the ones making the decisions. So there's a lot of explaining that needs to be provided for all generations.
- **The Council of Elders needs to give direction** with respect to holding settlement and stone-moving feasts outside of Lisims (Nass

River)—especially stone-moving feasts. **It needs to be understood** that:

- Having feasts outside of Lisims is added cost for members of the [Matrilineal] Wilp who are responsible for the greater part of the burial and feast expenses.
- Our feasts are the way that we come to know “who is who” in our nation.
- When our fathers die, his remains go back to his Wilp; the final arrangements are made by his Wilp.
- Unless they are asked, or unless the father left specific instructions [and/or by a Will], the paternal children cannot tell the Wilp of their father what is to be done when he dies.
- To do so constitutes ***lagam-dalk***—to speak into the affairs of a Wilp other than your own. [To ***lagam-dalk*** is a breach of ***Ayuuk***.]
- **Feasts [have become] bilingual – English and Nisga’a.**
 - There’s more and more English spoken at feasts today, and
 - Elders have to be bilingual because there are less and less people attending feasts who understand our language.
 - **We need more workshops on Nisga’a language.**
- **People also leave our feasts whenever they feel like it**, and it’s no longer just the young people—includes Simgigat, Sigidim Haanak’, and elders.
 - The message is, “it’s okay to do this”.
 - One youth shared that he left the feast early because he saw his mother do it.

- If it's expected that we sit through an entire feast, then we (adults /elders) need to set a good example.
- It's important for "everyone" to be respectful and heed the advice that's reiterated throughout the feast.
 - No one is to move ... listen – from the beginning of the feast through to the end.
- **Noise control in feasts** is becoming more of a problem.
 - Many young children are unsupervised and many people come to feasts to socialize.
 - **Parents and extended family members must continue to set good examples by teaching and disciplining children in regard to proper feast etiquette.**
- It's getting harder to control noise in the feast hall.
 - There are many children unsupervised. Many people use the feast as an opportunity to socialize.
 - A grandmother talked about bringing her grandkids to feasts and had difficulty disciplining them because other grandchildren were not being disciplined by their grandparents.
- The feast hall is a place for *yuuhlimk'askw*.
 - Children need to be taught "self-respect" and this starts in the home, so that when they come out in public they know how to act.
 - And when they come to feasts, they will know that they are there for a reason, and that they are to show respect, listen and participate.
 - That when we attend feasts we need to be able to observe and listen

- from the beginning to the end, so that we fully understand [all that is taking place in the feast].
- There is a great impact on “learning [our ways]” when children are not allowed into the feast hall.
 - We want our children to learn, but we don’t allow them to participate – sometimes the reason given is “due to limited space”.
 - That may have been the case in the olden days, but today we have large gymnasiums that we use for feasts, and we should be able to accommodate everyone.
 - **Feast terms shared by one elder:**
 - *Hak’otsgeskw*—hair was cut a certain way, cut over the ears like, indicating [that one is] ‘in mourning’ and compassion is shown [to the bereaved].
 - *Hasiniilax’utkw*—not *Hawaal*. (**this comment requires further discussion**)
 - We do not use *Deex-wantkwsim* just any old time; only in stone-moving feasts when people are going to receive compensation for participating in the stone-moving ceremony and feast. This is *Ayuuk*.

Reason guests are also told that no one moves from the feast hall until all work of the Wilp is completed—right to the end of the feast.
 - We also need to revisit [other] protocols. For example,
 - When a Sim’oogit disagreed with what [he heard] in the feast he would stomp his foot; clapping meant that he agreed with what’s [being said].
 - [Note also, why we are needing to have these discussions; that]:

- It was the Missionary why our feast system was stopped for a time ... until his son died and our leaders saw an opportunity to show “compassion” to him, and negotiated with him to settle over his son in the Nisga’a way.
- There are also many distractions in today’s society that prevents people from attending feasts.
 - In the earlier days we didn’t have vehicles, television, internet, etc., and it was automatic that when there was an event [in the community], everyone came out.
- Evolution is always going to be there; we need to find ways to continue to work within or around it.
- **It’s also important to consider how taxation will impact our feast system.**
- **We must find solutions on how to address ALL these matters.**
 - **If we don’t address all of the concerns to do with our feasts, we will never get it back as it was ... when there was more MEANING to our feasts.**

SIMGIGAT & SIGIDIM HAANAK’

- The role of the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak’ has diminished since the coming of the Whiteman.
 - We need to reinstate the authority of the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak’.
- **What is the role of the Sim’oogit / Sigidim-nak’?**
 - The role of the Sigidim Hanak’ is parallel to the role of the Sim’oogit.
 - It’s important to teach by role modeling and by communicating—

- especially at the dinner table the way we used to.
- They're supposed to live like the priest / pope – pure, honest, good example.
 - They are to be the watch dogs in the Wilp.
 - They are to teach *Hawahlkws*. (see AYUUK below)
- The actions of Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' must be truthful. Positive role modeling.
 - [The role of the Sigidim Hanak'] is a very trying role with lots of responsibility, especially when you have to stand beside your husband who is a Sim'oogit.
 - You have to be a hard worker, determined, committed.
 - **How does one arrive at becoming a Sim'oogit / Sigidim Hanak'?**
 - In Nisga'a society, we do not elect hereditary chiefs or matriarchs. People are born into the role [of Sim'oogit and Sigidim Hanak'], and grooming begins immediately [upon birth].
 - Traditionally, people are born into the role [of Sim'oogit & Sigidim Hanak'] and it's important to follow the lineage of the family—[the line of descent].
 - The Sim'oogit name is traditionally passed down to the eldest surviving brother.
 - A person becomes a Sim'oogit when he is able to afford putting up a big feast.
 - It's traditionally been the second eldest brother who is next in line for the Sim'oogit name.
 - It is against our Ayuuk to leave the Sim'oogit name vacant, unless there is

controversy over it.

- Observed how when name was removed on day of burial ... successor called name right there; one *Wilksiwitkw* called the name.
- How is the Sigidim Hanak' name passed down?
 - How did it work in pre contact for the Sigidim Hanak' name to be passed down?
 - There's misunderstanding about this in some families that is creating dissension.
- The Sigidim Hanak' is the eldest sister of the Sim'oogit, and the [woman] married to the Sim'oogit.
- The following was shared with AND Researcher while Group Reports were being made in the gathering:

Regarding the Sigidim Hanak' name, as explained to the daughter who asked her mother what will happen to her *Sigidim Hanak'* name when she passes on; her mother's reply was,

“It will go to your eldest sister. You will call it too, someday, but you have sisters ahead of you.”

(The Nisga'a mother was a knowledgeable-traditionalist elder born in 1906)

- One has to earn one's place in these roles; be respectful to others ... be honest.
- People used to earn their name. They'd be groomed [from birth] to be in line for the Sim'oogit / Sigidim Hanak' name.
 - Today, it's misunderstood that when a person gets a name, they're automatically a Sim'oogit.

- But when a woman gets a Sigidim Hanak' name [she's] told that it's going to take time to be recognized as a Sigidim Hanak'.
- The other side to this is, sometimes, a woman thinks that because her husband is given a Sim'oogit name, she automatically becomes a Sigidim Hanak' – this is not the case.
- And what if a woman is in line for a Sigidim Hanak' name and her husband is not in line for a Sim'oogit name?
- It was noted that this was part of the reason for “arranged” marriages [in the past].
- The number of self-proclaimed Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' is increasing.
 - People are “appointed” to be Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' when they used to be groomed from birth.
 - The authority needs to be given back.
- Have to go back to ‘earning a name’ and the ‘grooming [process]’.
- **Whose responsibility is it, to groom?**
 - How is this responsibility recognized and respected when seating people?
- [Before] the Sim'oogit of the Wilp is given a name – the roles of young chiefs, the rules /Ayuuk, family names, the matrilineal [system of the Wilp] – **I learned about all this before I got my name**, and then I was given the Sim'oogit name.
 - Now I'm teaching the younger generation within our Wilp, the nephews.
- A woman is taught as she is growing up, first by watching what her mother

does, then helping her mother, and then doing things for her mother. Eventually the young woman is able to do what her mother does.

- Usually, the Wilp members will [today] recognize the strongest person within the family, the doer.
 - They would give that person more responsibility and in doing so, they're grooming this person to eventually be a Sim'oogit or Sigidim Hanak'.
 - In some cases, it's not necessarily the eldest or the next eldest who is in line for a name; it could be the strongest of the strongest of the strongest.
- So who are the real Sigidim Haanak'?
- We know today that some of us are referred to as Sigidim Hanak' by virtue of being married to a Sim'oogit. This needs to be looked at and worked through.
- A committee could be struck to investigate this whole matter.

Lastly:

- Bothered by statement expressed yesterday concerning **how to give back authority of Simgigat and Sigidim Hanak'**.
 - We need to understand that **they did not lose their authority; they need to exercise their authority at the various functions.**
 - They are the ones considered the respected leaders, the respected elders who have earned trust and respect.
 - Everyone, including the elected leaders, must earn Respect the proper way, by traditional teachings, e.g., *luu-magahl lo'op ahl ts'imaagan* /put a rock in your mouth—so that we don't say things that will hurt people

or jeopardize their positions as leaders.

- Our Ye'e, in the old village, would check on how our families were doing even though we lived in separate houses; he'd ask: Are you okay? Did you have enough to eat? Are you dressed warm?
 - This is an example of a Sim'oogit continuing to exercise his role and responsibilities as a Sim'oogit. This is no longer followed by our people today.
- **The role of our Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' is to ensure that we follow our Ayuuk. They've always had the authority – they just need to exercise it more.**

AYUUK

- We can't change our laws because *ayuukhl Nisga'a* is the foundation of our culture. It is the very reason why do we do things the way we do.
- A question was raised concerning, "what the difference is between Ayuuk and culture".
 - Our Ayuuk is our law ... [our system of laws which includes our customs and traditions].
 - Ayuuk and culture go hand in hand; Ayuuk is prevalent throughout culture.
 - If we respect our Ayuuk, we respect our culture.
- Whiteman's laws override our laws, why? Conduct research into this.
 - When it comes to *K'amksiiwaa* law and Nisga'a Ayuuk, as matters concern our lives as Nisga'a, where do we draw the line?
 - Our Ayuuk is first in our lives. We have to bring our own Ayuuk back.

- As taught by uncles, **the purpose of Ayuuk is to unite; not divide.**
 - Our strength as a nation depends on Respect for our own Ayuuk.
- Respect, Spirituality and Leadership go hand in hand; is all part of Ayuuk.

Respect

(as taught through *Yuuhlimk'askw*)

- In regard to respect for one another:
 - in the olden days, children were taught to move aside and allow the Sim'oogit or Sigidim Hanak' to walk past when they meet up with them on the sidewalk.
- Respect for the Elder was law in the past, for example, 'don't look elder in the face' ... 'step aside when you meet an elder' ... '*hawahlkw mi dim sidookhl wiit'isit/Is hawahlkw* to deceive an elder (in any way)'.
 - It was observed that there is no Respect anymore, between elders and youth.
- Recall as a child, as part of cultural teachings, RESPECT was taught in many ways by parents and grandparents:
 - When you see an elder in need of help, help the elder; this teaching is being passed on to own child now.
 - In times of death in the community we were told to 'stay at home ... stay indoors, don't be out on the streets' ... 'Be quiet,' and it was explained why it was important for there to be 'quiet' at this time.
 - There were no children or teens heard outside on the streets (in the mid-1970s to 1980s).
 - Today, we hear lots of noise on the streets in times of death ... it

doesn't matter anymore.

- Today there is also no acknowledgement or respect for curfews.
 - It used to be that no children were allowed out after a certain hour; this was to ensure the children got enough rest for the next day, and to keep everyone safe.
 - Back then it was also still okay for any adults to send children or teens home if seen on the streets, especially after dark.
- **Now even in the Feast Hall there is no respect.**
- **The level of Respect has diminished over the years in so many areas in our lives. We need public education to encourage the teaching of Respect in our homes.**
 - Ultimately, parents are the ones responsible for their children.
 - At one time, the paternal family also played a role in our lives; when there was a need, uncles could tell us to go home ... or tell us not to do what not supposed to be doing.
- The parents & elders [also] taught children to recognize the lineage. Today we don't take time to communicate this with each other.
- **In the olden days we practiced and respected that it takes a whole community to raise a child.**
- It would be good to document these things so that we'd have teaching tools.

Yuuhlimk'askw

- Before TVs, phones, vehicles and computers came [into our midst],
 - We used to all sit at the dinner table and share a meal—where

yuuhlimk'askw took place – **talking, lecturing, advising**, making sure that we don't step out of line, and that we clearly understood the consequences to our actions.

- **This is not happening today.**
- When young, *yuuhlimk'askw* was at the dinner table. We were not allowed to talk at the table, only to listen and in listening, we learned.
 - [We learned about *Ayuuk* and *Hawahlkws*.]
- *Yuuhlimk'askw* is a form of counseling, and it is most effective in the home.
 - Parents love you, therefore, they will provide guidance – and children need to respect that.
- Elder shared a story of when he was growing up.

He recalled running around in the feast hall when an elder approached him and told him, “*bak ji gidii-t'aan*” – “try to sit still” and listen because one day you'll become a leader in your own community. Later became involved in the church army, council, was chief councillor....

Four of my uncles spoke to me and gave advice. One uncle talked to me about my role as a councillor, and he advised that people will criticize you; don't speak back – take a rock and put it in your mouth (*luu-magahl lo'op ahl ts'imagan*).

When younger, and chiefs and elders had their monthly meetings, I was seated at their table; we had to use our own language. It was through my father and the elders that I became fluent in the language.

- It was noted that in the olden days elders used to be powerful; their

authority was well respected.

- The elder’s advice usually stems from his/or her life experiences—what they were taught, or what they learned through their own actions.
 - The Elders value your life and that’s the reason they give advice, and counsel you.
- Nisga’a philosophies are difficult to interpret into English.
- “Life Skills” is an important learning process in relation to Respect & Disrespect.
 - It’s important to respect yourself, to respect nature, and to respect your elders.
- [By learning our *Ayuuk* and *Hawahlkws* we learn Respect].

Hawahlkws

- *Hawahlkws* is part of our *Ayuuk*; it means, not allowed / taboo / forbidden / unacceptable....
 - [*Hawahlkws* refers to behaviors, words spoken, even thoughts which are “not allowed” for reasons that are based on our beliefs or known consequences if we don’t follow our *hawahlkws*].
 - ***Hawahlkws* is disappearing.** It was common to hear about it in the earlier days. It shaped young children and taught us “the [good] path” in life.
 - Children don’t know the significance of *hawahlkws* [today]; it’s important to stress this to our children.
- Sometimes Stories were used to explain *Hawahlkw*.
 - Stories told to me as a child taught me how to live the good life;

- and that *hawahlkws* has consequences.
- *Hawahlkws* teaches us “things we should not do” and “why”. **This is not being practiced today.**
- It used to be taught in the homes by our mothers and grandmothers.
- In the olden days, it was *hawahlkw* for the father to be present when a baby was being born.
- It was *hawahlkw* for a father to change the baby’s diaper.
- When a young girl became a young woman, it was *hawahlkw* for her to eat freshly harvested food – she was not allowed to eat fresh food for one year.
- Need to change how we address *hawahlkws* so that the children will hear and understand it, and respect it. **Use the traditional way of teaching.**
- It used to be, that when there was a death in the community, all children were expected to be quiet, and to not laugh around.
 - [“Everyone” was expected to observe this *hawahlkw*].
 - All scheduled activities came to a complete stop; nothing should be happening.

[Nisga’a believe that “the spirit of Death” is always lurking around, and when Death sees that people are behaving as if they are unaffected by death in the community, it can decide to strike again.]
- Societies used to stop all planned activities and come to the home of the deceased to pay their respects to the bereaved family.
- **This is not happening anymore.**

- There should be no joking in the feast hall, [especially in Settlement Feasts].
 - *Gilo ji ansgwatkwsin ahl gat.* /Don't laugh at /Don't ridicule /Don't make jokes about anyone ... [It's *hawahlkw*].
- The names that we carry today are centuries old. When [a Nisga'a] passes on, the name is removed and passed on to the next person in line.
 - **[If the name is not removed in the traditional manner prior to burial, it is believed to be buried with the deceased; this means the name cannot be called again—to do so is considered *hawahlkw*.]**
- An action that will have a negative consequence means:
 - We need to listen to our elders when they tell us that something is not supposed to be done, especially when it comes to “nature” and “respect for all living things”.
- **Partying with children is *hawahlkw*. Exposure to alcohol and other substances at an early age is *hawahlkw*. There are consequences.**
- Could an “improper dress code” at feasts be a form of *hawahlkws*?
- It's up to families to teach [*hawahlkws*], and we need to give them the proper tools to enable them to teach.
- We need topics in school related to *hawahlkws*.

K'aats

Nisga'a Ayuuk prohibits dating & intermarriage within one's own tribe. To date or marry within one's own tribe is called K'aats and is a breach of Ayuuk.

- By the law of k'aats – you cannot sleep with your [tribal] brother [or sister]. If you do, you're breaking our Ayuuk.

- K'aats affects all families, and everything that we do.
- When attempting to deal with k'aats in our own family, we are told, “Well, So & So is doing it.”
 - You lose your identity when you k'aats; especially your children are affected by k'aats.
 - K'aats effectively removes cultural responsibilities—especially tribal responsibilities of the Wilp.
 - **The elders in our Nation including the Council of Elders have to take the lead in addressing this matter, and deal with it in the feast hall.**
 - **There must be a Nation protocol for dealing with K'aats.**
 - **Currently, there is a very important name lying dormant in our Wilp because of k'aats—awaiting a time for someone to be ready to take the name;**
 - How can we tell when someone is ready—[what are the criteria]?
 - Is evident that the Sim'oogit is not exercising his Sim'oogit responsibilities.
- A major issue that we have not addressed from the start has to do with **the mixed messages that we send to our youth.**
 - On the one hand, we have our Ayuuk about K'aats;
 - Then we have weddings that occur in Terrace, or outside of the valley, when the couple is in the same tribe.
 - If we don't [take care in how we] adapt and evolve—in how we deal with issues—things will only continue to get worse.

- Why does it happen? Because even though it's against our Ayuuk, we condone it, we allow it, we accommodate it.
 - **Some facts to take into consideration should be the missionary enforcement of foreign religious beliefs, and the important Nisga'a beliefs and value systems we were forced to "let go" of by the prohibition of our language and customs, and**
 - **Establishment of Indian Reserves, [which] do not enforce our Ayuuk in regard to k'aats prevention.**
 - Nisga'a were forced to forget our Ayuuk which entailed *hawahlkws* and taboos such as k'aats.
- Today, we seem to accommodate k'aats relationships which make it appear to be okay—by adopting one of the couple into another tribe – your tribe is your Identity.
 - **Adopting into another tribe has its ramifications – it creates confusion, loss of identity.**
- K'aats relationships have a great impact on our family structure and [traditional] responsibilities.
- This needs to be corrected. Once corrected, we'll start seeing the youth attend all the functions.
- With respect to k'aats, a family member came to me and asked, "What do you think of me living with my own tribe?" Told her, "You made that decision yourself," and just left it to her to determine for herself [what the consequences are].
 - Recently, she has shared how difficult it is for her to participate in tribal functions.

- Love is a powerful drug; it makes it very hard to separate the couples who are in k'aats relationships.
- **We don't have control about what happened yesterday. It's up to us to have control of tomorrow. Prepare today.** How do we address this?
- **So how do we address all of these concerns?**
 - Believe the **Wilp** needs to do more than just meet for feast purposes, especially in regard to addressing **Respect**.
- Agree, TEACHINGS START IN THE HOME.
 - Teaching our children about our Ayuuk, our language, our identity.
 - **Recommend:** that as a nation—no matter where we live as Nisga'a—**start with one day a month, sit with family around the dinner table**, advising, sharing, listening and learning.
- As part of teachings, we are told, if we don't understand the first time, then Elders **REPEAT...** and **REPEAT ...** "TELL ME AGAIN ... AND AGAIN ... until I understand."
 - **Recommend that each Wilp start practicing this, in order to stop K'aats ... keep telling our youth again and again, until they understand why K'aats is prohibited.**
- **Role modeling, workshops, education and communication** would be effective in helping people to realize the effects of k'aats relationships and the impact to the family structure and Ayuukhl Nisga'a.
 - The [impact on the] role of paternal relatives in Nisga'a society is an important [factor].

- It's important to **evaluate the cost of such workshops and obtain funding.**
- It was also suggested that we **use the tribal feast to teach about family, lineage, and relationships to [each] other.**
- At tribal feasts, teach children about family history and lineage.
- K'aats relationships should not be recognized in the feast hall.
- There is historical information in regard to k'aats and it should be researched and made known. For example
 - A couple in a k'aats relationship was banished from the community.
 - Ayuukhl Nisga'a Department has developed and circulated pamphlets.
 - **More workshops and public education is needed.**
- We have tried many times to address this as a nation.
 - With compassion and respect we can encourage those in k'aats relationships to [assist us] in bringing it to an end, by asking them to share how it affects i.) their lives and ii.) the lives of their children.
- Lastly, a participant phoned in a concern that their group did not discuss the matter of k'aats, and wanted it known that it wasn't from lack of interest or concern that this issue was not on their list.

Other Ayuuk-related Information

- Very concerned about the **breaking of the Lagam-dalk law**; have experienced someone else from another Wilp and tribe speaking into our Wilp. How do we deal with that in a respectful manner?
 - If you are from the Laxsgiik Wilp (Eagle House), you cannot speak into

- [the affairs of] another tribe's Wilp because it causes dissension.
- You also cannot speak into [the affairs of] another Wilp within your own tribe.
 - The only time someone else can speak to the affairs of another Wilp is if one is asked to do so by the respective Wilp making the request. [There is also more to this process.]
- How does one address the matter of **other Huwilp using names from our Wilp**? All of the names in our Wilp are heard in our Adaawak.
 - In addressing a personal situation, requested the assistance of another Sim'oogit to speak to the Sim'oogit of the Wilp who *lagam-dalk*—spoke into the affairs of our Wilp.
 - **Regarding retribution or consequences** for an individual's actions: Cleansing is one way—washing [off one's wrongdoing] with cold water....
 - Example of how we as parents dealt with our child when caught stealing firecrackers; the Nisga'a way of disciplining was applied, and the RCMP were involved:
 - i. We took our child to the home where the firecrackers were taken from.
 - ii. Our child cried ... apologized ... the owners forgave and we all talked;
 - iii. Our child was then spanked with cedar boughs, and
 - iv. Then bathed [with cold water].
 - Our Ayuuk does work; we need to be patient with it.
 - **In the old days, by our own Ayuuk, the safety and well-being of every member, of every child in the community, was paramount.**

- As our own people say, children fight ... soon after, they make up; then **when adults get involved, this is when families become divided.**
- [By our own Ayuuk], how do we deal with Drug & Alcohol related problems like “family violence” and “marital breakups”?
 - Gone are the days when a spouse will merely put up with this.
 - In own experience, involved the Simgigat and family members of both sides.
- We had **different types of feasts** [in the past]: stone-moving, settlement, redemption, apology or when blood was shed – *Ksiiskw*.
- We have heard that there are consequences for the bad choices we make in life. **What about the good choices?**
- Our culture is aligned with our Ayuuk and elders have much wisdom to offer us.
- **One thing remains the same** [in our culture], **our ways are spiritually correct**—[our own ways are] **of integrity**;
 - Greed and power are not part of [who we are], it’s a western philosophy.
- **Gwiis-Halayt** – (Chilkat) blanket that the Halayt wears ... very sacred.
 - There’s concern that many young men are wearing the *gwiis-halayt* today.
 - In the earlier days, people earned the right to wear [this sacred] regalia. Some who are wearing the *gwiis-halayt* haven’t earned the right.
- [There are Ayuuk and *hawahlkws* that relate to the Halayt and everything that the Halayt wears or uses. This requires thorough explanation].

- **Re burials in times of suicide:**

A group member shared her feelings as a *Wilksiwitkw* who was a *t'il-luulak'* (undertaker) for a *Wit'in* who had died in this manner; and how hard it was for to bury her *Wit'in* in the manner it was done by our *Ayuuk*. She did not understand why ... and felt no honor in this practice. She asked, "When and where did this practice start?"

- An elder explained that in pre contact, our people learned some of our ways from the *Naxnok*, from the supernatural. What we learn from the *Naxnok* our people regard as a gift to us from God.
- We have always known there is a God; *K'am Ligii Hahlhaahl* we call God.
- An elder who has passed on also explained, that a mother who dies in childbirth, is also buried in the same manner—very early in the morning.
- It is not yet fully understood, but it has to do with assisting the spirit after a person has passed on in a manner considered having resulted from "unnatural causes".
- While this practice requires further research, it is not about judging or intending to be disrespectful.

Hobiye

- It's an event where you share the abundance of food.
- It's a celebration that you had a very good year harvesting food, an abundance of food from the land – hunting, fishing, oolichans, etc.
 - A big feast would occur in the Nass Valley.
- **In the olden days, *Hobiye* didn't occur every year.** Only when we were able to fill our storage boxes for the winter.

- Should only be celebrated in February.
- Depends on the crescent moon which tells whether oolichans and other food resources are going to be plentiful;
 - is not necessarily in February. Check the lunar calendar to determine **WHEN**, and plan celebration accordingly.
- Celebration date should not have to be planned around All Native Tournament.
- We are forgetting the “meaning” in Hobiye; we say Hobiye happens “when the crescent moon is shaped like the bowl of the *hoobix* (wooden spoon) and appears as if there is a star in the centre; that when we see this around the month of February that it is a “sign of plenty”; that this is when we celebrate. The celebrating has to do with the meaning.  Research thoroughly.
- The coming of the oolichan is part and parcel of the *Hobiye* celebration.
 - The shape of the moon is a sign – it tells us if our year is going to be plentiful. **When the moon is a certain shape – like a *hoobix*, then we celebrate.**
 - **If it doesn’t take that shape, we can’t celebrate because we won’t have a plentiful year.**
- The oolichan is our “saviour fish”. It arrives in the spring—in February or March—when families run out of food that they preserved for winter consumption.
- We also have a story that tells how the oolichan speaks to the spring salmon, telling the salmon to “Continue on your way, we have already saved them” ... The spring salmon replies, “But they need more.”....

- [*Hobiye*] should only be acknowledged and celebrated when the crescent moon rises, not ten days later.
- **The celebration should stay in the Nass Valley. We should not have to travel out as it's costly and hard for the elders.**
- **The Hobiye celebration should not be limited to an event in the valley.**
 - It is to be noted, [however], that travel costs become a factor when groups are expected to travel to the urban areas where there is no *wo'otkw* (billeting); people who travel have to pay for hotel accommodations, meals and fuel expense. The cost is around \$40 – 60,000 for one trip.
 - We also [have to] fundraise a lot of money in order to travel.
- Is there a governing body that controls all of this so that there will be no problems?
- *Hobiye* also has the same [significance] as New Year's Day, and it coincides with the Chinese New Year.
- It should not matter where Nisga'a celebrate Hobiye; Nisga'a can celebrate wherever they live.
 - The Chinese don't all go back to China to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

Words highlighted by facilitator in one discussion group:

- *Mayak'* – the “algae” that grows in the water.
- [Dirge] song – *lim'oo'y* – the person singing cries as they're singing.
- Observe the weather – normally a big storm comes at the end of October

or the first week in November, [and flood waters] – called *Yo'oks-Moots*.

- *Hayatskw* (coppershield) – [made from metal] called *uuk* (copper) – sometimes used in place of money. Sometimes you see the old ones cut off because it was sometimes used in place of money for the family.
 - [Was considered a form of currency by some, before money was introduced to our people. It could be more correct to state that the use of *uuk* /or *Hayatskw* in the past in feasts, parallels the use currency today.]
- *Leex-yeem-luulak'* – a person who walks and talks with the dead [spirits].
- Time travel: Our *adaawaḱ* talks about “time travel” – about a canoe that ... when you sit in it, you tell it where you want to go, and then tap the side of the canoe with the oar, and you are [instantly] transported to the destination.
- *Ukws Nagwit* – the point at Gitwinksihlkw.
- *Ksi-gwantkwhl hloksim axkw* – rising of the (crescent) moon. [The moon is out.]
- *Ts'ak'imskw* – to give a “bowl” of oolichans to the senior chief /Wii Sim'oogit in the village.
- Transplanting of salmon was already done by our forbearers—areas where the dead salmon are, after spawning.
- If your hands get cold, put them into the oolichans.
- *Ango'oskw* – it is written into the treaty.

Nisga'a Women

- We traditionally held a high respect for women.

- We need to acknowledge “the role of [Nisga’a] women” more.
- Women hold the stories – Adaawak.
- Women are the strength that holds families together.
- Without women, there would be no society.
- Women, mothers, grandmothers tell children things for a reason.
 - Respect for all people ... for all living things is taught to the very young.
- Mothers are usually very strict when they bring their children out in public.
- We need to understand where we come from – especially as it relates to the Matrilineal System.
- The “authority of women” is not as strong because the “loss of culture” is so rapid.
- As women, we need to get our power back.
- We need to recognize the balance/equality in the role of men and women. It’s more and more apparent in today’s society.
- In Nisga’a culture, women were held in high esteem; more than our men because they bring our future leaders into the world.
- The females in our culture are very important and they deserve respect because they carry on our lineage.
 - Would like to acknowledge and thank the *Jijiis* participating in our discussions today.

Youth

- Happy to see Youth here in this gathering. “You are our future leaders.”

- Throughout discussions, “youth presence” was acknowledged by speakers.
- If the youth in a community have issues, they need to speak of those issues in public. If you’re not happy, **speak up**.
 - **Change can’t happen if we sit back, if we remain quiet, people will think everything is okay.**
- One Youth asked: **So what are the solutions [to all of our issues]; not hearing any solutions.**

In regard to Youth Suicide:

- One Youth shared stressful experience with a number of peers confiding in her, and hearing them all talking about committing suicide.
 - Many [youth feel] that when grandparents wish to talk with them, that all they want to do is give them the third degree (bawl them out).
 - Peers do not understand our Nisga’a laws, and they do not understand that their grandparents, aunts and uncles are giving them advice because they love them, and want them to be safe.
 - **How do we communicate that “our youth NEED TO KNOW that there is SOMEONE they can talk to when they have problems”?**
- Another Youth shared how in Terrace, peers talk about suicide every day like they talk about sports.
 - **Some of the youth are products of the Foster Care System; put in foster homes where they have experienced sexual and physical abuse.**
 - **As a member of the Youth Council and knowing about this,**

what do I do? How can we help these troubled youth who want to commit suicide?

- The only way to stop suicide is to go to the elders and talk; learn the language, learn our own ways, our traditions ... about how we make an apology by our own ways ...
 - Learn about *Ksiiskw*—Restitution—a very stringent law for restoring [peace & harmony] and compensating ... restitution for a life lost ... (and there's so much more to the law of *Ksiiskw*).
- We could advise the youth to visit the elders once or twice a week. Elders, be willing to spend time with the youth.
- It was noted that youth feel intimidated by elders and, therefore, have difficulty going to them.
 - To communicate effectively with youth, adults need to get down to their level; don't talk down at them.
- **There's a breakdown in communications at all levels.**
 - Our young people do have a voice, but **we should not be so rigid with structured agendas, especially at public meetings.**
- Always observe the good in young people and encourage it.
 - Understand peer pressure that the youth experience, and know how to address it and support the youth.
- We have to respect and understand that youth face peer pressure.
 - What we can do to reduce peer pressure is to “listen to” and “understand” them.
 - One suggestion is, **help them to develop an interest in the**

culture.

- The **Canoe Journey** involving youth and elders taught me a lot about myself. [As a youth who participated],
 - **I became a different person in a different environment.**
- Community support must be recognized, and accepted, in regard to helping children grow [up to be responsible adults].
- We need to revitalize culture and spirituality in our communities through societies such as:
 - The Anglican Church Women, Young Men's/ and Women's Christian Association, etc.
 - Or/ i.) Change the name of the women's and men's groups to reflect the activity that they carry out, but ii.) if they want to remain YMCA and YWCA **they must realize their accountability to the church.**

Suggested Solutions

- When a Sim'oogit addressed the youth at NESS, he addressed them as "Our young leaders" as he began to speak to them.
 - Let us always acknowledge our youth as "**young leaders**".ⁱⁱ
- Make publications available to everyone especially to our youth.
 - It would be good to have **pamphlets on Yuuhlimk'askw and Hawahlkws** in English and Nisga'a.
- Need a **workshop on Hawahlkws** as it's a very effective way to teach our youth.
- We say our feast is the place where we learn. **Recommend that one day**

a month be set aside in each Nisga'a community for a feast, where we sit around the dinner table to talk and learn about our culture; it's so very important.

- **Recommend** Mock Feasts for Youth to learn and practice language and feast [protocols and procedures] in all Nisga'a communities (such as they have in Gingolx and Gitwinksihlkw).
 - It would be a good way to learn about our Ayuuk.
- **Recommend** that Village Councillors look at how we conduct Public Meetings and get back to basics.
 - Public meetings need to be more open; provide opportunity for people, especially youth, to share their concerns.
 - Public meetings should allow our youth to speak freely ... with no fear of being ridiculed or judged.
 - Our priority should be our youth – we need more dialogue with our youth.

On Leadership

- It's been stated that one of the things we have lost is the dinner table;
 - This has a bearing on our leadership as well.
- Our life experience is different than the message they – our leadership – put out [to the general public].
- **It's time that the leadership made time to really listen to us—the common people. Listen to us ... know how we feel ... hear our concerns.**
- The elected leaders are our voice – they were elected to these positions by

the people.

- Perhaps, we have too many Councillors.
- **Today, we live by three different powers ...** [Elected; Hereditary; Church.]
 - The Wáhlingigat did not “elect” their leadership.
 - We had our own form of Spirituality—via the Halayt, dance, song....
 - The Church; why can't we establish our own Church?
- There was acknowledgement of the political leaders who made the time to participate in the group discussions, in this Elders-Youth Gathering.

What can elders & youth do to ensure continuance of these gatherings, to keep this “process [of learning]” going?

- **There needs to be consistency** [in our practices], including in all of our programs.
- Suggest **more public education** that is user-friendly, easy to understand.
 - Use of Puppets at NESS was an **effective teaching tool**; need more of this kind of [**CREATIVE**] teaching method.

What can we ALL do to help, to keep things moving?

- It's time that we all “**Walked Our Talk**”, including culturally.
- [To inspire motivation] encourage EVERYONE. And when in doubt, ask questions.
- **Recommendation to utilize Nisga'a Lisims Government's website – NNKN**

- We are committed to keeping our cultural practices strong, but when we have only an hour here, or an hour there to do this, it doesn't do any justice.
- Suggestion to post protocols, etc., on the website so that we can keep it going – not everyone gets a chance to express concerns or to offer solutions to concerns [in our gatherings].

Residential School

- The Residential School System has left devastating effects on our personal pride and identity.
- Was one of the lucky ones who did not go to Residential School; was kept home – worked and learned the traditional ways.
 - A family member, on the other hand, was hauled off to residential school when a little boy, and came back a different person.
- One participant shared her dad's experience in residential school – was called a "Dumb Indian" for speaking Nisga'a, yet he couldn't speak English.
 - He told his children, "I don't want you to be called a 'dumb Indian' so I won't speak our language to you." He spoke English to us.
- To turn things around now ... Nisga'a immersion in our Headstart programs is an excellent idea.
 - It's good to teach children at a very young age because they absorb the information more readily.

Substances

- Drugs and alcohol were not introduced to us until recently. Our forefathers used to drink *aksaa-maa'y*.

Healing

- Healing starts in our homes: We have to practice and strengthen *Ayuukhl Nisga'a* in our lives, and it starts in the home.
- Why are we spending so much money flying to Vancouver for healing?
 - We rely too much on *K'amksiiwaa* ways; financially, they are the ones benefitting.
 - We don't need the *K'amksiiwaa* to show us how to heal.
- Learning more of *Ayuukhl Nisga'a* is equivalent to healing; let us go back to our own ways.
- **The Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' need to “start feeling” the pain that we are experiencing; our elected leaders need to “start feeling” what we are feeling.**
- Let's start healing HERE [in the valley], TOGETHER.
- We envision having our own Healing Centre.
 - We are going to get to where we need to; Prayer helps. I pray every day by the river.
- As a recovering alcoholic of 21 years, know drug & alcohol addiction is a disease. Years back there was no one around to advise us on the effects of alcohol addiction. No one told us we should stop.
- Today, we know that the only way to cure addiction is to “learn about WHY we do what we are doing to ourselves”. Evaluate our lives.
 - We need to ask ourselves, “WHY do I drink ... WHY do I do drugs?”
 - It's a disease—once your body becomes dependent on it, it's hard to stop. Once you start experimenting with drugs it's hard to resist it.

- Prayer helps; repeat the Lord's Prayer in Nisga'a. I pray in my heart; there's no need to pray out loud.
- We need Nisga'a spirituality.

Spirituality

- We've lost this because of our life experiences in the residential schools.
- Youth need to ask themselves – What is Nisga'a spirituality to me?
- Part of Nisga'a spirituality is to express what you feel. Nisga'a spirituality is where we get our teachings.
- Physical, mental, spiritual and emotional growth creates balance [in one's life] – there is no wrong way [in Wellness].
- *Oots'in* is the soul of man – he lives inside you. The mortal man dies eventually but the *oots'in* lives on.
- Regarding death – *haagwil hiyeen, haagwil hiyeen* is telling the deceased that they should walk slowly to get to the great valley in the sky.
- The church and our forbearers' ways are completely different. We call the Supreme Being, *K'am Ligii Hahlhaahl – k'aa amaa-gadim Sim'oogit*.

OTHER CONCERNS & OBSERVATIONS

Nisga'a Cultural Calendar

- **We need to go back to the intended purpose of the Nisga'a cultural calendar > for scheduling feasts.**
 - Today, we use it to advertise birthdays, anniversaries, sports events and other things that don't relate to [Nisga'a] culture.
 - **And why are tribal members asked to contribute toward these**

events? Families should contribute amongst themselves.

- **Recommend that Cultural Calendar be utilized only for Nisga'a Culture-related events.**

The Feast book

- NLG has the Yukw book – it's good but we need to use *K'amksiiwaa* way to communicate it.
- The Feast book should be taught in school.
 - In order for it to be used to educate, it's been suggested that the information be condensed—broken down into smaller, manageable parts as in curriculum development—so all young people will learn.
 - Put it on our website to make it readily available to the public because not everyone works year round, so can't afford the cost of the book.
- Learning styles are different today. Take advantage of today's technology – promote online learning.
- Adapt to different learning styles for children.
- Need more public education.
- Laxgalts'ap Village Government has a program called “People Building People”
 - **Curriculum has been developed on the Yukw book** and it's used in the program. Copyrighted.
 - 8 Simgigat /chiefs walk the young people through the Yukw book. 1 male, 1 female from each tribe.
 - Determined what the group knew, and then taught what they didn't

know.

- Case studies: learned culture from mom. Five participants critiqued case studies taught by elders.
- Then we had a feast after 9-day guidance.
- **Would be good if each community could do likewise.**
- In Laxgalts'ap as well, a Sigidim Hanak'/matriarch was hired to do a workshop on traditional Nisga'a parenting. They discussed things like the 5-day Rites of Passage.

Minutes of the Elders Gathering

- It's all fine to have conferences like this and have time for questions and answers and recommendations, but **it takes too long for the minutes to be made available to the public** and to the people that weren't able to attend the sessions.
- **Want to know if we will see ... hear ... answers to our concerns in a timely manner.**
- **Who is responsible for recommendations being brought to action?**
- Agree with previous speakers, especially re the above.
- It was suggested that we utilize the Nisga'a website to reach our people especially our youth – they are the forgotten ones, so to speak.
 - **We need to find ways to include everyone in everything [we do as a people ... as a nation].**
- Also suggested that **each Wilp/or tribe create a website to post events, feasts, ideas, and what is expected of each tribal member in each function, and no one will be excluded.**

Priorities & Recommendations Submitted in Writing

Priorities submitted by participant in Group 4

1. Role of Sim'oogit and Sigidim Hanak'

- Adaawak breeds respect

2. Learning Circles

- Opportunity for youth and elders to connect.
- Elders to get down to the level of the youth rather than talk down at youth as it can be very intimidating.

3. Ayuukhl Nisga'a and Healing

K'aats

Wilp – strengthen authority and responsibility of Wilp.

Repetition ... & Listening – important learning principles in the delivery of "teachings" in the Nisga'a home and in public forums.

4. Change the public meeting format and use as a forum for learning and opportunity to express ourselves.

5. Contributing factors to the present state of conflict in processing of cultural knowledge and practices

- Uncertainty in our present state of affairs
- Different / or conflicting values based on language and worldview learned in schools, starting in Residential Schools
- Parent choosing not to speak Nisga'a to children to protect children from humiliation of being referred to as "Dumb Indian"

- Taking of one's own life – lacking sense of Identity and meaning in one's life.

6. Intractable conflict –

The conflicts which stubbornly elude resolution require a more multi-faceted, prolonged approach.

Issues:

- Multi-faceted approach relating to resources, values, power and basic human needs
- Time – we have an extensive past, a turbulent present and murky future
- Context – many intractable conflicts especially at inter-group level are embedded in longstanding differences and inequalities.
 - They are footed in a history of colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism or human rights abuses which cause a large imbalance of power.
 - Deep-rooted conflict caused by the absence of security, identity, respect.

Motion: Frame Analysisⁱⁱⁱ & Reframing Tools

MSC _____ / _____

That a set of tools be explored that will help the Nisga'a Nation in making sense of the wealth of information acquired from past conferences and in this gathering.

Step I – Seek tools to assist us in developing a “coherent understanding” of the diverse values, viewpoints, procedural settings, positions and issues expressed in these gatherings; **the understanding of which** will help us determine the next steps.

- Step 1 is based on the understanding that where conflict of information exists means that the information is complex, as opposed to complicated or is based on simple systems.
- Frames play a role in perpetuating conflict therefore a very good starting point.
- This tool could provide improved understanding by each stakeholder of their own frame and frames expressed by others.

Step 2 – Based on frame analysis outcomes, strategies in dialogue could then be used to reach new levels of understanding in setting goals and objectives.

Submitted by Fern Scodane, Group 4



Possible Recommendations: Submitted by Group 5

Explain roles and responsibilities at

- Family meetings
- Tribal feast
- Dance practice
- School
- Through handouts
- Role modeling
- Through mentoring – take someone under your wings if parent isn't available.

As to “Who’s who”?

- Create a database of Simgigat / Sigidim Haanak’ names and make it available to everyone.
- Poster campaign
- Learn seating protocol at feasts – mentor/explain

Make the best of technology to keep the lines of communication open

- Use NNKN’s website
- Use village government website
- Create an application – *siwatdiit ahl* “App”
- Make learning fun and use topics like the Nisga’a Treaty, Feast Book and other publications to create games like Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, Trivial Pursuit, etc.
- Facebook, Twitter, etc.



RESOLUTIONS

(Submitted in writing; no movers)

Resolution I: Subject Nisga’a Women

MSC _____ / _____

Whereas The Nisga’a have always held our women in the highest of respect; and

Whereas We have lost respect – *Kwhlixo’osa’anskw* – and have not really found ways of teaching our younger generation to “respect our Nisga’a women”.

Therefore Be It Resolved that

The Nisga’a Elders-Youth Gathering Planning Committee: plan events and find funding to have workshops.

Resolution 2: Subject Yuuhlimk'askw on Nisga'a Women's Role

MSC _____ / _____

Whereas We, a modern day treaty Nisga'a, are not fulfilling our Nisga'a protocol in terms of grooming and nurturing our Nisga'a women; and

Whereas There is nothing formally set to groom our young women.

Therefore be it resolved that

The Nisga'a Elders – Youth Gathering Steering Committee plan, seek funding and implement a Matriarch-led Workshop immediately so as to take advantage of our elders we still have in our midst.

Resolution 3: Subject Nisga'a & Youth Gathering

MSC _____ / _____

Whereas The Nisga'a Elders-Youth Gathering is new to everyone; and

Whereas There is no annual budget set for this annual gathering;

Therefore Be It Resolved that

The Steering Committee for the Nisga'a Elders-Youth Gathering plan, seek funding, and implement this gathering every two years.

**Resolution 4: Subject **Communities Learning Around the
Dinner table****

MSC _____ / _____

- Whereas Nisga’a culture is diminishing more and more with each generation; and
- Whereas It is evident in our homes that knowledge of our culture is disappearing, including the knowledge of how to teach the significance of our cultural ways; and
- Whereas The youth are struggling to discover their Identity—who they were born to be—some are literally ‘dying’ to know who they are; and
- Whereas The young parents too are struggling to help their children.

Be it therefore resolved that

School District #92 (Nisga’a) through the schools, Nisga’a Valley Health Authority, Nisga’a Lisims Government and the Village Governments commit more energy—financial resources, effort and attention—toward the preservation of our language and culture.

And further, that:

More gatherings be organized between the Elders and Youth, with the focus on teaching and learning “one thing at a time”—to bring back community learning around the Dinner Table.

Resolution 5: Subject *Hawahlkws*

MSC _____ / _____

Whereas *Hawahlkws* has always been there for us to observe and to use as a method of doing things according to our *Ayuuk*; and

Whereas We only know it is there and we have not practiced it.

Therefore Be it Resolved that

The Nisga'a Elders-Youth Gathering plan, seek funding and implement workshops specifically on "Nisga'a *Hawahlkws*" while we have the knowledge of our elders.

Resolution 6: Subject *Nisga'a Spirituality*

MSC _____ / _____

Whereas Nisga'a believe and recognize that we were not accidently placed on our land; and

Whereas Nisga'a have not been formally taught about our Nisga'a spirituality, and our eventual conversion to our present day Christianity.

Therefore Be It Resolved that:

The Nisga'a Elders-Youth Gathering Planning Committee: plan, seek funding and implement workshops on pre contact Nisga'a spirituality and post contact Christianity practices.

Resolution 7: Subject Breaches in Ayuukhl Nisga'a

MSC _____ / _____

Whereas There appears to be some breaches in *ayuukhl Nisga'a* regarding feast procedures and protocols; and

Whereas The Nation has just concluded the writing and printing of the Yukw Book; and

Whereas The book is for sale and not available at a lower cost for low-income citizens, students and youth; and

Whereas All our people want to learn.

Therefore be it resolved that

This conference direct:

- I. The Nisga'a Council of Elders to recommend to the Nisga'a Lisims Government Executive that the cost of the Yukw book be reduced for low-income citizens, students and youth; and that
- II. The Nisga'a Council of Elders recommends to the Nisga'a Lisims Government Executive to begin a process of developing a Yukw handbook to be given free to the Nisga'a schools and others.

Resolution 8: Subject Spirituality – What our law tells us

MSC _____ / _____

Whereas We seek to understand the history in regard to the procedures and protocols used when there is a suicide; and

Whereas We seek answers to such questions as:

- When did this process begin, or why is this process being done today?
- For whom was it utilized in the past: a Chief? The common man? A single father? Who was he, and what House did he come from?

Therefore be it resolved that

We talk about it in church and hear from the elders of victims.



Need recommendations from this conference in relation to:

- Recognition of gender [equality].
- Roles people play, culturally, because we cannot change our Ayuuk.
- Respect for the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' system.
- Change [our attitudes about] Respect. [Teach Respect in the Nisga'a way].
- Greed [is not our way].

Elders Speeches (during discussion group reports):

Sigidim-nak' Tk'igapks, Alice Azak – *Simgigat, Sigidim Haanak'*. I'm happy to be here with you today. I remember the ways of our elders many years ago. We followed *ayuukhl Nisga'a* in everything we did. When a child passed on, there wasn't a big feast – a private settlement was held in the home. The people in the olden days weren't employed; the contributions consisted of tools, household items, moose meat and other traditional foods. This is what we need to think about – the people in the olden days had very little material things. **It was their knowledge and wisdom that was important.**

Sim'oogit Wisin Xbiłtkw, Andrew Mercer – *Simgigat, Sigidim Haanak'*, *ganhl k'ubatk'ihłkw* (children): First, I want to thank the Lord for this day. Thank you, for attending this important gathering – we're becoming concerned about the way we do things in relation to *ayuukhl Nisga'a*. On this day I remember Gadim Galdoo'o who recently passed; he always stated in his speeches that we are going way off track regarding our Ayuuk. So I'm pleased today that we are discussing this, so that we can re-align things for the benefit of our children.

We were fortunate to have Sim'oogit Hleek in our group. *Gwiis-halayt* blanket is very sacred. Today, we see young men and children wearing them in the dance groups. I have a *gwiis-halayt* blanket but I don't wear it to dance, as I have another blanket to do that. We don't dance with the *gwiis-halayt* blanket; it's very sacred. You have to earn the right to wear it. You have to have contributed to your community, and more importantly to your nation, before you receive a blanket like that. We are very saddened to see what's happening today with our blankets.

In regard to seating our *Simgigat* and *Sigidim Haanak'*; it's an insult to our

Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' when they're seated in the wrong place. Our young people have to know that. I can recall our late uncle, wáhlin Wisin Xbiłtkw, always told us, if you're not sure about something don't hesitate to ask another Sim'oogit even if from another Wilp – he will gladly help you. I know this because I've done so. You ask, so that you don't make a mistake or hurt anyone, and so that people don't make fun of you. Always ask a Sim'oogit or Sigidim Hanak' if you're unsure. I've always done that and I'm thankful.

What I've done to solve this problem at our feasts, in my Wilp, I have my *luu-anyee* at the door to seat the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak', I don't leave him alone – I stand behind him and whisper to him the Sim'oogit name, and what table he's on; the same with the Sigidim Haanak'. When I have my nephews seating, I don't give them too many tables to seat, I think that's where the confusion is. So I've always taken the responsibility upon myself not to leave them alone when they seat the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak'. [For our] tribal feasts, I print a list of the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' for young people in our Wilp to study, so that they'll know how to seat people the next day, and they don't make a mistake when seating the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak'. They're learning, and starting to remember the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' names.

The other concern we discussed is the [family] meeting—called before the stone-moving feast, or before the tribal feast—by the people [who] are going to be moving the [grave]stones [of deceased loved ones]. They call the meeting and they don't invite the Simgigat or Sigidim Haanak'. They have meetings, and set dates, and all of a sudden it's on the [Cultural] calendar. The Sim'oogit doesn't even know, and yet the Sim'oogit is the only one that can call that meeting and set the date.

We're disregarding that today. There are a lot of issues we never got to talking about today. We felt that **we need a lot more time to discuss these issues.**

Nevertheless, I am very happy that we're moving forward today, and being brave. I commend all of you for your bravery in talking about our problems; we're now pulling them out from under the rug. We have to own our problems. We are the only ones that can address [our problems], not people from other places – only we can do it.

Marilyn Tait – There was one other thing regarding the “blanket” that we forgot to mention. My uncle, Sim'oogit Hleek, shared his concern regarding Regalia. [He also explained] the significance of the men's blankets; that the “black”[interior] represents the darkness that the villages were in at one time, it lasted a long time – no sunshine, all darkness. That's the reason the men have the black blanket with the red [border and] crest. He said, the reason the women have the red blanket with the black [border] is because, in the morning sometimes, there's a red mist in the sky ... and sometimes in the evening. That's the significance of how the colors were chosen for the men and the women. There were never any other colors – just red and black, with the buttons, and if you are a true Nisga'a you wouldn't be wearing any other colors. These are some of the concerns that were shared with us.

Sim'oogit Hlayim Wil, Alex Angus – The group felt that 'we are not having too many feasts'. We talked about the role of the Simgigat and Sigidim Haanak' ... regalia – everything is [inter]connected. *Anhlo'omskw* / honor ... comes with birth, and is further developed by paternal relatives as the child grows; the extended family give advice as the child is growing and developing. If the child goes off track, he/or she would hear words like *Hawit*

... *Gilo* – especially if the child [showed] interest in going out with a person in his/her own tribe.

Why do we say this? Prevention – we address it before it becomes an issue, and we help the child to understand the reasons why this shouldn't be. If we don't caution our children, it's thought that we don't care about them. The entire family is engaged – whether we prevent a situation, or if we don't prevent it – and instead, we react. In other circumstances, people may ask, “Why didn't you help when I needed help with the children?”

Axts'imuxw means – [behaves as if one has] no ears; [is not listening].

We have to remember, when a child is born, there is nothing that is not good [about the child] – the child is born pure.

We need to *gis-yeet'in* (pass on) what we know, that's what *Yuuhlimk'askw* is; to advise others based on what we know, what we may have experienced.

In regard to *k'aats* – we encourage it when we continue to condone it ... Take care, my children.

It's up to us to share our knowledge and wisdom, and to put a stop to things that are not right, to prevent things from happening by advising our children. When a *k'aats* relationship is started, it can't be stopped. [May you continue to] do well in your discussions. When you see [/or hear] someone going off [track], speak out, and be heard. Compassion and respect, and love, is within us all. Thank you.

Liibaygum An'un, Maureen Morven: (Read & submitted in group discussions.) As I sat and listened to all the contributions in all of the discussions, I learned that everyone has contributed something different. All the elders have different teachings and information to share; it gets kind of

confusing at times.

As a student of spirituality, I have been learning about correctness and incorrectness; I have been learning about the historical and spiritual reasons for the way things were done in the past. I also began remembering the talks my grandparents gave me that were about the expectations of me as a Ksim Nisga'a, and how things worked within the culture.

I found, and still find that our culture is very aligned with Spiritual Law. For example, our *Hawahlkws* were put in place for the protection and safety of one's spirit and soul, which is very similar to the "Law of Karma" in other cultures. The law of Karma tells what should and shouldn't be done, and what the consequences will be when we make poor choices, just like our *Hawahlkws*.

There is also the law of respect and the law of balance which our culture is based on. There is a spiritual law that says we are part of everyone, and everyone is part of us; translated into our own language is *Sayt-K'ilim-Goot*. There is also a spiritual law that says we each are responsible for our own place in the big picture, and that we must help everyone around us to maintain our place in the bigger picture. This sounds to me like *Nihlimoomt* (assist one another) and *Sayt-Hahlals* (work together). These are only a few of the alignments, or similarities that I have found in my own research.

I have also found that to adopt such a law as the law of K'aats, our ancestors had to have had an understanding of the sciences—biology and chemistry. As explained to me by my Ye'e:

If you K'aats, you are breaking our law. You cannot sleep with your brother; you cannot marry your brother. All Ganada boys are your brothers. If you marry your brother ... your children will

be sick; they will be crazy in the head.

Other elders have also talked about birth abnormalities that would occur in descendants as a result of K'aats. The elders in the past shared this information as passed down by the ancestors.

In hindsight, and after learning biology and chemistry, I came to understand the meaning of incest in our culture, and its effects on a child conceived in incest. They could be born with weak health and other birth defects, including mental defects. These defects which become permanent in the bloodline may surface in any generation.

Our ancestors also had an understanding of psychology, and how trauma can be damaging to a person's life. So they had all different ways of dealing with these issues so that one does not suffer their whole life.

When I think of all the laws of our ancestors that governed our nation, I cannot help but feel proud that I come from them, that I'm a descendent of our ancestors. Our ancestors were highly intelligent.

When listening to the positive and negative life experiences as explained through *Hawahlkws* and *Yuuhlimk'askw*, you can tell that our culture is very spiritual and that our culture came from K'am Ligii Hahlhaahl. Today, our laws are written down so that we will remain closely connected to K'am Ligii Hahlhaahl, and closely connected to each other so that our nation remains strong.

As a child, bits and pieces of our culture was shared with me by my grandparents. They always told me that so much has been forgotten, so much has not been passed down; that they could never tell me all there is to our culture as lived in the past, and even if they could, that it would take

“my” whole lifetime to share it. They told me that since they could tell only what *they* know, that I should sit still and listen for however long it took while I can, since they might not be around when I was older. They always said that, “Our laws are strict and for good reason. They made us a strong people, they made us such a people to be looked up to or revered.”

As a child I was fortunate to have also witnessed somewhat of a grooming process when our father was to settle over one of the Simgigat in our community. I remember a lot of visits with a lot of Ye’es who sometimes stayed overnight at our house. I later learned that they were providing our father with counsel and guidance on his future role as a Sim’oogit. They came and provided him what our people always practiced, *Yuuhlimk’askw*.

These are the memories prompted by the discussions heard yesterday, and as I listened today. I thought carefully... and I prayed about sharing them today.

I have observed the people in leadership roles; I have watched them struggle ... I’ve observed how even though they know the difference between what is right, and what is not, they do not speak up or take corrective action; because the solutions are either not popular, or they are not politically correct. When I take into consideration all that has been shared with me about our culture and our laws, one thing remains constant throughout. Our strength lies not in our physique or in our ability to be political or popular; our strength lies in our ability to be correct ... to be a people of integrity.

Our Ayuuk, our laws, are not about politics or about being popular. They are though, safe and absolute, meaning that they are laws of pure knowledge from *K’am Ligii Hahlhaahl*. This is what makes them spiritual.

Spiritual law governs the lives of all people; our laws govern all our lives, and

our actions reflect our laws whether we believe in them or not. As elected or hereditary leaders, this means that our leadership must reflect truth, honesty, compassion, love, respect and correctness; this is what integrity is. Greed and hunger for power are not part of Integrity. To be effective leaders for our own people, we must be willing to let go of the negative teachings we have learned from the Western culture.

To better understand our struggle as a people, we need to go back and rediscover our cultural values and truths. This will help us to truly understand how we got here. We need to do this not because it is popular, or political. We need to do this because it is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do in order to lead our youth back to safety, and how we do this is to “Walk Our Talk” in our cultural ways. As the Shaman put it to us in a workshop, “We must put our words on our feet so that our words become footprints for our descendents to follow.” As a person who will one day be an elder, “I” need footprints to follow.

Nisga’a Youth Organizing Youth Panel Presentation

Handouts: Terms of Reference
Background Information to Youth Organizing Youth (YOY)

Sim’oogit K’eexkw, Chairperson—Day II, Opening Comments

... People express what’s in their hearts. When we can’t see what’s in each other’s hearts, we can’t fully understand their feelings in what they’re saying – it doesn’t mean that one of us is wrong. Until we’re at the same level of understanding then we could see, but our responsibility is to bring each other up to the level of understanding.

It’s like Michael [Jordan] when he was playing basketball. He never won

a championship, but he brought all his friends and teammates up there, and that's the way we need to work together.

I just thought I'd share that [while] the YOY are preparing.... (Calls upon the Youth Organizing Youth Panel).

Ts'ilimaas, Gilbert Morven, Vancouver Representative, from the Wilp of Hleek. Gives encouragement to fellow participants.

For awhile I was afraid that our culture would slowly drift away, but realized that 'fear' was a result of being away from home.

I spent most of my life in Vancouver, in the city, and I have to admit, it's only within the last year and a half that I've been picking up my culture again, and it's been through the *Ts'amiks* group.

What we've been doing is having a monthly potlatch and we try to stick with protocols, and the dance group has been really thriving for us. The thing with living in the big city is, there are many other nations around and you can't really say hello to anyone, and you have much more loss of identity so when we have dance practice, everyone's there together.

The Youth Council has monthly meetings, and we have a big annual meeting to plan for.

One of my concerns is, I've been hearing that they don't think the *Ts'amiks* community is a thriving community, because of how far we are from the mainland. Yesterday in Laxgalts'ap as we were performing, Sim'oogit A^xgwindaskw was sharing how the villages are wanting to pull their songs and *adaawak* from the urban communities; that's my main fear for my community because all the youth out there are hungry and striving for what it means to be Nisga'a, and if it wasn't for the *Ts'amiks* group I'd still be a lost

soul in Vancouver.

I've had a lot of trials and tribulations in my life and I've been directly affected by the Residential School Butterfly Effect – I had no respect for my life or for life at all.

Before I actually joined the dance group a year and a half ago I kept getting beat up by crooked cops – and with my pride in my way of being a big strong Nisga'a and not knowing what it means, I talked back to the police and ended up with broken and bruised ribs, and I was living the homeless life at the time. People would text me and encourage me to come out, and the first time I hit the dance floor, my soul ... and everything ... was glowing, and I was able to smile.

So I was asked, and decided to join the Youth Council. I used the wisdom of what happened in my life to help the youth, because there are a lot of distractions in Vancouver – events, drugs, liquor stores.... I remember reading and learning from the Txeemsim stories. The youth would like to see the elders travel to Vancouver – we all want to keep our language and culture alive. I rarely use my English name.

Regarding Avante Mines, it has its pros and cons. I have a suggestion that we use the revenue – that will come to our government from the project – to build some real traditional longhouses with the fire pits.

It's been said that you have to be groomed to wear the *gwiis-halayt*. I'm self-groomed, but we need elders to help us. Travel – to and from the group sessions – is difficult in the city. Most of what I know comes from my Wilp. I thank the Chiefs for their will power.

The other thing I heard was our dance group shouldn't have buttons on our

blankets because that's the sign of a Chief or Matriarch. We didn't know that. It would be good to have those longhouses built along the water or near hunting grounds and have one longhouse for each Wilp.

I think the organizing might have been a little off for this event. I want to be here for this, but I wanted to be part of the Journey Home event, and now I'm feeling disrespectful because I'm pulling away from my community to be here for this. It would have been nice to have everyone enjoy the event as one, and it has affected this gathering too – you see the room here is nearly empty. But we learn as we go along and sometimes we have growing pains. *T'ooyaksiy' nisimh.*

Justin Davis, Terrace/Laxgalts'ap Rep, from the Wilp of Luu-ya'as.

Urban Locals are pretty much left out of all feasts because we don't have the transportation. Travel is provided sometimes on a 'first come–first serve' basis and we have a lot of people in Terrace.

Yesterday I heard about *K'aats* and I didn't know what that was until I was about 19. Yesterday when they were talking about it, and it was said that some who have done it were outcast. Today I don't even feel like I want to be here because I've done it. I feel that our Urban Local has been left out of a lot of things.

Regarding our Youth Council, we started in the Getting Youth Off The Streets program, with movie nights and game nights in Terrace. (It's difficult to decipher what he's saying) ... What I want is that the Urban Locals be included and kept up-to-date and not told last minute about stuff. That's about it. Thanks.

Emily Watts, Prince Rupert Rep: Chiefs, Matriarchs.

I introduced myself in Ts'imsan first because that's what we learned in school. Only Ts'imsan language is taught in Prince Rupert, not Nisga'a. It would benefit the youth if the Nisga'a language were taught in our schools. Some of the things I heard yesterday were, why don't youth attend feasts; or why do we do some of the things that we do at funerals, memorials or feasting?

It would be good if there was a way to get that knowledge out – what is the protocol? Why do we have protocol? Why do we give things out at feasts? Why do we do different things the way we do them?

I grew up with my Jijii telling me things and I still don't know much about things. There are a lot of things I don't know that I would like to learn. As Urban Youth in Prince Rupert and Terrace, we don't have the resources to learn these things, and we don't even know who to ask. *T'ooyaksiy' n'isim'.*

Arthur Johnson, Jr., Gitlaxt'aamiks Rep: I'm very honored to be part of this panel; very honored to be part of this community.

Our Nisga'a Youth Advisory Council (NYAC) has been going very strong this year; we had a few struggles in the past years. Through our NYAC group we've become stronger within our own communities, and we've been having stronger mentoring within our *Councils* which is helping us to be the future leaders that we want to be.

The stuff that we're doing in our communities are: Volunteering in any way that we can at any function; Getting Youth Off The Streets program; working with other groups, and working with Nisga'a Valley Health Authority programs.

Trying to gauge our youth as to what they really want within our communities is another task in itself, because there are so many other groups of youth that don't really want to mingle with each other. We're trying to break down the barriers to get them to all work together towards a common goal.

Within the communities now, we're trying to get the youth to learn from the elders to really understand where we come from – get a better understanding of our culture and traditional harvesting. I had a great opportunity to learn from my uncles, my in-laws, and I want to learn as much as I can so I can pass it on to my children, to my nephews.

The 'feasting' concern is what I've been hearing, and the suggestion that we have our elders sitting with the youth so they can teach us what's going on and what they're doing. I'd like to see something like that so that we know what's going on at the feast, because right now what we have with our youth is a very big gap and that shouldn't happen. It's a concern that we all share; that we need to put forward. We've talked about this for the last few days; let's make it our goal. That's pretty much what I have for now and I'd like to thank you for letting us be on this panel.

Lena Doolan, Gingolx Rep: I live in Gingolx. I myself am not as fluent in Nisga'a as I should be and you can tell from my previous comments that I'm not that great at speaking in public in Nisga'a.

A concern I have is with the feasting system and how you have people that don't even show up most of the time, and that's how the culture will be lost.

It's a great shame that a lot of us don't participate in cultural events. That's about all I have. Thanks.

Kimberly Azak, Gitwinksihlkw Rep: I'd like to thank the Council members for their presentations, and for the courage they have to stand up and speak to you today. I've done this a few times and I'm still really shaky and nervous addressing big crowds, so I encourage you my fellow Youth Council members to keep on. Thank you very much for your patience, and to the panel.

I see that the high school students have arrived. I'd like to talk about some of the issues that we talked about yesterday. Like I said, we were very fortunate to have Sim'oogit Hleek in our group and he shared his great knowledge of all the stories in our areas in the Nass Valley. Hearing those stories gives young people something to think about when they go about their daily lives. We do listen and we do take what we need out of those stories and apply it to our daily lives, and that's what we need to encourage the younger people to do—to remember the principles that we're taught and what our culture is all about.

Learning how to speak our language is another area of concern. As you heard, we're in the primary stages of learning how to speak or address groups ... crowds ... we're in that learning process now, and we want to get to a place where we can hold a conversation, and applying ourselves to do that.

Taking Nisga'a classes, being with elders, and hearing their stories, singing and dancing are some of the teaching tools for our youth. Singing and dancing is learning. We need to immerse ourselves into the culture and ask questions - if we don't ask questions we will not learn. To learn from elders, we need to approach them and they're very approachable – I ask questions and I give them the sense that I want to learn, and I'm here to learn.

As far as feast-related concerns go, I do attend feasts, and shamefully I'll admit that previously, I'd only go to family feasts. I realized in the last year that if I really want to learn our culture, I must attend any feast that is going on and respect the families that are hosting. In that way, I can help myself to learn the culture and the protocols. We need to find out how to learn the history.

I'm very thankful that this opportunity has arrived for the youth and elders to come together. With that I'd like to invite any Nisga'a Youth Advisory Council (NYAC) members to come forward if they have any closing comments.

Gilbert Morven: Since we have our high school students here I want to reiterate what was said earlier [concerning our language & culture],

“We're not losing it; we're neglecting it”.

In my travels here with the Journey Home group, I got to hear some of the stories regarding residential school, and for the survivors to be able to go through the hardships that they went through, and to still keep our language and culture alive to this point—for us – the youth—it makes me feel like I'm not doing enough.

I just wanted to get some closing remarks in here, and say to my fellow Youth, my peers here, *daxgigat'ihl gagootsim* – take courage, and step forward to our Chiefs and Matriarchs to learn and speak our language; take courage, to participate in your dance groups. Also within the *daxgigat'ihl gagootsim*, everybody take courage. Our elders stepped forward, and they grasped the school knowledge to the fullest. We have so many well-educated people that went to residential school; they had the courage to pay attention in school and always had the courage to pay attention to the

culture.

So I'd just like to say to my fellow peers – take courage, we don't need to be afraid. English is not our first language, and I'm trying everything possible to ensure that it is a language that I use second when I'm in the feast hall, and when I'm in gatherings. Pay attention, listen, it's very important. *T'ooyak_{siy} nisim*.

Questions/Comments:

K'eexkw encouraged youth to take this opportunity to comment or ask questions of their Youth Council. He quoted *wahlin* Sim'oogit Hleek, "It's not any good to say, 'I almost stood up to say this', it doesn't mean a thing."

If you get up and say it, then everybody knows who you are, how you think and where you want to go. Elders are allowed to speak as well.

Millie Percival: I was wondering if you have an elder rep that works with you and can guide you. Three of you mentioned that you need to attend these kinds of things in order to learn and understand our culture. I know a lot of times when we have youth conferences the organizers seem afraid to allow anybody else in besides the youth, unless you're invited as a presenter. I think this kind of forum is really nice where we have youth and elders so that we can get each other's perspectives. We got a lot of good input yesterday, from a lot of youth, and I think it would be beneficial if it were both ways - if you allowed older people into the youth conferences as well just to observe or whatever. Thank you.

Kim Azak: As far as the elders guiding us in our meetings goes, we've had a few elders that have put their name forward indicating that they want to be a

part of our Nisga'a Youth Advisory meetings. But as far as having an elder for every time we meet, maybe that's something that we can incorporate ... As for the youth conferences and letting the adults in, I guess that would be an issue that would be discussed and brought forward as a suggestion to the youth that organize the events.

Irene Griffin, Gitwinksihlkw: I wanted to ask as well, perhaps it would be in order that it be part of the committee to have an elder with you, not only to advise, but maybe to help you in getting the language and in telling stories because to me, it's part of leadership.

I also want to say how impressed I am – as an elder myself I worry about how we're going to be in the next 50 years, because everything in our lives is changing. One of my favorite sayings is, "In the olden days, 35 years ago..." because in 35 years we have changed so much, and I'm really encouraged when I hear you – the next generation – there is HOPE for us, that we won't lose our language, our culture, our spirit, our land – because that's who we are.

I especially want to encourage the rep from *Ts'amiks*. I was so impressed with you, using our language and in your courage to speak up.

I also wondered about having the Journey Home event and the Elders Conference at the same time. I know attendance would have been more here if the other event wasn't in conflict. It would have been good to have the Journey Home people here too, to listen to the discussions, because the discussions in the breakout rooms have been very enlightening; it goes towards helping us to know who we are.

I'd just like to encourage all of you and let you know that you're all doing a good job.

Gilbert Morven: It would be really good if we did have an elder on our NYA

Council, and to my knowledge we've not had our working council together in a while; we're going to work on that right away.

Another concern is: Would an elder have the time, or be able to sit with us each time we get together? So that'll be a work in progress for us.

Regarding the Journey Home event which I've been thinking about ... on the way home from Vancouver ... It's really within K'am Ligii Hahlhaahl's plan to do sections of healing, because there's an entirely different set of feelings happening—that needs to happen for all the Journey Home goers. I myself, when I walked through the residential school I was really shaking, and crying; it was even harder when we would break into circle groups with the elders.

The comment regarding language and culture being lost, I think it was just put aside so that we could get our 'self-governance' to maintain our own way of life, and not have to try to follow anyone else. That was the importance of the treaty. I believe it will be coming back. *T'ooyaksiy' nisin'.*

Justin Barton: I was just wondering, what about *Hobiyee* and what it means to you guys, and whether it should stay within the four local villages or should we extend it to the three urban locals.

Kim Azak: If you ask my opinion, it should be throughout all seven local communities because if you haven't noticed, from what the urban locals have said, they have felt left out in the past few years, and they haven't been able to purchase ... (?).

Last year, Vancouver had their own *Hobiyee* and the Prince Rupert dance group went down; they said it was a good experience, so coming from us, it would probably be best if all seven locals did host *Hobiyee*.

Angaye'e, Shirley Morven: This is what I would like to say. Although the Creator didn't send me down here to judge I have to tell you that I'm really

proud of you. You're the first group since Alvin, Oscar, Rod and Bert McKay came home who are that young and in a leadership role. That's really good. You're two generations removed from the very first group that ever went away to school and came back. Those gentlemen - what was really admirable about them, what they saw that was missing, they went right away to fill that in. I don't remember any of them use negative terms about anything. They just took what was there and they ran with it and I see that kind of promise sitting on the podium. Congratulations. I know you're not here to please me but I hope you're very proud of the efforts you've shown today. Thank you.

Ts'aagabin, Verna Williams: I'm happy to see all the young people who have come, as you have filled this building. (Asked the youth to stand). Applause. You will be the leaders of the valley soon. Applause.

Youth (Paul ___): What is the position for mixed Martial Arts? We've been training since July and we are hoping that it goes on for a long time.

Youth 2: I've been participating in the same program, but lately with the activities that have been going on in the community; I have had to pull myself away.

The program is beneficial to our youth because it teaches discipline, it keeps them active, they're living healthy and they're learning about foods and nutrition. It's a good program but our youth need to Respect the program in order for it to continue.

Kim Azak: I'm not sure what the status is of the program as I've been busy with this event. The next conference is on October 14 to 16 when we're taking a group of youth to Kitsault with some elders. **Resp.:** That's awesome.

If you have a group of youth and you'd like to put forward the name of one member for one of the Youth Councils, the majority of Youth Councils still

have spots open for you to fill those spots. So it's something for you to consider.

Vern McKay: What programs are being provided for the youth?

Kim Azak: The Nisga'a Youth Advisory Council is a working group and we have programs organized through the Youth Organizing Youth department at Nisga'a Lisims Government.

This month we'll be having a Treaty training session in Kitsault on October 14 to 16. Other programs, we're trying to establish all Youth Councils and fill the voids within each group, so that youth can push forward things you'd like to see happen, things you'd like to see your Youth Councils to be involved in, and to participate in within your communities.

Chester Munroe: The reason Paul was asking the question is that the program is very costly for us, and we're wondering if there are funds available to offset the cost of equipment and cost to hire a head instructor from Terrace (Mixed Martial Arts Program).

We've been going strong since July and we average 15 people per class which is open to everyone, adults, youth ... So if you have anybody from the surrounding communities that want to get involved, you're more than welcome to join. Just adding on to what Paul asked.

How do you engage youth in social media to get your concerns out there, or for them to voice their concerns to you guys?

Kim Azak: Each Youth Council in each community is provided an annual budget, and each Youth Council creates a workplan based on that budget. If you desire these kinds of programs in your community and if you're affiliated with the Youth Council you would submit a letter to your Youth Council regarding funding.

Regarding social media; previous Youth Councils did have a Facebook page set up but it wasn't used too well ... so we set up a web page on NNKN which is used by all Youth Councils.

Martha Adams, Gingolx: I'm wondering when our Hall is going to be open for the youth to participate in other sports, and not just basketball, because I know we used to play volleyball.

Lena Doolan: As of right now, the 'flooring' guys will be coming in on October 4th to start the floor, and from there we'll determine the opening date and what sports will be offered and what sports [equipment] will be put in the gym.

Youth: One thing I want to bring up is the concern of the [population] growth of our nation.

We have a lot of 'growth' that happens in the world—we have Nisga'a as far as the United States, throughout Canada ... and through social media we voice our concerns.

We have a city, Prince George, that's growing rapidly with Nisga'a people. My question is: **What are your concerns with the youth in Prince George?**

Kim Azak: That is a good question. I'm sure we'll be asking ourselves that after today. It's something to think about. We don't want to leave any of our citizens out, but with the gap between Terrace and Vancouver—those citizens are left out—and they need to be taken care of just like any other citizens of the Nisga'a nation.

K'eexkw thanked and encouraged the Youth Council panel, and other youth for sharing what's in their hearts. It's up to us to open our hearts to them, listen to them, hear them for we cannot accomplish anything if we don't stop and listen. ... A-sim! We heard that phrase a lot when we were children.

Day III: Wind Up

Wilp: Home is where The Healing Begins

Reference: Powerpoint Presentation (hardcopy attached)

By *Gilom Ji T'agiy*, Roberta Stewart, Manager

Mental Health & Wellness, Nisga'a Valley Health Authority

Questions & Comments – following the presentation:

- Where would the nursery Headstart/nursery fit into the project? There are a lot of young parents who can contribute.
- Nisga'a youth councils would like to be engaged in this process
- Suggestion that updates be put on the website for the information of those who live outside of the areas where the meetings occur.
- Encouraged by this work. Keep up the good work.

Roberta: Surveys will be in two formats: one electronic which will go online, one on paper.

Sim'oogit Hleek, Dr. Joe Gosnell: Listened to the music [playing in the community hall] this morning. Music can make you very sad, it can make you very happy – it can be used as a form of telling people what your feelings are.

I was reminded of my teenage years – residential school, my time in Sunnyside where we had the Sunnyside blues, Nisga'a blues, Double Island blues ...

Sadness fills my heart sometimes when I remember those life experiences. I don't think we should allow those experiences to hold us back. Rather, use it as a form of encouragement.

My mother said – don't forget what happened to our people. Who will erase those events from our minds? There were apologies made by the government

to those who went through residential school. There's no amount of compensation that will erase that from our minds. No compensation will erase the taste of soap, the sting of the strap on the back of our hands. Nothing will replace those things. But we have to move on, regardless of what happened in the past.

I watched as the event unfolded here, I watched what happened. I used to be able to say, "The sky's the limit." The sky is no longer the limit. You can go as high as you want, there is no limit.

I heard the song – *Dim Di'akhlgiwiy*. That's what my grandfather told me - I can do it.

So to our young people,

Si'aamhl wilsim, as you continue on your life journey. *Jidaa sagan-yatsgwin*
/If you stumble ... and fall on your journey don't stay down ... pick
yourself up and dust yourself off, and then continue on your journey.

Where do these words come from? ... From our forefathers ... from
our ancestors.

I look forward to meeting some of our people who for the first time will walk on our lands ... see the mountains for the first time. *T'ooyaksiy nisim*.

Brian Tait: We only have our children for a very short time. I'm very proud of NVHA, School District, the chiefs and matriarchs, who role model and lead our children and show how much we care. I'm proud of the teachers for the work that they do – we need to allow our message to go to them that we still have a responsibility to our children. Too often we demonstrate that we rely too much on RCMP, teachers and other professionals. It was good to see the children yesterday [Youth group, NESS students]. They need to be able to tell mom and dad what they like, what they see. I'm very proud that my son spoke yesterday and I'm very happy to hear the report this morning. You're taking

great steps in improving our lives through health and strong relationships.

Oscar Mercer’’: I don’t have a question, just encouragement to you. Your father is my brother so I can call you my daughter. *Si’aamhl wilin*. I’m very happy for the work you’re doing. *Si’aamhl wilin*.

K’eexkw: I work at the school, NESS. Sometimes, when children arrive to school, they’re tired, hungry or upset; this is what they bring to school. So, *Gilom Ji T’agiy*, I stand here to state that it is time that we the *angigatkw* / the parents ... so that our nieces and nephews can take their place... It’s time for us make a stand to demonstrate the Love of our Creator within our lives, the lives that we’ve been given [by the Creator].

I remember living across the river, there was always food available –we all sat at the table, and listened, as they explained life. This does not happen anymore. There’s no excuse for this, we just don’t fit it in to our lives anymore.

Where is our *ayuuk*? Why don’t we live it? ... It’s our responsibility to *yuuhlimk* / to counsel our kids, it’s no one else’s responsibility.

Even though food wasn’t always there, our parents still sat with us at the table and shared with us everything that was going on. They shared the values, our *ayuuk* ... Today we ask, where’s the RCMP? Where are the professionals?

The RCMP has no place in your home. The RCMP has no place in our lives. We should be advising our children at our dinner table. We should be advising our nephews and nieces. I’m guilty of not doing that. I have no excuses.

We can’t walk around as if we’re carrying a heavy load - we have to stand up straight. We shouldn’t be saying how sick we are. I’m quite sure that if Dr. Gosnell continued to blame the Whiteman for what’s happened, we wouldn’t have a treaty today.

One good thing about residential school is that it gave me the strength to not

let go of our language. Whenever I got into trouble in school I would get beat up ... when they tried to take our language away. I knew I was doing something good.

Some of our grandchildren go to school hungry ... tired ...hurt. When are we going to own that responsibility? You heard what Hleek had to say. We can't stay stuck in blame, because of our past. We have drug dealers ... bootleggers in our communities, and we don't do anything about it. We want the RCMP to do something about it. We should be the ones to do something about it, we have our *ayuuk*.

I've been working in the school for some time. If you want to experience love, work in the school, because each child gives hugs, and love - they're still pure [innocent]. We need to practice more, looking within, rather than continuing to look outside....

Gilom Ji T'agiý, si'aamhl wilin, I encourage you to keep on with the work you're doing. This is what will portray the goodness of our Creator. You heard the words of Hleek, when you fall, don't stay there. Get up again, and brush yourself off; do that before you enter your home, brush yourself off. Shake yourself off and say, I'm going to put my feelings aside and allow the peace of our Creator to flow through me.

Thank you for your presentation, and don't hesitate to call me because I'd like to be a part of it. Four years ago I made up my mind that it's my role to speak on behalf of our children. (Missed the remainder of K'eexkw's closing remarks; lots of noise in anticipation of the Journey Home group.)

Chairman provided an overview of the amendments to the day's agenda.

.....

10:33 a.m.: **Nisga’a Heritage & Preservation Society**

Reference: NHPS Brochures, Introductory information attached

Panel: **Simgigat**; *Baxk’ap*, Jacob Nyce; *Hlayim Wil*, Alex Angus; *K’eexkw*, Herbert Morven;

Sigidim Haanak’; *Tk’igapks*, Alice Azak; *Angaye’e*, Shirley Morven; *Wii Gaks*, Audrey McKay; *Ksim Sook’*, Nita Morven; *Baaskhl Hayatskw*, Adele Gosnell; *Ts’aagabin*, Verna Williams.

.....

- Each community is represented at the NHPS.
- Concern is that our language is dwindling, the language of our forefathers.
 - When contact with the *K’amksiiwaa* occurred, this is also when English was introduced to our people and in the surrounding areas.
- NHPS discusses ways in which we can strengthen and revive full use of our language.
- Children are taught Nisga’a language in our schools alright, but there’s not enough time to teach “fluency” in the 2-hour a day sessions.
 - Some of us can’t grasp it in that time frame; this is the reason we need to use our language more in all of our communications.
- We need to restore the language that was taken from us, so that we can teach it to our children along with the culture. If we don’t do this, IT WILL be lost.
- The challenge is, to have all of our youth commit to attending all feasts.
- NHPS would like to challenge each community to close the gap between the youth and the elders.

- If we don't all commit to supporting this work, the handful who are teaching the language could be teaching until we're blue in the face and still we won't have much success.
 - We need individual and community support. The steps are there, the path is there, let us work together to save our Nisga'a language.
 - *Aamhl hlaa sayt k'yoolims-gatgum ahl ts'im sayt-k'ilim-goot.*
- In regard to the NHPS logo^{iv}: the “open hands” means *gwilx-ye'enskw*—to pass down the knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors; we do this by following in the “footprints” of our ancestors – in *sayt-k'ilim-goot*. The talking stick represents the “authority” of the Simgigat & Sigidim Haanak' in K'alii-Aksim Lisims to be the ones to authentic Nisga'a language & culture.
- For most of us who have worked with language and who are now retired, our responsibility in this area of our lives has increased instead.
 - In all our efforts to keep our language alive, all of us who know how to speak and understand our language, it's time for “all” of us to stand up and help with this work of keeping our language alive.
- We're aware that money is always an issue – to have to pay people to contribute and participate in anything that we do.
 - In the olden days, people used to volunteer and work together, *Sayt Hahláls*, in anything we did; but after relocating here, we've become conditioned to being paid to assist with anything.
- Language is taught to adults at VWN; some of them have expressed that they should have listened to the language teachers at NESS.
- The children learn very little in the few hours/per week of language classes. Much of what they learn is introductory material; they learn about who they are, where they come from, and so on.

- What we want to teach is “fluency” in speaking our language, and this is worrisome because it is not happening.
- One thing is certain – the Nisga’a language is not spoken on a regular basis in our environment.
- Most of the students that were taught at NESS by the instructors that are now retired, those students have their own children today.
- Adele Gosnell, new member of NHPS, expressed that she would like to get involved with the ACW and teach Nisga’a in her home; she says that we could also learn songs in *sim’algax*.
 - Would like to know how everyone feels about this in the ACW and YWCA.
- Hope there’s a “renaissance” movement that will inspire EVERYONE to learn our language so that everybody is speaking Nisga’a at the very next gathering that we have.
- **K’eexkw** introduced and thanked Tina Jules, Director of Instruction at School District #92 (Nisga’a). He acknowledged her resourcefulness in moving this work forward. We only provide guidance to her and all those she works with. She promotes, as applies to all language initiatives, that the responsibility for the preservation of our language is “ours”, it isn’t hers; she’s just here to assist us.

K’eexkw also demonstrates how easy it is to learn our language by (using hand gestures), asking everyone to:

- *Hitgwin!* (sng.) *Makskwsim!* (pl.) Everyone responds by “standing”. Then he says, *T’aan ... Wansim ...* Everyone “sits” back down.
- Some of you think it’s difficult ... it isn’t. It’s here, in your heart.

- When you apply your words to your life, and when you speak it, then it will be felt and heard by those who listen to you.

Questions & Comments – following the presentation:

Sim'oogit Haymaas, Chester Moore: NLG announced they had funding for language and culture. We need to stand on our own and have our own rules and regulations regarding language and culture. We need to have our own building in each village and elders – to learn our language and culture. If we stand on our own, we'll have the right to make our own rules and regulations. There are people to teach the language and culture. *Hawahlkws* – they teach that from kindergarten. Immersion is the most effective way but we have to be able to do this in our communities. There are very few people left – time is of the essence. *Ayuuk* and *hawahlkws* go hand in hand; important to use that in our daily lives.

Sim'oogit Hleek: There's a sign at the south end of Lava Lake and one at Sii-Aks. Part of the wording -- Angwinga'asa'anskwahl Nisga'a – what does it mean? To show people who and what the Nisga'a are about. There should be a number of pull-outs along the way where people can look at the land, shop, eat – Tourism. There's one place a mile downriver from the turnoff at Gitwinksihlkw, hot springs, and other areas of interest. Show the visitors who we are and what we do and how we do things. Another place called Wilbaa Gaskw, it has a great cultural significance to our people, our women. Those places are not protected today. When I first saw the cave, it was [couldn't hear the dimensions]; it's now shortened to 15 feet. If it's not protected, it will soon be covered over and it will disappear and yet it's part of our culture. There's no trail there, and it's only a hundred feet from the road. It should be protected. There should be a story written of the significance of that place. We need to preserve what is left of our culture. If we don't preserve it, it will disappear.

Sherry Small: I went to high school up here; I grew up in the valley so I'm no stranger – still can't speak the language, but today I understand when you speak. I don't always understand everyone who speaks.

- Gave encouragement to everyone, especially to the elders, to start mentoring—to ensure that the language and culture doesn't go with the elders when they leave us.

Monica Morven: Was a student at NESS; took Nisga'a for 3 years; was there when Audrey was teaching. One thing I've noticed is, we have broken English, and we also have broken Nisga'a. When I translate, I translate literally and sometimes that can lead to misunderstanding. I'm afraid to speak Nisga'a because I don't want to make a mistake. I've learned through songs as I'm part of the dance group. Singing brings part of that back to me. I admire the mothers of our community, the ACW, as they are strong role models and they show great leadership, so I'm encouraged by Adele's idea. I'd love to be able to bring my mother there as she's losing her ability to communicate with me at home, and I notice she still speaks Nisga'a very well so I'd like to be able to bring her to reconnect with you. I'd also like to bring myself and my daughter – I was really impressed with the presentation.

Verna Williams noted that she will put out a notice when they begin the immersion.

Georgina Harris: My grandfather gave advice at the dinner table. Sometimes he didn't say much but we listened. Some of us didn't know what *yuuhlimk'akskw* was, but our grandfather always told us, 'don't forget what I said, one day you'll remember, and apply it when it's time. This is what we want. It's not for teachers to do; it's for us to teach our children. We need to sit our children down and give them advice. One day our words will come to them, and they'll know. That's what we should do – continuity is important.

11:47 a.m. Rev James Moore: Blessing of Food

- **Hlim Guwa'a**
- **Gitlaxt'aamiks Dance Presentation**
- **Closing Remarks by Council of Elders**
- **Welcome Banquet for "Journey Home" Guests**

.....

Endnote

ⁱ According to Sim'oogit Gakw'ihl-Heen, Hubert Doolan, the term **ADAAWAK** is derived from the word “adoks.” *Adoks* is the plural form of *ayukws*, our word for “crest.” The *adoks* communicate meaning in our culture, the oral tradition of the Nisga'a...

The pronunciation, “adaawak”, indicates Ts'imsan pronunciation, and not surprisingly. According to (the lates) Hubert McMillan and James Woods: Our ancestors, when creating new names of any kind, would sometimes borrow terms from the Ts'imsan language when they did not like the sound of our own words. This may have been the case here.

(The late) Hubert McMillan also explained that when it came to the use of singular & plural terms in the context of “formal” communications, then the singular was used.

In taking the word “a-yukw-s” apart by each segment of meaning, and in this context:

“a_” in front of a verb indicates a kind of “quick, instant or sudden movement (in some way, or of something)”, or “early /sudden growth or development (of something)”.

“yukw” means “to carry, to hold (something)”; “s” implies “as if”

There may be other possible meanings involved as well.

The term, *ayukws*, appears to be a *Halayt* /or *naxnok* term indicating that it is derived from a supernatural/or spiritual experience. For example, in the segments of meaning as shown for *ayukws* (crest), might the meaning be referring to “knowledge” brought back by the *Halayt*, as received from the *Naxnok* (the supernatural)? ... Thus the

term, **Adaawak**, referring to the oral accounts of our origin, our history, our stories.

Also as described in the Land Ownership and Occupancy Study of 1984:

The *Adaawak* are the collective oral history which authenticates the origin of particular *Huwilp* and clans and their place in Nisga'a society.

Some *adaawak* are the property of specific *Huwilp* and cannot be told by anyone outside the *Wilp*. The *Wilp Adaawak* is tied to the territory, or resource harvesting areas which belong to the *Wilp*. This *adaawak* describes the origin of the *Wilp* as depicted in our names, crests, songs, dances, ceremonial regalia, totem poles, etc., as well as our movements on the land. The *Wilp Adaawak*, therefore, is the deed to the land, and is told publicly ONLY in the *Yukw* feast of the Sim'oogit who has passed on, and at which time the 'title' to the land is formally transferred 'in the name of the Sim'oogit' to the successor.

Other *adaawak* are more generic and pertain to the entire culture, and are told by the Nisga'a elders. The *adaawak* on *Wiigat-Txeemsim* is our Origin *Adaawak*. Anthropologists refer to beings such as *Txeemsim* as the "culture hero"; Nisga'a elders refer to *Txeemsim* as the *Niye'e*, or grandfather of the Nisga'a Nation in *K'alii-Aksim Lisims*. The *Txeemsim Adaawak* is the foundation *adaawak* to the Nisga'a way of life. It is through this *adaawak* that Nisga'a *Ayuuk* – including teachings on the principles and values of life – are transmitted. "The Great Flood" and "The Volcano" stories are other generic *adaawak*, all of which communicates to us how long the Nisga'a have been in *K'alii-Aksim Lisims*. There are also *adaawak* that expand on the teachings of morality, spirituality, and so on.

ii By Nisga'a culture, a child may be referred to as *Sim'oogit*, particularly, in instances where a child shows qualities of potential leadership by our own ways. To illustrate:

When a grandson would enter the home of his grandparents just as the family is seated for the evening meal, they would make a big-to-do about it. Grandmother would utter, "*Way hlaa ts'inhl Sim'oogit, sim ga'ahl dim wilaa t'aat.*" Grandfather who is seated at the head of the table would reply, "*Giiy, Sim'oogit. Giiy.*"

The grandmother would give up her seat next to the grandfather. The grandson would behave just like a little *Sim'oogit* at the dinner table. Today, he is one of the leaders in one of the communities.

iii Very roughly speaking, "frame analysis" aims to identify the major cognitive schemata (frame of reference), through which people interpret the world and communicate about it.

iv Explanation of the logo of the Nisga'a Heritage Preservation Society, School District #92 (Nisga'a):

The purpose of the logo: It is to be utilized on i. letterheads, and as the ii. stamp of approval to authenticate any documentation on Nisga'a language & culture information used in the curriculum and on any iii. other form communications or publications (brochures, posters, signs, etcetera).

The agreed upon draft Logo:

- The HAYATSKW symbolizes the wealth of knowledge & resources within K'alii-Aksim Lisims (the Nass Valley).

-
- Inside the *Hayatskw* at the top shall be “two open hands” representing GWILX-YE’ENS – the “passing on” of information about our Nisga’a way of life by the knowledge & wisdom of our ancestors.

The two hands – side by side with palms up, will face outwards (as if ‘giving’) – and in the left palm will be a sketch of the head portion of the Sim’oogit, in the right ... the head portion of the Sigidim Hanak’

- Inside the *Hayatskw* at the bottom, shall be two footprints representing the “footprints of our ancestors” within K’alii-Aksim Lisims

→ GAGEEKSHL WAHLIN GIGAT; the cultural footprints laid down for all Nisga’a to follow in, by Ayuuk.

- In the centre of the *Hayatskw* shall be the → GANIM SIWILYE’ENSKW – talking stick, the symbol of authority vested in the Sim’oogit.

- The *Ganim Siwilye’enskw* in the Logo symbolizes the authority of the Simgigat & Sigidim Haanak’ to uphold Nisga’a culture and Ayuuk, and to be the ones to authenticate it and to pass it on.
- The talking stick shall depict the four main animal crests / Ayukws that represent the four tribes in K’alii-Aksim Lisims; *Laxgibuu*, *Ganada*, *Laxsgiik* and *Gisk’aast* / or a photo of the Unity pole.

- The traditional colors shall be used within the logo;

- **black** representing the time of darkness in Nisga’a life
- before Txeemsim brought the *daylight* which is symbolized by the color **White** (*daylight* signifying light/or enlightenment)
- and **red** representing “life & creation” following daylight, which is why the women’s ceremonial blankets are red on the interior.

