

# WILP WII LITSXW

## MEZIADIN INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA

*Supported by Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs  
and Hlimoo Sustainable Solutions*



## MANAGEMENT PLAN

August 2023



## WILP WII LITSXW MEZIADIN INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA

Management Plan

August 2023



GITANYOW  
HEREDITARY  
CHIEFS



HLIMOO  
SUSTAINABLE  
SOLUTIONS



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# Contents

Vision / 3

Background and Purpose of This Document / 4

Declaration in Gitanyow Ayookxw / 5

Cultural and Ecological Value of the Area / 6

Importance to Overall Nass River Watershed Salmon Fisheries / 7

Cultural History and Stewardship / 9

Gitanyow Place Names in the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area / 10

Allowable Activities in the Protected Area / 12

Prohibited Activities in the Protected Area / 16

Relationship to Other Government Plans, Processes, and Legal Designations / 18

Monitoring and Enforcement / 19

Restoration Priorities / 20

Appendix A: Maps / 22

Appendix B: Acknowledgements / 24

Appendix C: Methodology / 25

Appendix D: Declaration / 26

Appendix E: References and Key Links / 28



## VISION

### **Wilp Wii Litsxw Vision for the Future of the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area**

Wilp Wii Litsxw envisions the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area to be held from one generation to the next in a sustainable manner, ensuring the health of the salmon populations, waters they inhabit, and wildlife and plants relied upon by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike.

Wilp Wii Litsxw envisions the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area as a place where sustainable economic development is thriving, where a precautionary approach ensures that tourism, cultural infrastructure, transportation corridors, and where feasible, forestry activity is done in a way that respects and upholds the principle of *Gwelx ye'ens*. *Gwelx ye'ens* is the right and responsibility to pass on the territory in a sustainable manner from one generation to the next.

Wilp Wii Litsxw envisions collaborative management of the area, with partners in government and industry, to ensure that sensitive salmon habitat is protected from mining, pipelines, transmission lines, fracking, and railway development. Further, that additional review of green energy projects and forestry will only allow such development with the *free, prior, and informed consent* of Wilp Wii Litsxw.

Wilp Wii Litsxw envisions continued access of the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area by recreational users and visitors, thriving partnerships with Gitanyow and Wilp-led businesses, and culturally significant buildings and infrastructure throughout the protected area. Finally, that the Wilp will commence planning for a science and climate change study centre, cultural camp, and elders/youth programming within the protected area.

## Background and Purpose of This Document

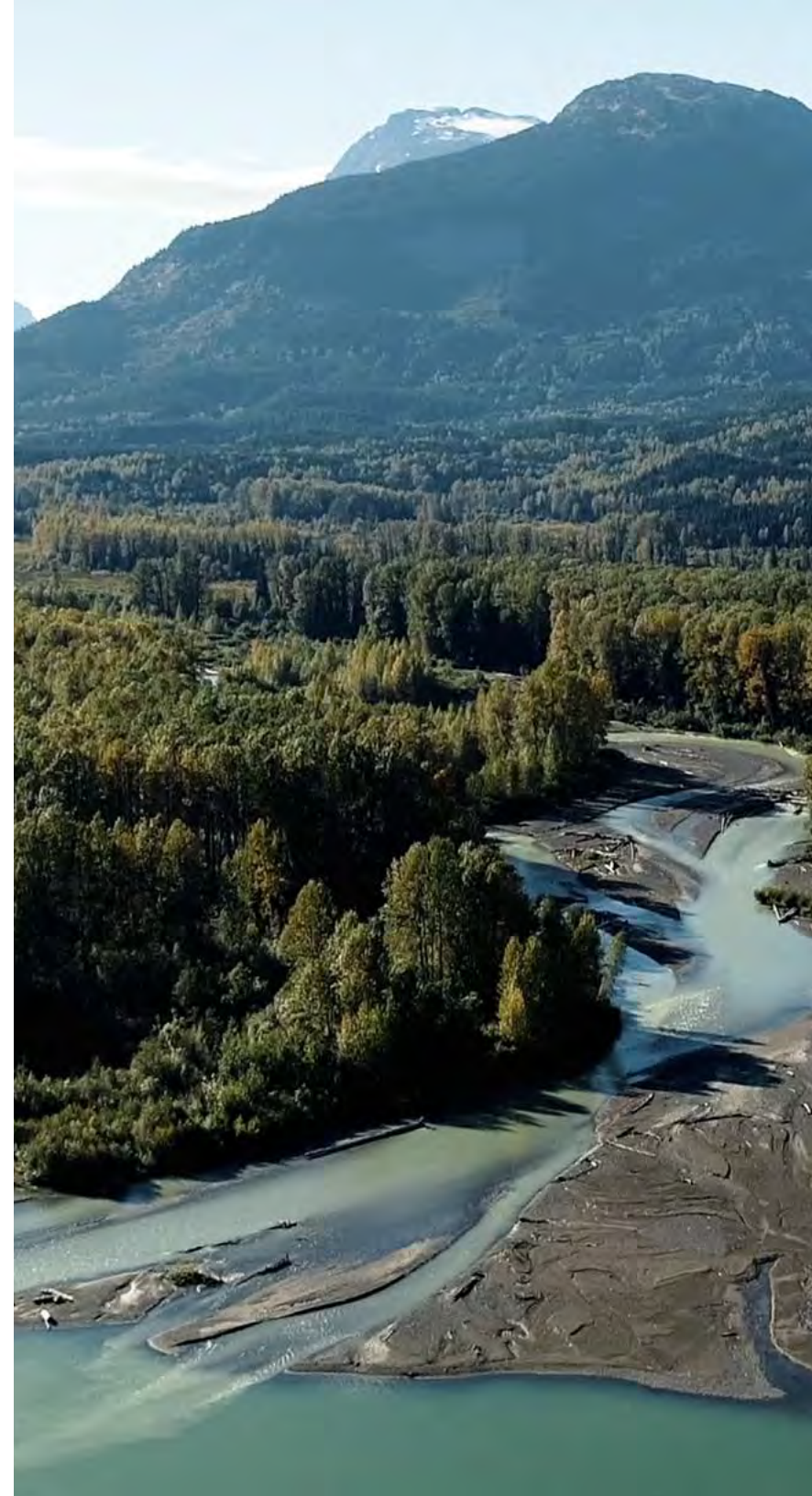
This management plan was developed by Wilp Wii Litsxw to communicate management goals and guidelines for the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area (MIPA).

The process to start drafting this management plan began in 2016 when Wilp Wii Litsxw learned of the abundance of salmon spawning in Strohn Creek, and the potential impact of new mineral exploration tenures in that area. It was determined by the Wilp that mining in and around salmon spawning areas was not a supported activity.

Discussions continued since 2017, as well as negotiations with the provincial government and feedback on multiple drafts from Wilp Wii Litsxw members, resulting in this final version. Between September 2021 and April 2022, the following people were invited to review a draft version of this management plan and provide input and feedback:

- ▶ Interested third parties, including industrial proponents;
- ▶ Other governments, including provincial, federal, and regional districts;
- ▶ Non-Indigenous residents of Meziadin sub-division and Stewart;
- ▶ Gitanyow, Wilp Wii Litsxw, and neighboring First Nations including the Nisga'a Lisims Government; and
- ▶ Anyone directly affected by the establishment of the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area.

Discussions with the provincial government included potential operable areas for forestry activities, and the current position of Wilp Wii Litsxw on forestry is now included in this final version. No other comments or feedback were received.





## Declaration in Gitanyow Ayookxw

On August 28, 2021, Wilp Wii Litsxw established the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area at an event held at Lax an Zok, welcoming more than 200 guests to the Lax'yip to witness in accordance with Gitanyow Ayookxw.

Simoogit Wii Litsxw (Gregory Rush Sr.), along with wing chiefs and matriarchs of the Wilp, signed the Declaration in Appendix D. Witnesses to the signing of the Declaration included neighbouring Gitksan, Wet'suwet'en, Tsimshian, and Nisga'a representatives. Other witnesses included local residents and allies, and some provincial and federal government representatives. Those representatives of Crown governments that work most closely with Gitanyow on the management of Meziadin watershed were not in attendance despite being invited.

The Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area Management Plan has also been established as Gitanyow Strategic Direction for the purposes of the *Gitanyow Ayookxw for Wilp Sustainability Assessment*. Section 5(2) of this Ayookxw provides that: "No activity may proceed, and no person may do any act or thing in relation to an activity, that is inconsistent with applicable Gitanyow Strategic Direction."

## Cultural and Ecological Value of the Area

The Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area is approximately 54,000 hectares and is inclusive of both the Hanna Tintina Conservancy and the Meziadin Lake Provincial Park, the new protected area in the Strohn and Surprise Creek drainages, as well as the drainages of Meziadin Lake and Meziadin River.

GITANYOW LAX'YIP LAND USE PLAN ZONES WITHIN MEZIADIN INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA		
<b>Ecosystem Network and Buffer</b>	Approx. 5,000 hectares	High biodiversity, water values, fisheries values, protected from logging
<b>Moose Winter Range</b>	Approx. 10 hectares	Managed access, supporting recovery of Nass moose population
<b>Grizzly Bear Habitat</b>	Approx. 5,000 hectares	Protected from logging
<b>Goshawk Nesting and Post-fledgling Sites</b>	Approx. 10 hectares	Blue-listed under COSEWIC, new management direction pending
<b>Mountain Goat and Canyon Goat Winter Range</b>	Approx. 5,000 hectares	Protection from helicopter traffic, industrial activity during winter months



### Fish Species

- ▶ Sockeye salmon
- ▶ Chinook salmon
- ▶ Coho salmon
- ▶ Bull trout
- ▶ Steelhead



### Wildlife Species of Note

- ▶ Grizzly bear
- ▶ Interior/coastal goshawk
- ▶ Wolf
- ▶ Moose
- ▶ Mountain goat and canyon goat

## Importance to Overall Nass River Watershed Salmon Fisheries

The Nass River is the third largest salmon producing river in B.C. Among one of the most valuable and abundant salmon species that it supports are sockeye salmon, a renewable annual resource of great value. Nass sockeye are valued for sustenance and are fished every year by Gitanyow and other First Nations with traditional territories in the Nass watershed, fisheries that are protected under Canada's constitution and through treaty agreements. Nass sockeye are also valued commercially by a wide variety of First Nation commercial, general Canadian, and US commercial and recreational fisheries. The collective monetary value of Nass sockeye fisheries alone has been estimated to be on average around \$10 million annually (Levi, 2006).

Meziadin sockeye require high quality spawning and rearing habitats to ensure they continue to produce sustainable populations for the Gitanyow, other First Nations, and commercial and recreational interests. Meziadin sockeye have a complex life history where spawning takes place in three primary lake tributaries — Hanna, Tintina and Strohn Creeks — and also along Meziadin Lake shorelines. Juveniles nurse for up to two years in Meziadin Lake before they migrate to the ocean to complete their adult life cycle.

Maintaining good habitats and adequate water quality and quantity in the Meziadin Watershed is crucial to sockeye survival and production.

*Maintaining good habitats and adequate water quality and quantity in the Meziadin Watershed is crucial to sockeye survival and production.*

### SHIFTS IN SALMON PRODUCTIVITY BETWEEN HANNA, TINTINA, AND STROHN CREEKS

<b>1981 Fishery Officer Counts</b>	0.03% Strohn (first recorded)
	24% in Tintina
	75% sockeye in Hanna
<b>1985 Fishery Officer Counts</b>	0.09% in Strohn
	22% in Tintina
	77% sockeye in Hanna
<b>2016 Gitanyow Fisheries Radio-telemetry Study</b>	41% observed spawning sockeye in Strohn
	7% Tintina
	29% Hanna
	23% Meziadin lakeshore

The Meziadin sockeye resource and the other ecosystem values it supports are unique and depend on a delicate environment that relies on key physical attributes that include adequate water quality and quantity, and suitable spawning and rearing habitats. The key attributes in question culminate throughout the entire Meziadin watershed and protecting critical habitat only in part will likely reduce the effectiveness of the Hanna Tintina Conservancy and its goals of conserving Meziadin sockeye over time. More specifically, current measures under the Hanna Tintina Conservancy provide protection for less than half of the Meziadin sockeye spawning area and only partial protection for the water that sustains the important sockeye rearing and nursing areas in Meziadin Lake.

Finally, while there are no noted observations of salmon spawning in Surprise Creek, its location draining into the lower reach of Strohn Creek just before it enters Meziadin Lake provides a vital source of water for the entire watershed.



### **Plants, Berries, and Mushrooms of Note**

- ▶ Pine mushrooms
- ▶ Huckleberries
- ▶ Devil's club
- ▶ Melgwus (hellebore)







## Cultural History and Stewardship

The history of this area is well documented and has been the subject of both published books and government-led research, which combine both the Adawaak (oral history) and the historical records of the first non-native explorers, traders, and colonial government representatives who came to the Gitanyow Lax'yip (see References). In the pre-contact era, around 1860, the T'ax'matsiadin (Meziadin Lake) territory came into possession of Wilp Wii Litsxw and T̄xawok, of Gitanyow. Territorial possession resulted from a justice transfer of territory during a peace ceremony or xsiisxw from the Tsetsaut.

The xsiisxw was done in the appropriate manner in accordance with Gitanyow Ayookxw, a similar Indigenous legal system to that of Gitanyow's neighbours, the Nisga'a, Tsetsaut, Gitksan, and Tahltan. As with the entirety of the Gitanyow Lax'yip, Gitanyow's (Wilp Wii Litsxw) title to the Meziadin watershed area is documented and upheld by the following:

- ▶ Gitanyow naming of mountains, rivers, lakes, and other geographic features demonstrating highly detailed knowledge of the territory and its features, and of their historical origins dating back to the original "surveying" of the Wilp territories millennia ago by the ancestors of today's Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs;
- ▶ The description of the Wilp territories in the Adawaak;
- ▶ The formal and public validation of the veracity of each Wilp's Adawaak, its title to its territory and its rights by other Wilp Chiefs and neighbouring nations through a series of Li'ligit (feasts) over countless generations, including at the point of Crown sovereignty assertion up to the present time; and
- ▶ Archaeological and anthropological evidence of sustained, ongoing occupation and use of the defined tracts of land making up the Wilp territories, dating back millennia, at the time of Crown sovereignty assertion and to the present time.

The Wilp territories occupied and governed by the Gitanyow today have remained constant for centuries and continue to be validated through the Li'ligit. Despite encroachments by third parties, including resource companies, the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs continue to uphold their lawful responsibilities to steward the territory in order to sustain its wealth and in turn Gitanyow society and governance.



**The former Wii Litsxw and Gwaas Hla'am, circa 1910.** HISTORIES, TERRITORIES AND LAWS OF THE KITWANCOOL. BRITISH COLUMBIA PROVINCIAL MUSEUM. WILSON DUFF EDITOR. 1959, VICTORIA.



**Wilp Wii Litsxw Git'mgan in Gitanyow today.**  
WILP WII LITSXW SOURCE

## GITANYOW PLACE NAMES IN THE MEZIADIN INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA

- ▶ **Lipsga'nist** – Bell Irving Mountain – “standing alone,” also known as Ska'n'ism habasxw (“big grassy mountain”).
- ▶ **An'hahl'yee** – Hanna Ridge – “where grizzlies go along.”
- ▶ **T'aam Mats'iaadin** – Meziadin River.
- ▶ **T'ax Mats'iaadin** – Meziadin Lake – “pearly water.”
- ▶ **Lax'andzok** – “on place camp” – Village of Wii Litsxw at confluence of Nass and Meziadin Rivers. Fishing for sockeye, spring, sockeye, coho, steelhead, trout.
- ▶ **Xsi'andilgan** – “water/where/beaver dams” – vicinity of lower Hanna and Tintina Creeks.
- ▶ **Xsik'alaa'nht'ax** – “water at head lake” – Surprise Creek.
- ▶ **Xsik'alaa'n** – “water at headwaters” – Strohn Creek.
- ▶ **Anda'gansgotsinak** – Near glacier of Surprise Creek.
- ▶ **Miinhl'lo'op** – Glacier area above Strohn Creek.

*(See References Cited for source of all place names.)*



Victory song dance. WLP WII LITSXW SOURCE

## Allowable Activities in the Protected Area

Wilp Wii Litsxw members gathered June 3, 2021 at Meziadin Junction to discuss this management plan, including the vision and allowable and prohibited activities.

The following activities are considered allowable, with the relevant management direction and precautions. This list is open for discussion further with Wilp Wii Litsxw, third party stakeholders, government, and communities in the area during the six-month review period.

### Recreational Activities

- ▶ Snowmobiling is permitted outside moose hunting areas during November to January each year.
- ▶ ATV/quad use is permitted outside of creek beds and sensitive alpine areas.
- ▶ Low-impact eco-tourism opportunities are welcomed and encouraged, and partnerships for these activities with Wilp Wii Litsxw and Gitanyow are encouraged.
- ▶ Angling guiding is permitted; an access agreement with Wilp Wii Litsxw is encouraged and will be required within one year of the final ratification of this management plan.
- ▶ Guide-outfitting is permitted; an Access Agreement with Wilp Wii Litsxw is encouraged and will be required within one year of final ratification of the management plan.



## Aboriginal Rights and Culture

- ▶ Exercise of Aboriginal or Indigenous rights by Wilp Wii Litsxw members, and those who have received permission from Simoogit Wii Litsxw in accordance with Gitanyow Ayookxw, is permitted. Activities include fishing, hunting, trapping, and gathering plants, berries, medicines, and mushrooms.
- ▶ Cultural camps and educational camps for youth, adults, and elders are supported and encouraged by Wilp Wii Litsxw. Information on best practices is available from the Gitanyow Chiefs Office for dealing with human, food, and other waste associated with the camps.
- ▶ Salmon habitat infrastructure is permitted, where needed and done in accordance with Gitanyow Ayookxw, including water storage, fish enumeration fences, etc.
- ▶ Cultural burns of forested areas to prevent severe wildfire risk, and to promote growth of berry and fungi growth, and to safeguard cultural infrastructure from increased wildfire risk. Fire stewardship of the area may include implementation of the Gitanyow Fire Stewardship Plan at a future date.

## Infrastructure and Highways

- ▶ Development of buildings and retrofitting of existing buildings in the Protected Area to house Wilp Wii Litsxw cultural uses is permitted. This includes cabins, learning centres, cultural camp buildings, structures, and facilities for children and elders associated with main buildings.
- ▶ Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure maintenance is permitted, including but not limited to paving and seal-coating, bridge maintenance and replacements, snow removal and sanding, avalanche control, and other standard highways operations will continue to be supported. Consultation on proposed activities will continue through the Gitanyow Recognition and Reconciliation Agreement, Engagement Framework (2021). Gitanyow will work with MOTI and the RCMP to ensure speed limits on Highway 37 and Highway 37A are appropriate to limit industrial vehicle accidents causing spills into sensitive salmon spawning waterways and to ensure best practices for protection of fish and wildlife. Wilp Wii Litsxw does not consider gravel pit development a ‘mining’ activity, so long as it is in support of public transportation services along Highway 37 and 37A and select forest service roads.
- ▶ Fuel storage for helicopter and other aircraft vehicles is permitted only in designated areas outside of the floodplain of main spawning creeks and their drainages (Strohn Creek, Surprise Creek, Meziadin River, Hanna, and Tintina). Fuel storage and helicopter staging areas are welcomed and encouraged at Meziadin Junction, a Gitanyow-owned business.
- ▶ Gitanyow buildings constructed for the purposes of monitoring stations for Gitanyow Fisheries Authority and other scientific and cultural studies or events held in the protected area is permitted.

## Commercial or Economic Harvests of Berries, Mushrooms, and Fish

- ▶ Commercial harvest of berries, fungi, other plants, and salmon is permitted only with express permission of Simoogit Wii Litsxw, in accordance with the Gitanyow Ayookxw. Sale of berries, mushrooms, and other plants should consider sustainability of the harvest level.
- ▶ Commercial harvest of salmon is permitted only during years where sufficient returns to Meziadin allow, carried out in consultation with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Gitanyow Fisheries Authority.

## Residential Dwellings of Non-Indigenous Peoples

- ▶ The residential sub-division at Meziadin Lake will continue to be respected. No new private docks are to be built, especially in salmon spawning areas on the lakeshore. Residents are encouraged to use a centralized dock in areas not used as extensively for spawning. Maps of spawning locations are available from the Gitanyow Fisheries Authority.
- ▶ Where Crown leases or fee-simple properties become available, Wilp Wii Litsxw will seek a right of first refusal with the provincial government.



## Scientific and Cultural/Archaeological Studies

- ▶ Scientific studies are permitted, including studies on salmon, other fish, wildlife, water quality, climate change, and glaciology are encouraged and supported. Partnerships with Gitanyow and Wilp Wii Litsxw are required or letters of support can be provided where capacity is limited to participate. Where a partnership with Gitanyow exists, or Gitanyow is leading the project, no provincial or federal permits will be sought or required. Study plans, including methods and identification of potential impacts or risk, will be reviewed by Gitanyow Fisheries Authority and Wilp Wii Litsxw.
- ▶ Archaeological and cultural use studies are encouraged and supported. Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs have positive working relationships with academic researchers and private consulting firms who can assist in study design and implementation. Where the study is supported by Gitanyow and Wilp Wii Litsxw, no provincial permit will be required.

# Prohibited Activities in the Protected Area

## Industrial Activities

- ▶ Mineral claim registration, mineral exploration, mine development, mine operation, mineral exploration, or any activities that promote mineral exploration and development in the protected area is prohibited. Activities that promote mineral exploration can include mineral surveys, data gathering, commercial promotion through advertising, or other activities to create economic interests in the protected area. Wilp Wii Litsxw does not consider gravel pit development for public highways to be a mining activity.
- ▶ Railway development is prohibited, including surveying, investigative studies, promotion, or speculation publicly on the economic case for a railway through the protected area.
- ▶ Fracking, or any type of sub-surface gas exploration, is prohibited, including the promotion of the area by governments or companies for gas exploration.
- ▶ Pipeline development is prohibited, including for the transmission of natural gas, oil, condensate, and other hazardous materials. Any activity by another government or company to promote pipeline development in the protected area is prohibited.
- ▶ Transmission lines, including any surveying or investigative studies related to such development in the protected area, are prohibited, unless related to Wilp Wii Litsxw green energy projects, and subject to review under the Wilp Sustainability Assessment Process.
- ▶ Industrial road development associated with the above or other prohibited activities in the protected area is prohibited.

## Privatization of Lands

- ▶ Granting of any new fee simple, leasehold, or other provincial interests or dispositions in the protected area is prohibited.
- ▶ Any new non-Gitanyow residential development in the protected area is prohibited.

## Waste and Pollution

- ▶ Release of any hazardous waste into the environment in the protected area is prohibited.
- ▶ Introduction, spill, or escape of waste or any substance into the environment that is capable of causing pollution of the land, air, or water in the protected area is prohibited. Prevention of accidental spill or escape of waste or any substance into the environment will be included in relevant agreements with Wilp Wii Litsxw.
- ▶ Wilp Wii Litsxw will work with those responsible for any existing contaminated sites in the protected area to identify and implement measures for clean-up and restoration.

## Forestry/Commercial Logging in the Protected Area

Commercial logging and any related activities are prohibited in the Protected Area. Related activities include road building, commercial thinning or other removal of trees for economic purposes.

Exemptions may be sought in the area shown on the map title “Proposed Forest Operable Area” in Appendix A. Criteria for potential exemptions may include:

- ▶ Selective or partial cut methods are employed and carried out only under the Gitanyow Forest License, and only under circumstances related to the potential legal provincial protection designations and in accommodation of broader provincial forestry interests in the Nass Timber Supply Area;
- ▶ Removal or falling of trees for stewardship or tourism purposes including: trail building and maintenance; restoration activities such as falling of trees for large woody debris in spawning creeks; falling of hazardous trees in areas where human safety is a concern; falling of trees for use in cultural infrastructure or practices such as smokehouse, cabin or other building construction or use;
- ▶ Any and all exemptions must only be offered with the free, prior, and informed consent of Wilp Wii Litsxw.

## Harm to Fish or Fish Habitat

- ▶ Any work, undertaking, or activity (other than fishing with the permission of Simoogit Wii Litsxw in accordance with Gitanyow Ayookxw) that results in death of fish, or the harmful alteration, disruption, or destruction of fish habitat, is prohibited, regardless of any authorization or license issued by the Crown.

## Activities for Further Review

- ▶ Green energy projects, including run-of-river and other hydro-electric development, are open to further review. Projects will be considered in accordance with the Gitanyow Ayookxw and Gitanyow Wilp Sustainability Assessment Process.





# Relationship to Other Government Plans, Processes, and Legal Designations

The Gitanyow Lax'yip Land Use Plan (GLLUP) continues to be the main Ayookxw for governing lands in the entire Gitanyow Lax'yip. The GLLUP has been in place since 2012 and contains provisions for an adaptive management approach, as outlined in the Gitanyow Huwilp Recognition and Reconciliation Agreement Sections 11.5, 12.7a, and Schedule C, Section 3.5d.

The Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area was established as a part of the adaptive management approach outlined in the GLLUP to be utilized where new information becomes available. Existing protection measures continue in the Hanna Tintina Conservancy. However, spawning locations for sockeye salmon identified in significant numbers in 2016 were outside the Hanna Tintina Conservancy (protected as a part of the GLLUP) and require additional protection measures as set out in this management plan.

Implementation of this management plan for the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance long-term carbon storage and other ecosystem services in the Lax'yip compared to 'business as usual.' Gitanyow enacts protection of this area in the Ayookxw and engages other governments on similar protection measures with the intent of both cultural and ecological preservation, and potential carbon offset and biodiversity credit revenue generation. Gitanyow remains open to exploring such revenue generation with other governments, including the provincial government of British Columbia, but is also pursuing other independent avenues.

This management plan and the Ayookxw supporting the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area will remain in effect regardless of any new provincial legal designations. Gitanyow remains open to collaborative stewardship and legally plural designations for protection of the Meziadin area and will draw upon the management direction and vision contained herein to guide any negotiations, consultation, or consent-based processes with Crown governments.

The exercise of Gitanyow Dax'gyet (authority) and Ayookxw (laws) is supported by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, specifically Articles 3, 4, 5, 11, 18, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, and 32. The UN Declaration is supported and adopted by both the provincial and federal governments, which further bolster Crown recognition of the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area.

## Monitoring and Enforcement

Gitanyow Lax'yip Guardians will continue to fulfill their role in the protected area, conducting moose hunting and salmon harvest monitoring, spill response, inspections of highways and forestry roads or impacts to fish and wildlife, data gathering, and restoration activities in the Hanna and Tintina Creeks and surrounding areas.

Wilp Wii Litsxw will annually, or as frequently as needed, appoint at least one additional Gitanyow Lax'yip Guardian to work on behalf of the Wilp in the protected area.

Incidents, management concerns, and other relevant information will be reported back to Wilp Wii Litsxw and the Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs Office for management response.

The Gitanyow Lax'yip Guardians will continue to work with the BC Conservation Officer Service and BC Natural Resource Officers, and others as necessary, on monitoring and enforcement activities, as appropriate.

## Restoration Priorities

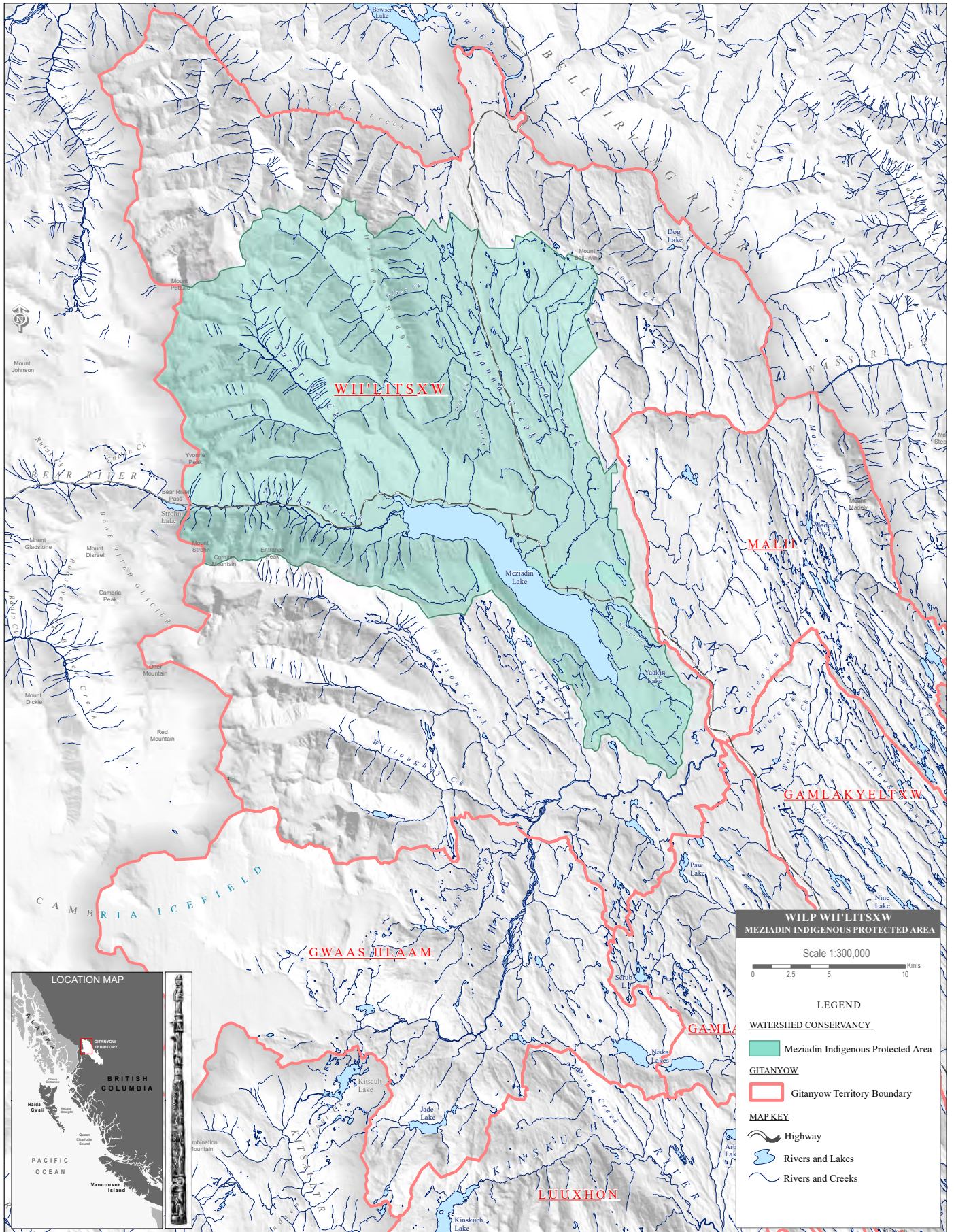
The Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area is inclusive of the Hanna Tintina Conservancy, which was jointly established with the provincial government in 2012 as a part of the GLLUP. The Hanna and Tintina have historically accounted for spawning habitat for up to 80 per cent of Nass River sockeye.

As noted above, the recent trend has shifted toward Strohn Creek for spawning abundance. Nonetheless, Hanna and Tintina are a vital part of the watershed and require ongoing restoration following extensive logging over 40 years ago resulting in changes to channel structure.

Gitanyow Fisheries Authority in collaboration with Wilp Wii Litsxw will continue to identify priorities for restoration in the two creeks drainages, including but not limited to:

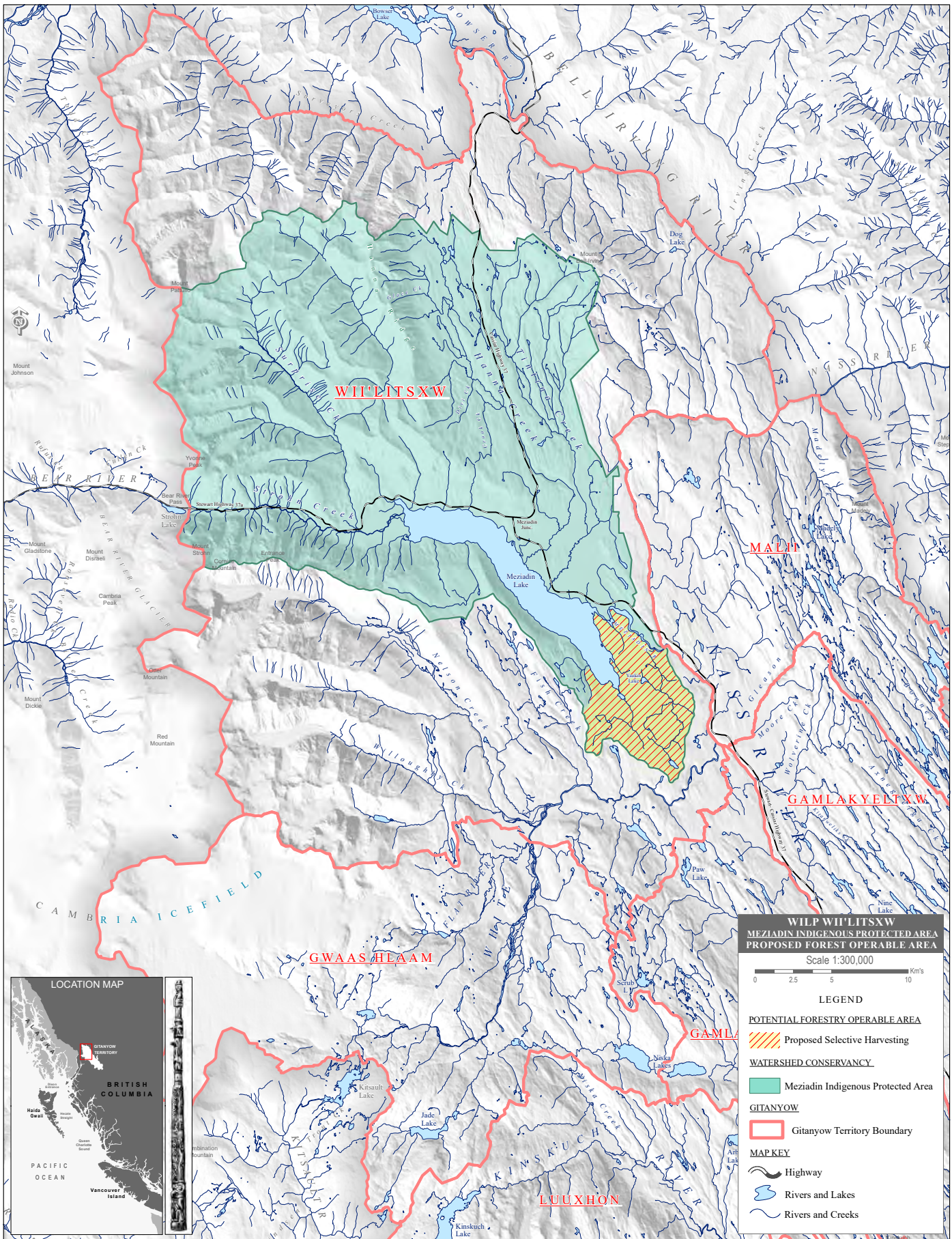
- ▶ Removal or replacement of legacy culverts, where needed;
- ▶ Ongoing trapping of beavers, to reduce impacts of beaver dams on water flow during years of drought or low-flows; and
- ▶ Installation of large woody debris structures to help scour channel to alter and improve channel width:depth ratio with an aim to further benefit sockeye migration into and spawning in Tintina Creek.





X:\coredata\Projects\Gitanyow18\Hanna Tinting





## Appendix B

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wilp Wii Litsxw would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations who provided critical support in development of this management plan and establishment of the Wilp Wii Litsxw Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area:

Gitanyow Fisheries Authority and Gitanyow Lax'yip Guardians, including Mark Cleveland, Kevin Koch, Jordan Beblow, Derek Kingston (former), James Morgan, Mike McCarthy (contractor), Dean Miller (contractor), Greg Johnson, Dustin Gray, Lesley McLean, Brenton Williams, Morgan Douse (former), and Melissa Shirey.

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Wilburforce Foundation, including Wendy Vanasselt and Carol Orr.

MakeWay Foundation, Ivan Thompson, Shayla Walker (former), Bridgitte Taylor, and Kim Hardy.

Coast Mountain College, Professor Matthew Beedle and Research Assistant Monica Jeffery.

BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Brian Kolman, Ryan Holmes, Megan Peloso, and Associate Deputy Minister Eamon O'Donoghue.

SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

Resilient Indigenous Leaders Network, including Claire Hutton, Megan Moody, Stephanie Puleo, and members of the IPCA group.

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Marsupial Design, Marci Janecek for updated 2023 version.

Silvertip Promotions, Shauna McGinlay.

Gitanyow Chiefs, including Glen Williams/Malii.

# METHODOLOGY

The general steps to develop this management plan included:

- ▶ Review existing documents of relevance, including those listed in the References below, Indigenous protected area materials from other nations, and samples of Indigenous co-management materials for conservancies in B.C.;
- ▶ Generate common categories among other similar examples of Indigenous protected areas/tribal parks for management plans;
- ▶ Draft outline and present to Wilp Wii Litsxw;
- ▶ Workshop with Wilp Wii Litsxw on vision, allowable, and prohibited activities;
- ▶ Complete other management plan sections based on past work of Gitanyow Fisheries Authority and others;
- ▶ Present to Wilp Wii Litsxw, Gitanyow Chiefs for validation;
- ▶ Conduct six-month review period to allow for stakeholders and third parties to have input on the final management plan; and Distribute and post on Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs website, and share with governments, industrial proponents, and interested parties.



# Declaration



## Declaration of the Wilp Wii Litsxw Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area

- ◆ Wilp Wii Litsxw hereby affirms in accordance with the Gitanyow Ayookxw our responsibility to protect the area within the Meziadin watershed to ensure the survival of salmon for future generations and for healthy ecosystems.
- ◆ Wilp Wii Litsxw is concerned about the potential impact of mining, mineral exploration, railway and other major industrial development on the salmon spawning habitat in the watershed and is acting on the inherent right of self-governance to uphold Gwelx ye'enst.
- ◆ Wilp Wii Litsxw wishes to ensure food security and response to the climate crisis by protecting a major habitat system in the Nass Watershed.
- ◆ Wilp Wii Litsxw works in cooperation with the other 7 Gitanyow Wilp for the betterment of the Huwilp and the Lax'yip through the Gitanyow Lax'yip Land Use Plan. In 2012, the Gitanyow Lax'yip Land Use Plan became law and protected the Hanna and Tintina Creeks, and it includes provisions for updates. In 2016 Wilp Wii Litsxw became aware of higher abundance of salmon spawning in Strohn Creek, and have taken every step possible since then to protect Strohn, and its tributary Surprise Creek.



**GITANYOW HEREDITARY CHIEFS**  
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- ◆ Salmon is vital to the Gitanyow culture, governance, physical and social well-being of our members. Without salmon, we lose our identity, history, and connection to the land and to future generations.
- ◆ Today we take the important step to continue to protect the Meziadin Watershed, while still allowing and promoting sustainable development. The Indigenous Protected Area is not a park. It is a new way of being with the land and water, in respect, but also ensuring our people and our neighbours can sustain themselves with employment opportunities.
- ◆ This Declaration is accompanied by a Draft Management Plan which outlines what activities are allowable in the Meziadin Indigenous Protected Area, and which activities are prohibited. It also outlines the value of the area, and why we are protecting it. The Draft Management Plan will be open for Wilp and public review, comments and feedback are welcome. The review period will be 6 months and following that a final Management Plan will be shared with all affected parties, and other levels of government.
- ◆ In addition to the Gitanyow Ayookxw, this Declaration is supported by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the *Gitanyow Lax'yip Land Use Plan*, the *B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, and numerous legal precedents including the *Delgamuukw/Gis Day Wa* Supreme Court decision and the *Wii Litsxw BC* court decision of 2008, and other cases regarding aboriginal title.
- ◆ We invite fellow Gitanyow Wilps and our Gitksan amna'gotxw and na'dil to witness and affirm this Declaration.



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Simalgyax Summary

- ◆ Hoogyax'm aluu ta dinhl Wilp Wii Litsxw Ayookxwhl Gitanyow, dim wela di di'y diithl mi'soh Lax Meziadin el lehl nidiit atiks't ga len'm.
- ◆ Luu wentxw go'ots Wilp Wii Litsxw ehl en ha hle'els, nedy hasak dit dim't luu bait wii lakxw diit en sa huun.
- ◆ Ha sakhl Wilp Wii Litsxw dim hooyax'm ama gya'atxwhl win luu lo'olhl hun.
- ◆ Sa'it neda ki'ihl Sim gi gyet lax yip'm Gitanyow ii luu sii paxs diit ayookxw ii hoogyax'm di di't diit gant ligil diit ga ahl An'hahl'yee ganhl Xsi'andilgan.
- ◆ Jeeda neehl hun ii k'al kwootxwhl wila di dils'm ganhl nidiit atiks't ga len'm.
- ◆ Sim git litxw nuum sa tuun dim k'al yee dim dip di'di'yhl Meziadin. Dox en ha hleels't lax yip ganhl lax aks ehl hla ga t'suum.
- ◆ Lip dox k'sa'winksxw hoox diit ent mehlihl guuhl da akxw diit ganhl guuhl need'y da akxw't dim jebxw't lax Meziadin. Iixw dii nii tahl guut gan wihl dip di di'ihl lax yip Meziadin.
- ◆ Sa'it oo'm hla ga t'suum ehl Gitanyow, Gitxsan amnagotxw ganhl na'dil'm, dim gya'as'm wen hoogyax'm aluu tahl ayookxw ganhl dim wila di di'itxw Lax yip Meziadin.

Signed on behalf of Wilp Wii Litsxw:

*Andy Johnson Sr*

Andy Johnson Sr, Han'oyak - Witness

*Malii*

Glen Williams/Malii, Gitanyow President

*Tyrone Hill*

Tyrone Hill, Go'nganalque

*Josh Rush*

Josh Rush, Txa'goo'latxws

*Joel Starlund*

Joel Starlund, Sk'a'nism Tsa 'Win'Giit

*Rita Hill*

Rita Hill

*Yvonne Starlund*

Yvonne Starlund, Atgunsax

*Barb Hyzims*

Barb Hyzims, Hatagamyee

*Tim Martin*

Tim Martin, Txa Wokxw

*Andy Johnson Jr*

Andy Johnson Jr, Lu lagamsok

*Gregory Rush*

Gregory Rush Sr, Wii Litsxw

Date: August 28, 2021



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## Appendix E

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