

Wilp Li'ligit

Feast Manual

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Welcome

This Feasting Manual is made possible through funding provided by First Peoples Culture Council – Aboriginal Language Initiative and the Gitksan Wet'suwet'en Education Society. The manual is one part of a four-part project. The first part of the project is building a network of language teachers/consultants, the second is the Gitksanimx.com website, third is the 50 flash card set and drawing contest and fourth, this Feasting manual. We are happy to announce that through the wisdom of Elders, Chiefs and Gitksan knowledge holders that were able to produce this manual.

While there are many Gitksan Laws within our society, we will focus on the Feasting aspect. We have not included absolutely every law but we will continue to update the manual when we can. Also, in order to understand our feasting system, it is important to understand other parts of our culture such as kinship, mother responsibilities. This manual will touch on some this important cultural information. You will see that our laws connect to our feasting system.

As Gitksan we will always be directed to our Mother and Grandmothers to get our advice and knowledge. This is one of our laws which to learn from our Mother's side of the family. Your House will have a Head chief, wing chiefs and matriarchs and members with different levels of rank. When in doubt about any of our laws, we always refer to your chief's and matriarchs.

We hope you will enjoy this manual and use it in stride with the teaching you receive from your Wil'nahtal. The information in this manual was compiled from interviews of Elders and chiefs.



Overview of the Gitxsan

Who are we as Gitxsan?

We are a matrilineal and oral society. Our traditional teaching called 'Gwalwxy'eenanst" is passed down from generation to generation. The teaching we receive as Gitxsan are taught orally through our Mother/Grandmother's family called "Wil n'aa t'ahl". The father's side of the family also have a role in the healthy upbringing of a child. The father's side is called "Wilxsi'witxw or Wilxsilaks(pl). The Gitxsan have 2 dialects, Gitgyeets and Giganeex. This is considered east and west. Gitanyow, Gitwangak and Gitsegukla are our Gitgyeets dialect and Anspayawxs, Sik-e-dahk and Gitanmaax are the Giganeex dialect. We are located on the Skeena River. "Git" is the people, "Xsan" is the Skeena. Gitxsan means the "people of the river of mist". The entire area we occupy on the Skeena River is called Gali aks Gitxsan.

The western villages have the clans Lax Ganada, Lax Gibuu, Gisghaast and Lax Skiik. The eastern villages have the clans of Lax Seel, Lax Gibuu and Gisghaast.

The clan or crest is called "Pdeek" and is broken down into more groups called wilps. This is the house group. Each wilp has a Chief, wing chiefs and Matriarchs. Each wilp has more names of different levels of rank. In the Feast Hall, you receive and give according to your rank. Each wilp will have their own way of ranking and giving out names but the earning of the low rank to high rank is done according to Gitxsan Law. Your rank is earned and witnessed according to all that you do.

Under the clans, we have the house groups; we have the territories and lands that go with the chief's name. Whoever is holding the Chief's name is responsible for the territory and makes sure that the people in their house takes care of the territory. They will use the territory for gathering food, hunting, fishing, and gathering berries. They get their foods from their territory that belongs to them. If someone else wanted to go on your territory, they have to get special permission. Some people that are granted permission is the father to go and work on the territory with your children to teach them how to survive on the land. The father of the child is allowed to go on the territory because he has a duty to the children. The reason for our laws is for the healthy upbringing of our children.

About the Feast

When you go to the feast, the feast hall is set up like the territories; each head chief has a table. He or she sits at the head of the table and all the members sit on both sides. There are usually 5 wing chiefs that are under the head chief this will vary from wilp to

wilp. That's how they are recognized in the feast. When you're at the feast you have to defend your territory (table). You have to witness other people's feasts. If they did something wrong, if they crossed over or went too far on someone else's territory(referring to seating), it's your duty as a chief and a member in that feast hall to get up at the end of the feast and explain what they did wrong. You have to correct what is not right at the feast. That is why they call us witnesses. As a guest, you are there to witness the business being conducted. The feast hall is the same as the courthouse, like the ampsiiwa court house. The feast is our courthouse where we do all kinds of business, everything right from childbirth, the piercing of babies' ears, weddings, and deaths. Everything has to go to the feast hall.

When you have a feast, you have to provide all the food. Your house group and the others house groups in the clan must contribute. They (the other house groups in the clan) help you out, not just your own family. If you are the Lax Gibuu clan, the other Lax Gibuu will come and help you out. They also collect money. Whoever is the host of the feast, they must provide enough money to pay for all the expenses. If it is \$8000 for the funeral expense, your family has to contribute that \$8000. When the other clan members contribute, that's the bonus and that is what is handed out to the guests. You get paid when you are sitting there witnessing the feast.

What happens when you enter a feast hall?

When you arrive at the feast hall, you enter in one designated door. You will be greeted by a seater who was hired by the hosting clan, usually the father side or another clan chief. He or she may already know who you are and guide you to your seat if you are a chief or have a high rank. Sometimes the seater may not know your clan or rank and will ask you. You should know your clan, wilp, and name, and come equipped with a bag with 2 bowls, spoon, and cup. Only people with names are normally permitted in the feast hall but times are changing. Once you are seated you cannot move or make noise, you are there to witness the business of the wilp and are paid with food, gifts and money. This is very important to witness the work of a family and clan. Total respect is a must. You will never say no while being served.

Overview of the Gitxsan traditional feast system

We are a matrilineal society who follows the grandmother and mother. We practice our system, although, somewhat severed we conduct feasts to the best of our knowledge.

We are taught to honour and respect one another in all that we do and wherever we go. We are taught that there are chiefs and matriarchs who monitor our daily lives, so we do not dirty our blankets.

We are taught to walk in dignity and to uphold our names, no matter how small the name may be.

We are taught to learn our territorial boundaries, learn the laws and to uphold and respect both.

We are taught trespass laws and are taught to get permission before entering another's territory. We are also taught to share what we harvest and to give to the owner of the lands and waters.

Those of high rank are taught how to speak, what topics are important, when to speak and proper protocols as to who speaks first, which communities speak and the order which they speak.

One of the most important jobs as you witness speeches is hearing whether a chief represents and mentions all the wilp or just one or two. When a chief states the names of chiefs in each wilp, that chief cannot speak following the clan chief as he has already represented the entire clan. Should the chief be selective in who he mentions and if a wilp is not mentioned, the wilp chief now has the authority to speak on behalf of his own wilp. This is strict law!

One of a lower rank cannot speak. If the chief of the clan or wilp chief are not present, lower rank individuals must approach another wilp chief and request they be represented in thanking the hosts.

If a matriarch is present, she is permitted to represent her wilp, providing the clan chief has not mentioned her wilp.

Processes for feasts vary from the Western and Eastern Gitksan but we are taught to be involved, no matter where the feasts are held.

Respect the host, respect the work that takes place, and respect the teachings.

We are taught, even when we do not have money, to be involved in the feasts by assisting with serving and distribution of gifts.

Our system is set up so we can always acknowledge our father and grandfather clans. We are taught to uphold them in all that they do and assist them when able. We are taught that our father clan is our back bone and that, without them, we cannot uphold our system as they are present when we are born, throughout our lives and when we

die. They are the teachers and mentors, we need to live in our society and they are the guides in all that we do.

Do not embarrass the host wilp or clan! This brings consequences and embarrassment to your wilp.

Embarrassment or insult to the host brings on an apology feast which can be very expensive.

We are taught not to demand from the host....when servers are doing their duty, if you are missed, leave it as is.

If there is a dispute regarding seating, this is to be brought to the attention of the host. Serious as it is, it becomes the responsibility of the host to correct it and this has to be done before the feast begins, not after the feast is over. A guest chief seats his wilp, according to our laws and wilp members cannot argue with the chief. Chief and matriarch seats are to remain open and no one is permitted to sit there, at any time.

NAMES

Names are just as important as the lands and resources of the wilp and names define who we are and where we come from. Names are given to identify our belonging to a system that recognizes all members. (Some members will go to the grave without a name and that is because chiefs did not pay attention to those who are in the wilp). All names have a meaning attached to them and some are to signify a place on a wilp's territory. Some names are entrenched in the laws or history and are displayed on the totem poles. Names are also handed down from generation to generation and will depict an event that took place years prior.

Some baby names are given to a baby, based on what a chief sees in the child. Most times, these names are made up and are called "Gii'ma'yii" names (little berry). Note: Gii'ma'yii is also a term of endearment used when addressing a baby girl. Names can be derived from characteristics a baby has and these names are just as important because it is a name given as a term of endearment, thus recognizing the baby as a wilp member.

We'm Tsuu'sx: (name for young children): names given to those who are not born into a bloodline of chiefs and matriarchs. These are the ones who are taught the history, land and boundaries, etc, in case one is not found to take a high rank.

Hlgu'wilx'shlixw (name with the bloodline or high rank): These are the young who will take a name within the bloodline of high ranking families. They are born into the high ranks and will be taught everything required to become a chief or matriarch.

When there is a totem pole raising, a member within the ranks, will be seated on the totem pole as it is being moved to where it will stand. Seeing a young boy on the totem pole signifies that he will become a chief one day. This boy is then taken, by his uncles and grandfather and taught what he needs to know about being a chief and is even taught to recognize the members of his wilp and clan.

When a chief speaks, "Sim'giigyet, sig'id'm hanak ganhl Guu'ba' wilx'shlixw", he is addressing the chiefs, matriarchs and those young who are born into high ranking families.

A young person with a **wilk'sihlxw** name can move up the ranks, as the wilp sees fit and can change names up to three times, at which time, he/she will receive a matriarch or chief name.

Some will advance by taking on a wing chief name until such time they prove they are worthy.

Sig'id'm hanak name (Matriarch): Again, this privilege is for one in a high ranking family. This girl goes through the same process of learning and being taught all that the chiefs are required to know. She is also taught how to manage feasts, how to speak and when to speak. She is required to teach those younger than her and must be able to provide advice to the wilp. She is considered to be the chief's right hand as her responsibility is to carry the bloodline of the high ranks. She must be able to teach others what is required within the wilp and within the feasts. Her main goal is to be the guide of her wilp.

Simogyet or Sim'gii'gyet names (chiefs):

The head chief of the clan comes without argument when a boy is placed on a totem pole in years past. It becomes common knowledge that he is now heir to the throne, so to speak and when the time comes, he automatically takes his place. This being a grandfather or a prior chief's wishes, it cannot, ever, be broken and must be followed.

A chief who has been selected to become high chief of a wilp gain this right in the same way as the chief of a clan, but, sometimes, this rank is done by selection of the wilp.

The wilp will choose one who knows the laws, the history, the boundaries of territories, chief names and language.

A chief does not have ultimate authority over the wilp, although, some assume this to be the case. A chief operates on the guidance of the matriarch and the wilp members and is not a decision maker, on his or her own.

Wing Chief's

These are wilp members or people chosen to assist the high chief with responsibilities and maintenance of lands and resources. They are the protectors of the land and wilp and they have to ensure the laws are being followed, not only by the wilp members but by all others who enter the lands.

Each clan chief will have one or two wing chiefs, who will assist with the management of the wilp.

Each wilp chief will also have one or two wing chiefs, who assist with teaching the wilp members and they will groom young boys or men to become wing chiefs.

Some wilp chiefs are born into the ranks and some are by selection.

Wing chiefs or wilp chiefs can speak on behalf of the high clan chief, but only when he requests it.

Retirement names

Sometimes a chief or matriarch will decide to retire from holding a high name and will host a feast where a successor is named and the successor will take his rightful place as chief or matriarch.

This is very seldom in our society, but, it can happen and only in cases where a chief takes ill and knows he/she will never recover. It is done to enable a successor to take ownership of the name and title, rather than waiting until a chief has passed.

A chief, who is retiring will take on a name of lower rank, but is to be considered a chief until he/she passes. The only thing is that the management of lands, resources and responsibilities to the wilp are transferred to the successor.

Taking and removal of names is not permitted in the culture. The only time a name is to be removed is when death is caused by holder of a name. Names cannot be transferred without the authority and decision of the wilp. Should a name holder not uphold a name and rank, names can be transferred to one who can and will actually uphold the name. Then, even so, a name of lower rank is to be given to replace the

name being held. Once this is done, the person is of lower rank and will have to prove their right to a higher name, sometime in the future.

Kinship A group of individuals of varying degrees of descent from a common ancestor...

We, as First Nations are connected by our traditions, culture and beliefs. We practice our culture in accordance to the laws set out by our forefathers because we share the common law. We also share common practices which enable us, whether it is through blood, adoption or descent.

Determining bloodlines and genealogy means researching our forefather's path and understanding where we originated from.

Bloodlines are determined by defining whether one's grandfather was of royal blood, meaning he being a chief and also determining whether one's grandmother was also a chief or matriarch.

In days gone by, only chiefs were to marry matriarchs or chiefs and this was done by arranged marriage. It was also done to ensure bloodlines were true as royalty. A common person was not permitted to marry one who was of royal blood.

Kinship is an integral part of the traditional systems of the Gitksan, Tsimshian and Nisga'a nations and was woven together by blood. This is not to say that those adopted did not have kinship within a wilp, as they too, had roles and responsibilities. Identification was through a process of knowing who the families were, where they came from and whether they had lands and resources.

Sometimes, our ties were not of blood but of our clan and wilp system and the chiefs maintained a strict rule when it came to access of lands and resources but they maintained the true bloodlines by not allowing one to marry within the same clan. This was a law that could not be broken and if it was, one was demoted for doing so.

When a wilp was dying out, the chief would go and find a woman, even from another nation, to come and build up a wilp. Most times, this woman would be of royal blood and of the same clan as needed. This was and still is, the only time where an adopted person would have the exact same rights as the owners of the lands. She would become a member of that nation and if ever, she left, she would not take title to lands and resources with her, but it would remain with her children. Title would then be transferred to one of her sons or daughters.

A woman, along with her children, would still retain their rights within their original clan or nation.

As we look at Kinship, we see the ties between families, wilp, clan and nations. We are taught to recognize and honour the connection between all. We maintain our connections with others by acknowledging them as cousins when in the same clan. We are taught we are related to those chiefs and matriarchs in the same clan, and are taught to call them Uncles and Aunts. We are taught to respect them as they are aides in our times of need or in times of celebration as they contribute to all that we do.

Our grandfather clan is the support system to any wilp and will honour the connection by being teachers and guides. They become the lawyers, so to speak, within a feast house, should there be a dispute. They are the witnesses to all that their grandchildren do, in and out of the feast house. They support ownership of lands and resources and maintain the connection for their grandchildren, to learn and practice our traditional ways.

They support the wilp, by assisting with all of the grandchildren's needs, even within a feast house. Grandchildren have rights, within the territory of a grandfather (different clan) for as long as grandfather is alive. When grandfather passes, the rights are then buried along with him. Granted, the rights only exist on a permission basis.

Our father clan is equally important and even more so as they are the teachers of our traditional ways. Our father clan is an integral part of our way of life as they support us in all that we do. Children have traditional rights on father's territory for as long as he is alive and only exist for one year following his passing. Father's teach how to harvest food and resources off his territory, but also teaches on the lands belonging to his children. We are taught our father has rights on our own lands as he must provide for his children. Our father clan have responsibilities within our culture as they are the guides and teachers of our way of life. They tell stories of our existence and are the disciplinaries of all. They are witnesses to all that we do and are contributors to all our feasts. They are the only members of our guests who are permitted to approach his children to direct them within the feast house.

Because we are all tied together through the culture, we, as wilp members and clan members are responsible for being active in the feast house. We have to assist one another no matter what the feast may be. We are connected by lands and resources and must share with all within our clan/wilp. The maintenance of lands and resources are the responsibility of the wilp chiefs and matriarchs, but must be approved by the head chief and matriarch. Distribution of resources is overseen by the matriarch and chief, thus enabling all to survive and have all that they need.

Aunts and uncles are the major role models and teachers of the young. Mother's and father's deal with raising children within the home, but aunts and uncles teach and discipline children and even adult nieces and nephews. They are taught right from wrong and how to conduct themselves throughout their lives. Aunts were teachers of girls and young women, showing them how to prepare food. Uncles taught young men how to hunt, fish and trap as well as proper conduct.

Because we are all connected in the culture, we are taught to share what we have, to barter for what we do not have and to support those around us. We are taught to protect the lands and resources and to adhere to strict protocols. We share in celebrating the birth of a child and we mourn together in times of death. We share in times of need and we do so, so no one suffers from poverty. In times of illness, we gather to strengthen and aid in healing. We praise the Creator by celebrating our harvest times and celebrate the upcoming harvest seasons.

We are taught, it takes a wilp and all its members, to raise a child, it takes a community to raise a child. We are taught, the lessons we give to our youth will enable them to be self-sustaining and healthy. All must be involved in the nurturing and teaching of our youth so they can become our future leaders. This is taught to us by the elders who have paved a way for us in our traditional lives. Without this teaching and guidance, we can become lost and not learn the way of our ancestors

We are connected in friendships, whether we are young or old and we celebrate these connections by addressing one another as brothers and sisters. We honour our elderly by sharing and the giving of food and by doing tasks they can no longer handle.

Kinship allows us to be of one mind, spirit and soul and it allows us, as nations, to stand in unity but it gives us a sense of belonging and heightens our self-esteem, it also gives us a sense of reliance and self-respect and dignity.

I am connected to my grandmother and grandfather, who are now gone, but come in dreams to guide me

I am connected to my Chief and Matriarch, who enable me to be a member of a way of life, given to me by the Creator.

I am connected to my Mother and Father, who nurture and teach me and who keep me healthy.

I am connected to my family who give me strength and a sense of belonging

I am connected to my friend, who is my confidant and support

I am connected to my teachers who assist in my learning

I am connected to other wip as they are my support throughout my life

I am connected to other nations as they provide me with confidence

I am connected to me, as I am the one who can provide my own happiness

I am connected to all others, to be what I was taught to be.

I am connected to the Creator as he provides me with all my needs.

Roles of a mother, from conception to death

The role of a mother does not end, according to our traditional laws. She is always the guide, throughout her life and hopefully, is carried on by her children.

Upon conception, a young woman's mother, aunties and especially grandmothers are a crucial part of what goes on, as the baby grows in the womb.

Grandmothers monitor the pregnancy and teach young women what to do and what not to do. Food is important throughout the pregnancy and pregnant women are not permitted to eat certain foods.

Grandmothers tell the woman not to eat the brisket from moose and deer and in fact, the brisket off any meat. We are told, the baby will be born with a chest that is either indented or majorly extended outward, causing problems with breathing and other ailments.

Pregnant women are told not to eat blueberries. The baby will be born with skin like blueberries or will have blue birthmarks on their bodies.

Pregnant women are taught not to lie around all day long, as the baby will get stuck and will cause a long labour or the baby will not turn in preparation for delivery. Women are taught to be active and to walk whenever possible so there will be an easy delivery.

As labour pains begin, women are encouraged to walk and not lay on a bed for lengths of time, enabling the baby to push down. To encourage a speedy delivery, pregnant women are given soapberries. Some say soapberries eases labour pains as well.

When baby is born, grandfather comes and offers baby to the Creator by holding baby up toward the skies and asked for blessings so baby will have a long life. Grandmother takes baby and whispers into baby's ear, so baby will always listen to what he/she is being told.

Mother waits for baby's umbilical cord to fall off and gives this to maternal grandmother for safe keeping. It is wrapped and kept in a safe place. It is said, when the cord is thrown away, a child will grow up with issues and will misbehave, as if, always looking for the cord. Our grandmothers teach us that, if an animal finds the cord and eats it, the child will be hyper and non-attentive.

Babies are always wrapped in a blanket with legs held straight, so the child does not grow with issues, causing them to be unable to walk or become bowlegged. Babies were placed in a cradle and the cradle was hung from the ceiling. This was done so baby would always be calm and not scream as if wanting attention.

Mother has to be careful about what she consumes as she nurses her baby. Food was monitored by grandmother and she taught the new mother what to eat so baby would not be constipated. When feeding baby, a young mother was told to sit and drink water while breastfeeding, showing baby how important it is to share.

Babies did not grow up with just mom and dad, but grew up with grandparents, on both sides. Disciplinary actions were the role of Aunts and Uncles and sometimes grandparents would take a child to teach. Teaching of the lands and resources and teaching of the language was a full time job for Aunts and Uncles and few practice this now. Grandmothers and Aunts would take the child out walking and teach as they walked, they would take children out berry picking or harvesting medicines and other things. Uncles would take children out on hunting, fishing and trapping trips so they would learn about the animals and how to care for whatever it was they harvested for winter use.

"I (Deborah Morgan Good) remember my grandmother and grandfather when I was a child. When the girls would do something wrong, our grandparents told us, they would tell our Aunt or Uncle and for some reason, we were always terrified of what they would do. This taught us to respect our family and to be careful of what we did when we were out and about in the community.

Mom and dad teach us our roles and responsibilities within the household. Children are taught to be in bed early and to be up at sunrise. Mothers teach cleanliness meaning, all were involved in cooking and cleaning. She teaches responsibility by assigning tasks and chores to all children. Self-reliance was taught as she taught her children, if you want something, you work for it and earn it. Daily activities were mother's responsibility to assign and the consequences of not listening were left to dad."

As children grow, they become young men and women and the protocols around this time are strict and grueling. Girls turning into young women were grandmothers and Aunts' responsibilities. Four days of fasting and sitting in one place was monitored by grandmother. The food fed to the now young woman was the responsibility of Dad's sisters and if there is no sister, mom's sisters take on the role. Young women were not permitted to eat fresh fish or meat for an entire year and then, when she got her menstrual period each month, she was not permitted to eat fresh fish or meat for 10 days, beginning on the day she gets her period. She is taught to sit when she drinks water. This is done so she will not develop a big belly over the coming years. She is taught by mom's sisters to work in the smokehouse, to harvest food on the land and taught how to be clean; in preparation for the time she moves on and has her own family.

Becoming a man was just as important, but again, mom had no role in this activity, other than to prepare her son for this. Uncles took the young man onto the land and left him to fend for himself for a length of time. Some say this too, was done for four days while others say it can be for 10 days. The young man must set up his camp and be able to survive on his own. Uncles would then have a ceremony; although I have no idea what it comprised of as my grandfather never told the girls about it.

When a young man was ready to take a wife, the mother would prepare gifts, to be given to the chief and wilp of the young woman. In the Nisga'a way, it is called Al'gyax, but the Gitksan and Tsimshain also had the same process. Gifts would be taken to the young woman's family; the man's family would knock on the door. If there was no answer, they would leave the gifts, to return another day. This happened until the woman's grandfather finally agrees to open the door. The young man's chief spoke first on what the wilp wanted, then the man's mother would speak and set out rules for him to follow.

If he is accepted by her family, the gifts are accepted, and then her chief would speak on what he expects from the young man. Her father would then speak and state that, if ever, he abused her in any way; he and her uncles would take her back. If all requests and requirements are acceptable, an engagement is then initiated. What is not followed now is, the girls family are responsible for the wedding arrangements and the wedding takes place in her community. This is strongly stated as her children would always belong in her community and her clan/wilp. There are many things that take place prior to marriage taking place. Both man and woman are monitored to see how well they would handle a marriage. One or the other of the families can decide whether it is fitting for the two to marry. If there are issues, Aunts and Uncles will call the families together and state the issues so they can be ratified to their acceptance. In our culture, abuse by

either, is not permitted. A man must care for his wife and family and if there is abuse in the home, the woman's father and uncle will go and warn the husband. If it continues, they will go and take her home. The man's family will have to discipline him and then come and ask for her to be returned. Continuing abuse will result in her and her children being taken and not permitted to return. Bi'txw is a divorce feast held by either family.

A mother's role throughout one's life is that of nurturing and guiding, to ensure a healthy life. She is the teacher of the language and the customs within the feast house, but her role is never done by herself, but with the aunts and uncles of her children.

She is and will remain the monitor of her children's lives, but very seldom becomes the disciplinary. She is the one person who ensures her children are fed and kept clean.

As we grew into young women and young men, we found, no matter what your age, your mother has the right to request disciplinary actions from aunts and uncles. In those times, families will meet and the laws of our forefathers are re-iterated.

Mom teaches her children to be self-reliant by teaching within the home. She requires her children to be up at sunrise, to perform duties in order to provide for future families and she teaches the laws of the wilp which are to be followed. She is the guide to her sons as to how, when he marries, to be respectful of her and her family and how to provide for them... "While you sleep, the money and all that you need will have gone by".

Mom's role is to teach her children the importance of having family and having children respect and honour their aunts and uncles. She ensures that children follow what they are taught and to abide by guidance provided by the grandparents. She is the one who supports the teachings by allowing family to take on a role in her children's lives. She becomes a teacher and a doctor in good times and bad. Her most important role is to be a role model and a mentor. Her true role to the wilp and family begins when she too, becomes a grandmother.....

Wilp Responsibilities when a member dies

This is a topic that can be an interesting one, considering the processes, from wilp to wilp, will vary.

When a person is in the hospital, it is natural for people to gather and among them are the father clan. When a person dies, it should be automatic that one or two members of the father clan be present at the time of death.

Members of the father clan should know who their “children” are and should know the responsibility that will be granted to them:

- Casket purchase
- Cremation expenses, should the person be cremated and this include the urn.
- Clothing: We are taught not to put used clothing on our deceased. (Some will request prior to death and that is the only time)
- Transportation; funeral home to home and finally to the graveyard.
- Pallbearers
- Night-watchmen
- Grave diggers
- Secretary
- Other:

Wilp members have a responsibility when one passes. Chiefs and matriarch to ensure the traditional processes are followed. They will choose who will do the work on behalf of the father clan and will designate roles and responsibilities.

A wilp meeting is called to discuss dates for all activities, including funeral and feast.

When a chief or Matriarch dies and they have not chosen a successor, the wilp members must meet with chiefs and matriarchs of the clan and make a decision. *If a successor has been chosen prior to passing, successor cannot be changed. We must abide by the decision because, we are taught, if we break these wishes, the process will not be successful and the deceased's journey will be hindered by a broken heart. It will also bring bad luck to the wilp and whoever takes the name.*

When a person of low rank passes, there is no smoke feast. Smoke feast is only held when one of high rank passes. Wilp members should learn and use the Nax Nok. The smoke feast is where announcements are made and this is the time to announce who, the wilp is sending out as messengers to invite chiefs and wilp members to the burial and feast.

Because this feast is smaller than other feasts, wilp members are to bring food but not in the amounts required for the main feast...No loaves of bread, apples, oranges, etc.

If a chief or matriarch has passed, there is a Ha'laiyt'm 'Hits performed by other clans, beginning with the Nii'dil (other half of the community)

The 'Hits will travel to the various communities and announce the burial and feast. “My grandparents told us, years ago, the 'Hits would come home and host a clan/wilp feast and distribute the goods they had received while going from community to community. This clan feast has been lost and is not used now”.

Wilp members are asked to bring food and money to the burial feast, to be distributed amongst the guests. Gifts are brought to the feast and used to pay the workers. Any other expenses accumulated throughout the process are also paid. Wilp members have to ensure they have enough funds to cover all expenses so as not to embarrass the chiefs and matriarchs.

Goods required:

- Towels and blankets
- Glasses and cups
- Other gifts, including homemade items
- Now a days: apples, oranges, bananas and other fruit, by the boxes
- Bread, by the loaf
- Soup
- Crackers
- Homemade bread, etc.
- Jarred fruit and other such as fish and meat
- Dried fish
- Desserts

My grandmother and grandfather were amused when talking about responsibilities of the wilp because it is so different now. When they hosted feasts, it was not done one at a time but they accumulated business until there were more than two. Then they would host a feast in the fall and complete business required of all wilp members who had passed.

They did not use apples and oranges, etc, but used big bags of potatoes, vegetables, dried fish and meats and included big bags of sugar and rice. Gifts were all made: snowshoes, traps, blankets, regalia and so on.

When they gathered, they determined who would be responsible for what roles: the matriarch would teach the young women how to prepare all they required for a feast and she taught them how to distribute when the time came. Aunts and uncles took the

young and taught them how to serve the guests and young men were taught to distribute other things such as the fish and meat they brought.

Young men were also taught to do duties such as the hawal process and handing out of Gwiikxw (money).

During the time of grieving, members of the wilp must cut their hair, especially when immediate family member passes. This is to show their grief, but it is also to show, as the hair grows, they are able to deal with this grief. It is said, those who grieve more than a year, are holding on to the deceased and it makes it difficult for them to travel to the next world. All members of the wilp are to wear black and this is one law most do not follow. My grandmother said Turquoise was the Gitksan color for grieving children, but those who practice the law, wear black.

Wilp members are also told to refrain from the public eye for a year. Children of the deceased are not permitted to speak in any gathering as the pain and heartache they carry can be transferred to others in harsh words. A chief, who has lost a mother or father, is required to designate another to speak on his/her behalf within that year. This is done so the chief can concentrate on grieving and duties, this difficult, can bring on words that would hurt someone. Keeping the blanket clean, my grandparents said.

We are also taught there is to be no celebrations within the wilp until such time the grieving period is over. There are to be no weddings in that year and all is to be kept quiet. Our grandparents stated that the deceased's toes are still sticking out of the ground and the body is not cold, meaning we are to respect death and honour it so it does not come back.

Wilp members are required to remove all mirrors and pictures from the walls, especially in a home where the casket remains until burial. As we are taught, babies and young children can see spirits and these spirits will make themselves known and seen in mirrors and pictures. All these remain off the walls for 10 days or more or until the family is comfortable enough to put them back.

Pregnant wilp members are not permitted near the casket and if grandparents are really strict, will not allow pregnant women in the same room as the casket. Should they be required to attend, their bellies and baby are covered with a blanket, so baby cannot see or feel what is around them. Babies sense the peace the deceased feels and it can be welcoming that the baby will leave this world before or after it is born. Some say, babies who stay in the womb and are alive, will be born with abnormalities or blemishes resembling a dead body.

Young children are not permitted to view a body, especially those under the age of three because they too can sense a peace and may decide it is better in the next world than it is here. Young women and men who are of child bearing age are also not permitted to view a body as it will cause illnesses with their future child. An example is when a baby is still born or not able to speak. Not many follow this law, but, is it better to believe that it is a myth and take a chance or is it reasonable to say our grandparents knew what they were saying and not take a chance?

Some of these teachings are not really about responsibilities in the sense of the word, but they do apply to wilp members as to what they are expected to do.

There are stories told about how we should not chew gum when there is a death. Respect is the topic and it relays a message that when one dies, the deceased may not have had anything to eat for days or even weeks prior to death. Chewing gum will make the deceased hungry, my gran said and he/she will come and pull the gum out of your mouth.

Another is when we are told all must be quiet. Death sees and will return because people do not show respect. A story about children, left in a home while parents were busy, played and laughed. One older boy kept saying death will come if you are not quiet. No one listened and soon there was a knock on the door. Death walked into the home, moved his hand, in a swiping motion and all the children fell and all dies except for the one boy.

We are also taught, when there is a death in the community, to close all windows and cover them and not allow children and even adults to look outside. There is a story of a young girl, who told her grandmother, "that is just a story, superstition"... As she looked out the window, a black image appeared and put its face to the glass and the young girl did not live through the night because this spirit had sucked the life out of her body.

Many things come into play when dealing with one's wilp and all members should be taught roles and responsibilities. How to run a feast is very important and the processes have to be followed, but while we are doing these things, respect for death is also important, the laws are to be followed and we must adhere to all so our wilp can flourish.

Types of Feasts

Various types of feasts:

The most common of feasts are the **burial** and **headstone moving**, but, there are other feasts which are not commonly hosted. In a culture that is diverse and just as

complicated, it seems these following are not as important in the current day as they were in prior generations.

Feasts were held to commemorate the seasons, spring, summer, autumn and winter.

These were held signifying the beginning and end to each season.

The coming of spring brought “Ho'bii'haa” which was the emptying of all cache pits, baskets and traditional food, which were harvested in the spring and summer, are now gone. In other words, Granny's baskets are now empty and there is a need to replenish. Any traditional foods left in the cache pits were shared with others at this feast.

Summer brought on the fish run and preparation of whatever was to be harvested in the fall.

A feast was hosted and prayers sent to the Creator, for foods to be abundant.

Fall was the time to harvest berries and medicines and so, again a feast was held to signify the need to prepare for winter. During this time, people brought traditional foods which were traded with those who did not have our berries, fish and other foods. Celebration in dancing and songs were done, in celebration of our preparation for trapping and hunting.

Winter fest: My grandmother called this feast a time of celebration of all foods which had been harvested and shared. Following this feast, men cleansed themselves in preparation for hunting.

Gitanyow is known for the 'Ice Cream Feast' which is recognition of the first snow fall. We are taught that, if this feast is not held, the snow will continue to come and floods will happen, severely, in the spring. Men went into the mountains and brought back clean, fresh snow, which was mixed with huckleberries and oolican grease, hence named “hii'moks”. This form of ice cream was served to the guests, followed by song and dance.

Newborns

When a new baby was born, a small feast was hosted to announce the arrival of a new wilp member. At this feast, the father clan named the baby and they celebrated with song and dance. Roles and responsibilities of mom and dad were announced. Grandparents advised on how the child was to be raised. Gifts are given and baby's umbilical cord was given to paternal grandmother to keep safe.

“A child, whose cord has been thrown away, will go through life, as if looking for the cord”. A child whose cord is kept safe is said to be easy going, considerate and calm.

Naming feasts

Sometimes, a child is selected at an early age, to become a chief or matriarch and must be taught the land, boundaries, history of the wilp, language, laws and song and dance.

A child is given a “Wil'ksihlxw” name, signifying the blood line and advancement to becoming a chief or matriarch.

This feast consisted of standing the child/youth in front of his peers and when the name is given; those who call out the name do so because they agree with the selection. Father clan and grandfather clan members are chosen to call out the name. At this feast, father clan members are chosen to teach the child.

A young boy/man was taught to hunt and would accompany father and uncles on hunting trips. Boys were taught the lay of the land while learning the traditional boundaries of his own wilp as well as his father clan's boundaries. Boys were taught the correct way to harvest wildlife and how to prepare the various parts of the animal. When he is finally permitted to shoot his first moose or deer, he was left to cut up the meat and other parts of the animal so there is no waste.

When done, the young man would attend a feast, hosted by his parents and grandparents and he was told to share his first kill. The food prepared for this feast included the meat from his first kill.

The liver and kidneys were presented to one's grandfather and the hide presented to grandmother for tanning and then to be used for various crafts or hoof baskets.

Coming of age, for the young men was a serious events and at this feast, they were advised as to how to conduct themselves and how they needed to work to advance in life.

Coming of age for girls

A girl was kept in the home for 10 days once her menstrual period began. The first four days, she is not permitted to lie down and had to sleep, sitting up. She was not permitted to stand while drinking water or tea. She had a small pebble placed under her tongue, so she could not speak. She was also kept away from any men within the home. A young woman, now, was not permitted to eat fresh meat or fish. She was

taught to wash her clothing separate from any man or boy's clothing. Following the first four days, she remained in the home, being taught by grandmother and father's sisters as to how to conduct herself, at all times, but especially when in public.

When the 10 days were up, she was brought into the feast and sat in front of the guests. It was announced that she is now a woman and her responsibilities are stated. If she was of high rank, then it was announced that she is now available for consideration, of any suitors and an arranged marriage would be done in the future.

Marriage Feast

Marriages of high ranking individuals were arranged.

A man would come with his family, bearing gifts for the young woman and her parents.

If the gifts were not acceptable or the man was not acceptable, the man's family would not be permitted to enter the home. They would leave and come back with more gifts and would bang on the door until mother opened it. (The only nation, I know who still perform this are the Nisga'a and they call it "Al'gyax")

Once the proposal is accepted, the girl's family, prepare for the Marriage Feast, where vows are made and advice is given to the couple.

Gifts are brought, which will assist in the beginning of starting a family and celebration is done with song and dance.

Divorce Feast (Bit'xw)

Abuse is not permitted in our culture. When a woman is being abused, father and uncles would go to the home and take her and bring her back to her parents' home. If there are children involved, they too were taken from their father. The man is warned and told the abuse has to stop. If the abuse is reoccurring, the uncles will take her from the home permanently and after a length of time, a small feast is held. Here, it is announced that she is now available to start a new life with someone else. Requirements are set out and suitors come with gifts and promises to respect and honour her if chosen.

Totem Pole raising feast

Totem poles were carved by one's father clan and the pole could be a replacement of an old pole that had deteriorated and fallen down. Totem poles were also carved and used in "bax'ma'ga", sending all deceased to the other world. Today, people are more inclined to use headstones. Once a totem pole was carved, it was raised and the

names of all deceased, over the last year or so, were called and were told to go on their journey to the other world.

If the totem pole was a Burial pole, it was raised and a small box, containing the ashes of a chief, would be attached to the center of the pole. Over the years, the box will rot and ashes are sent into the wind.

Totem poles were also carved to signify an event, such as war and would have the crests of the wilp/clan. Some poles would also have a crest from the father clan carved at the very bottom of the pole.

Pick myself up (Gu'ks hel'dim'guutxw)

There are various reasons for this feast and I have only seen it done twice. Most will perform this cleansing at one of the other feasts but as I was told, it is to be a separate feast.

When one falls and is injured or is in an accident of some kind, this person would call for a feast and would call his/her father clan, to do the cleansing. All those who assist, following an injury, would be paid with gifts and Gwiikxw. Cleansing was performed by the father clan members and prayers are sent to the Creator to protect the person and his family from further harm.

Cleansing feast (Gu'ks yo'iksxw)

This is one feast, we should never have to host as it is used when traditional laws are broken and one's blanket has been stained by dishonour, disrespect, trespass or injuring of another.

We are taught to walk in the footsteps of our forefathers, thus, walking in honour, dignity and respect. We are taught to honour the laws and to respect the other wilp, clans, members and more so, ourselves.

“Be careful of your walk, beware of your mouth, be aware of your conduct” is foremost in our laws. If any law is broken, if there is trespass or injury inflicted on another, this feast can become very costly. Should there be a death caused by another's hand, lands can be given away. Slander is costly as well, although, not as costly as causing death. A feast is held to apologize and gifts and money is given. If the apology is acceptable, there is to be no mention of the incident, following this feast. Conduct within a feast is more over the cause of this feast. We are required, when in our house of laws, to follow protocol and must not, ever, insult the host.

Apology feast (gu'ks itxws)

When serving in a feast, sometimes accidents happen and one must apologize. This is not necessarily a standalone feast but it depends on the severity of the situation. One apologizes and gives gifts and money for an incident.

Death/burial feast

This is the most common of feasts. When one passes, it is the wilp's obligation to hire one's father clan to come and care for the deceased. The father clan are called upon to purchase a casket/urn and to buy new clothing. They are also tasked with caring for the deceased until he/she is buried. Guardians/night-watchmen are hired to protect the deceased's remains. Once the burial is complete, there is a feast held to pay the father clan and guests with gifts and money.

Smoke feast (mii'yee'ensxw)

This small feast is held for CHIEFS AND MATRIARCHS ONLY. The purpose of this feast is to invite guests to come and witness the burial and the work involved. "Dim bek'xw nii'sim dim win me'lkwxs (name). Come to the cremation of (name).

Our culture and tradition was to cremate our people and it was not until the late 1800s that we began to bury our loved ones.

At this feast, hosted by the clan, announcement of workers is done. Messengers, (hi'ts), who will go out and invite other chiefs and matriarchs are also announced at this feast and other clans organize to host the "ha'lyt'dim'hi'ts where they bring food and gifts for the messengers. Money is also given to assist them in their travels and whatever small items are required for the upcoming burial feast. When they give this money, they call out "Dim bahl'win Simogyet, Dim bahl'win, Simogyet", in other words, "for your use".... This money is not to be returned to givers as it is being done today. When we attend these Ha'lyt'dim'hi'ts, our uncle always announced that this money was to be used by the messengers and wilp to assist them with their needs. Today, this money is returned, with interest.

A smoke feast was held for other reasons and as I (Deborah Good) was taught, they would pass around tobacco which had been rolled into cigarettes by a few young women, and these cigarettes were lit and smoked. The wilp would sit by and watch the smoke rise to the ceiling. If the smoke rose quickly, the wilp would know that the process would be peaceful and the deceased would travel a peaceful and happy journey. If there was conflict in the wilp, the smoke would rise slowly, signifying turmoil within the wilp and they would have to cleanse and rearrange arrangements or come to an agreement on the process.

Clan feast

This feast was hosted by the clan once the messengers arrived back home. Here, they arrangements and processes are determined and agreed upon. This, if the deceased is a chief or matriarch, the successor is named and agreed upon. What is needed for the feast is discussed and all agree to bring various types of gifts and food. What is brought back by the messengers is then divided up or set aside for use at the burial feast.

Headstone feast (B'ax ma'ga'am Lo'op)

This feast is a joyous feast, commemorating the completion of deceased's journey to the other world and the completion of the work involved in sending our loved one on a peaceful journey. The headstone is moved and gifts of food would be given to those involved. Giving of food was done by an'tim'hanak (spouses of wilp/clan members), as the headstone is being moved to the graveyard. There are songs sung along the way and there is dancing all throughout and into the feast itself.

Bringing back one's spirit (G'uks guu'hl o't'sin)

This is a small feast hosted by one's family. There are many reasons for this type of feast and this is one that is coming back into practice.

When one is in an accident or in a near death experience, one loses a part of their soul/spirit and will feel various emotions such as fear, depression, loss or heartache.

Before this cleansing feast, one is taken to place where the accident occurred and is encouraged and assisted in bringing back one's spirit.

All clothing worn when the accident occurred is burnt and food is offered to the Creator, enabling the spirit to distinguish between what happened and now. Fear of returning to one's body can make this a lengthy process and cleansing has to take place.

Once this process is complete, a feast is held and support is given, enabling a person to feel normal again. Gift are given to those who assisted the injured and celebration is done with song and dance.

Planning for a feast

There are many components to hosting a feast and needs will vary depending on the type of feast is being hosted.

A death feast is possibly the most complex due to the amount of work is required and it will also depend on what wishes are left behind by the deceased. Another consideration is based on whether the deceased was a chief or matriarch.

For generations, a clan feast was hosted to enable the wilp and clan to plan for a feast. Here, they would set a date and set out what was required in the way of food and ligi'wil (gifts).

If this is a settlement feast, the wishes of the deceased are brought forward, especially if there are specific people, from the father clan, are requested to do the work.

A settlement feast also requires the wilp to burn clothing which were often used by the deceased, enabling them to move forward on the journey. Food was also burnt so the deceased would not be hungry on this journey. Members of the father clan are brought in to do this task.

If the deceased was a chief or matriarch, decisions were made as to when the messengers would be sent out to invite other chiefs, matriarchs and the wilp to witness the feast.

At this planning feast, giving of names and recipients are noted and preparations are made for gifts and money to be given to the father clan and grandfather clan, when calling out names.

We also plan how much food is going to be brought, how many gifts are being contributed to the feast and who these will be given to. (This is not done now and people just bring all to the feast)

An'tim'hanak (spouses) are also present at this feast, especially wives, as they are responsible for providing husband's needs such as gifts, food and their own an'tim'hanak.

The wilp members, as well as clan members are responsible for providing all that is needed for the feast. This saves the wilp embarrassment if there is a lack of tsa'lim, hawal or nii'hlaa' (food, money and gifts).

An'tim'hanak will bring food and money as their contribution to the feast. When moving a headstone or totem pole, the an'tim'hanak play a major role as they give out food and drink as the stone or pole is being moved. They also provide food, to feed guests prior to the moving. An'tim'hanak will sing and dance as the stone/pole is being moved. This process is to be amusing and some will be silly and very entertaining, signifying the work that is being completed.

Hawal (wilp/clan contribution to the feast is documented so the wilp knows there obligations will be met and expenses will be paid in full.

There are different ways to contribute to a feast and all are documented:

How much are the chiefs providing in way of money?

How much are the matriachs contributing? Money? Ligi'wil?

How much are immediate family contributing?

Who are the an'tim'hanak and what are they going to do?

What food is being contributed?

Who is going to welcome the guests? Dance? Nax'nok?

The chiefs are responsible for maintaining order within the feast house. They will guide those who serve and are giving gifts. Great care is given to how food is served and servers are told to be very careful as an accident will cause an apology and giving of gifts. (My grandmother always came prepared for this)

The entire clan is to be prepared to assist with all feasts. (Not too common these days). Clan members would provide the extra food and funds necessary to cover extra costs and gwiikxw. This support was provided so when another wilp needed assistance, they would be guaranteed help from other wilp.

We are taught, even when we do not have money, to be at all feasts and to contribute with gifts or just to be there to assist with serving of food or giving of gifts. One must be seen in order to be recognized with the feast system. One who does not attend, is left with no name or rank. Those who are present are monitored by the chiefs and matriarchs and when it is time to give names, first consideration is given to those who contribute.

The roles of the wilp/clan are basically the same, regardless of the type of feast. To be active, to contribute and to be involved in the work required.

- Who contributes to a feast?
- Chiefs and matriarchs: most amount of money
- Those of high rank, including wing chiefs and those with high names
- Immediate family: slightly less than the chiefs (belonging to the same wilp)
- Wilp members
- Other wilp within the same clan
- An'tim'hanak: (spousal contribution)
- Ha'guu'ts'giisxw (children of the chief or men in the wilp)
- A'ye'e: (grandchildren of a chief or men of the wilp)
- Hlga'uum: (wife or husband of deceased)

(Those who do not fit in the above categories but want to assist)

Men are expected to provide the big items (difficult to explain as the new ways are different from before): boxes of apples, oranges, meat, loaves of bread and men's gifts.

Women are expected to bring soup, coffee, fried bread and other baked goods and other gifts

Guest Roles and Responsibilities

Honour, Respect and Dignity

Guests are invited to witness an event. Guests are also there to learn about the laws. One must remember a feast process is common to all Gitksan, but, the learning does not begin until the chiefs speak, at the end of the feast.

Guests are seated according to rank and if one does not know the seating arrangement, ask the chiefs.

Guests are to stay seated so they can observe and learn.

Guests do not speak to servers unless spoken to

Guests should not complain about food being served, as this is an insult to the host.

Allergies and dislike of food should not be mentioned! You accept what you are given, you take it home and give to family.

Do Not follow servers/host and demand food or coffee.

This is all too common in our modern day feasts.

Do not address servers and demand food if you are missed. You have to remind yourself you are not there to receive food but there to witness the process.

Food is a gift from the host and should always be considered as such. My grandmother scolded us constantly regarding Respect. When one continually demands at a feast, my grandmother told us “At the next feast, hosted by the clan, the host will come and pile food beside your chief and they will tell your chief that you are 'luu'naakx', meaning you are greedy” Your chief will be asked to take the food, pile it beside you and this is done to embarrass you and your clan/wilp.

As the wilp/clan go through the motions of the feast, we are taught, never to walk in front of a chief/wilp members as they perform or speak. Again, this is a reminder that we are to respect the host, we are to honour the process and we are to allow them to proceed in dignity.

Some feasts require the host to begin with the Nax nok, a skit performed by the successor of a high name. As they go around to each guest wilp, the wilp will perform their own and sometimes, this process is amusing. We are taught not to laugh out loud, no matter how funny it may be.

As guests, sometimes, we need to pay our An'tim'hanak (spouse payment) and we do not dance or make people laugh when in a Settlement (death) feast. We are taught, the host is grieving and are to allow them to do so. An'tim'hanak, dressing in costumes, dancing and teasing their spouse and others, is done when a headstone/totem pole raising feast, is done. Here, they celebrate the completion of the work that now allows our loved one to go on their journey, without worry.

If the host is our father clan, we are required to pay our “ha'guuts'giisxw” (hair cut) to show our support to our father.

Should the host be our grandfather clan, we are required to pay our “a'ye”...again, to show our support to our grandfather. These two types of support go back and forth and is a way of showing each other how to assist one another in our culture. As guests, we contribute to our father clan and grandfather clan and when we need their assistance, they too will support us.

As guests, we show support in other ways and usually these are announced within the feast:

We give gifts and money to blanket (gwil'ed'insxw) someone who has lost a loved one. The father clan will come and give funds and gifts to the children to assist them financially. The grandfather clan will also assist for the same reasons. This are repaid when the clan hosts their next feast.

When one assists financially or with gifts, we are taught not to mention the act, when in a feast. What we do, should be out of compassion and should not remind the host that we assisted. This is an absolute no, in our culture, especially when a family is grieving. We are taught that while grieving we will not remember some things but will, later on, remember who assisted. Regardless, if it is forgotten, we should just be happy we assisted and let it be.

Speeches are the most important when in a feast and it is a time to learn. Chiefs of the clan will speak of rights and title to land; they will speak about names and rank. Guest chiefs will speak and acknowledge what has gone on throughout the feast, they will agree to decisions made on the giving of names. Advice will be given to those who receive names and told to keep their blankets clean. Should land and title be mentioned, chiefs will also agree that the information is correct.

When there is a dispute and a guest is not in agreement with the process, all gifts of food and material will be left behind and guest will not take any of it home. When this happens, a feast is to be held and explanations made public. This is very rare in our culture and will happen only when it comes to lands and resources.

Roles of Chiefs and Matriarchs

A chief/matriarch is responsible for making sure everything required for the feast is supplied by the host wilp/clan. A chief will not make demands on the wilp as to what they should bring; but rather, inform the wilp as to the needs such as apples, oranges, soup, bread and money. A chief will also inform the wilp as to the amount of his hawal so they know how much they will need to contribute.

A matriarch will ensure the women/girls bring what is necessary such as food and gifts. Matriarchs will teach the girls/women how to distribute food and gifts. If there are workers due to a death, the matriarchs will organize the women by gathering gifts and writing names on each one. They will also be taught how to give these gifts to each worker once the workers have been given their pay.

A chief will oversee the serving of food to ensure all guests are treated equally and with respect and honour. The head chief of the clan will take charge of the feast and instruct all wilp members as to how to conduct themselves within the feast house.

A chief, chiefs and matriarchs must ensure there is enough hawal to pay for all expenses.

When names are given, the chief has to be sure there is agreement amongst the wilp members so there are no problems when the feast begins.

Should the deceased leave instructions, the chief must follow all instructions. Ignoring the wishes of the deceased will bring bad luck “hx’sii’yen” to the wilp.

Host speeches begin with the host wilp, followed by the head chief and other wilp will follow. (This is a process that is not followed by many)

Glossary of terms in alphabetical order

Amgoosinxw - Food and merchandise left for absent guest.

Ant’aa - Designated seat for the chief of sub-Chief in the feast hall.

Antamgwiitxwhl wineex- A grace giver; a person who blesses the food before it is served.

Ant’imhanak’ - Spouses contribution; money or merchandise given by the spouse of the hosting clan. May or may not be accompanied by dancing toward the singers and then you put your money in the pot. There is no dancing when it is a funeral feast because it is a table of tears. You can sing and dance at he headstone feast as it is a happier feast.

Antk’agahl wineex- Another word for grace giver. One who blesses the food before it is served.

Antlihlxhl xbiist - Casket and house guard; while the deceased is laying in state, person or persons from another clan selected by the wil’naat’ahl house group to stay and guard the house at nights. The coffin is never left alone and is always a guarded.

Antt'aapphl hayatsxw - Money counter; a person or persons who counts the money. Usually from the father's side. These are hired workers.

Antts'imil etxwhl gyat - Announcer of chiefs; one who announces the arrival of the invited chiefs.

Antuxwslitsxhl wineex - The announcer of individual clan members contribution; person who announces foods that is brought by the hosts.

Ant luk xbiist - Hauls the casket from the funeral home to the hall and grave site.

Aye' - Grandchildren contribution; grandchildren of matrilineal side contribution to grandfather's feast out of respect for your grandfather.

Baja'am xbiist - The pallbearers

Gyap yipx - Soup servers; host clan serving soup to their guests.

Halaydim tets - This is not done too often but it is a settlement-feast invitation ceremony; an invitation by the Chief's successor to invite head Chiefs to the settlement-feast (usually a headstone feast. Chief may be in full regalia and sing their sacred breath song, **xsinaahlxw**.

Ha'niiganyee - A farewell ritual to a deceased chief. chiefs from all of the other villages take part in singing their farewell song making a way for the deceased to go in peace and love. This practise is very modern and usually on the invitation of the bereaved kinship relatives, wil'naat'ahl.

Ha'niihalayt - The acceptance of invitation ritual; money given by the invited Chief to the deceased Chief's successor at the successor's invitation to the settlement-feast ceremony.

Hawaal - Contribution of money to the clan feast.

Hayatsxw - Ownership of a copper shield signifies wealth. Today we call the pot of money this name as we do not use the copper shield anymore.

K'otsgesxw - Contribution of money to a feast by father's children; children on the father's side, his brothers children or his nephew's children contribute to the fathers funeral feast. This is a thank you for all that we gained in their wealth.

Laksinsxwit - Person who bathes the deceased. Years ago they usually bath the deceased and dress the deceased but today it is done at the funeral home.

Luulihlxsit - Person guarding the laxnox. Usually the person dancing with a big stick.

Miinli'ligit - The host of the feast.

Mixk'aax - Eagle down feathers to show honour and respect. Often, at the start of the feast, the host chief in full regalia dancing to the singing of the Clan, will nod his head forward and the eagle down feathers which had been sprinkled atop the headdress will fly about. The eagle down represents honour and respect to his guests.

Sigenax - A farewell ritual to a deceased chief. chiefs from all of the other villages take part in singing their farewell song making a way for the deceased to go in peace and love. This practise is very modern and usually on the invitation of the bereaved kinship relatives, wil'naat'ahl - house group.

Sigwila - A blanket. Help in the form of cash or merchandise from the father's side, as a loan, at a feast.

Sik'alaxan - Term used for a person that is going to build a grave fence for the deceased.

Simgigyat, sigidimhaanak, ganhl k'ubawilxsihlx - "Chiefs, chieftainess, prince and princesses." Formal salutation prior to a Chiefs speech.

Simhaalayt - The Chief's spiritual dance at the feast using eagle down (when they welcome guests or to return money received at the time of invitation to the feast, mixk'aax.

Sixbiist or saxbiist - Person or persons from the father's side who is selected by the wil'naat'ahl to provide the casket.

So'o - Leftover feast food taken home from the feast.

Tets - Person or persons that go out and invite other communities to a feast.

T'iluulak'at - The person or persons from the father's side who handles the deceased.

T'imisit - A person asked by the host clan to record all help with food, money or merchandise at matrilineal feast. It is read out before the end of the feast.

T'uu'w - Feast

Wanimsit - Person in charge seating invited guests according to designated seats.

Wilpbaahlats - The name for the feast hall.

Wilpli'ligit - Another name for the feast hall.

Wok'esxwit - Person or persons from the father's side who digs the grave. (grave digger)

Wo'os - Food and fruit given to the person selected to do work for the host clan. syn: xwineext

Xdaala - Money given to witnesses at a feast.

Xgwiikw - Originally the gifts of groundhog skin to the guests at a feast in the past. Now, money replaces it.

Xwineext - Food and fruit given to the person selected to do work for the host clan. syn: wo'os

Yeegam wineeyit - Host clan at a feast giving out food.

Yeek - Serving food and merchandise at a feast.

The information in this manual was compiled by conducting interviews with Elders and chiefs. Additional information was submitted by prominent knowledge holders. We would like to extend our huge appreciation to the following for the kind guidance, knowledge and willingness to teach a generation and generations to come.

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