



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment
Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service
that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

GETTING PAST OVERLAPS Heiltsuk and Kitasoo/Xais Xais sign peace treaty

By Carla Robinson

“We are committed to the mutual support of each other by sharing our knowledge, resources, expertise, and other means of empowering the continued growth of our Nations and peoples according to our traditions.”

— excerpt from the Peace Treaty signed Sept. 23, 1996

Kitasoo Chief Archie Robinson asking the Heiltsuk people for permission to step ashore.



Watching the seven Heiltsuk paddlers escort the two Kitasoo/Xais Xais canoes towards the shore felt as though it could have been happening hundreds of years ago. This was, in fact, the first time in over a century that the Kitasoo/Xais Xais people had travelled in their own traditional canoes. But the ceremony itself, which recognized the beginning of a peace treaty between the two central coast nations, not only revived memories of an era long past. The empowering act of a Kitasoo Chief asking the Heiltsuk people for permission to step ashore onto their territory seemed to give many people the first small glimpse into the future of self-government.

"This is a historical day," said Edwin Newman, the chief

negotiator for the Heiltsuk. "This treaty acknowledges the relationship between our two communities since time immemorial." Newman said the peace treaty reflects the extensive kinship ties the two nations have, and that they have always used and shared certain lands and resources.

“We shall continue to resolve, amongst ourselves, all matters pertaining to the traditional territories and resources of those territories between our two Nations.”

— *excerpt from the Peace Treaty signed Sept. 23, 1996*

"There will be big changes," Kitasoo/Xais Xais chief negotiator Percy Starr said after the signing ceremony. "Now we'll be able to speak with one voice — the Kitasoo, the Xais Xais and the Heiltsuk. If all the nations of the central coast get together, that would be an even more powerful voice." Starr said the agreement will guide the two nations in their treaty negotiations, particularly in the area of co-managing natural resources such as fish.

Pressure to come to an agreement with their closest neighbours began to mount in 1993 as the Kitasoo, through their affiliation with the Tsimshian Tribal Council, and the Heiltsuk began working on the details of their framework agreements. "Shared lands, referred to as overlaps by B.C. and Canada, are viewed as a stumbling block to the finalization of modern-day treaties," Newman said. "This treaty demonstrates that we don't need the interference of B.C. and Canada to resolve the issue of shared lands."

At the evening ceremonies, Woyala, or Chief Reg Moody, the highest hereditary Heiltsuk Chief, said, "If we look around this room, we can see the way we are connected, the Kitasoo, the Xais Xais, the Haida, the Haisla, the Bella Coola, the Oweekeno. We can't continue to live the way the white man has divided us... Tonight, we have fulfilled a dream we both have had for a very long time."

The area's senior federal negotiator, Bill McGill, who attended the signing ceremony as a guest, agreed that overlaps have to be solved by the people whose Aboriginal rights are affected. "I'm fully confident the First Nations of the north coast are well on their way to solving their overlaps. They're looking for ways to solve them in a way that will suit them and their neighbours."

McGill said overlaps shouldn't affect the signing of

agreements-in-principle but definitely have to be dealt with before the treaties take effect. "We're only making treaties with one nation, one set at a time. Treaties have to be specific."

Like the Tsimshian's land claim to the north, the Heiltsuk's land claim crosses boundaries with several surrounding Nations, including Nuxalk (which has chosen not to enter into the B.C. treaty process), the Haida, Haisla, Gwax'sala and Oweekeno. Many people, citing old grievances, said coming to an agreement with Nuxalk, and possibly Oweekeno, could be a tough challenge. Newman, however, whose job it is to bring all the nations together concerning the grey areas of their land claims, seemed confident the Heiltsuk would be able to reach agreements quickly with their other neighbours.

When a representative from Oweekeno's treaty negotiating team, Dennis Hanuse, decided to speak towards the end of the evening, many people took it as a good sign. "I could leave here without responding," Hanuse said, "But as with this peace treaty, we're going to have to make agreements ourselves, and I consider myself amongst family and friends."

It was clear at the celebration feast that people knew this was an important moment in the negotiations toward self government. "It's a tremendous amount of responsibility to try to design something, a legacy, that will make your children's children life better than what you grew up with," said Arlene Wilson, Heiltsuk's Chief councillor. Chief Moses Humchitt, in a speech that was translated by Liz Brown, said, "This is not for us as hereditary Chiefs. It's too late for us. It's for our children and great grandchildren."



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission](#)

[on](#)

[Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED](#)

[WATER — Bella Bella](#)

[Treatment Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement](#)

[Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community
Service that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's](#)

[Percy Starr:](#)

[Order of Canada's newest](#)

[member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local](#)

[Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:](#)

[A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

INKAMEEP VINEYARDS : *Great Grapes*

by Jolayne Madden-Marsh

Sam Baptiste (right) helps his staff prune vines.



“Everybody in the industry has a great deal of respect for Sam. The wineries that buy his grapes produce excellent quality wines. He takes an active role in the industry.

He’s a very smart man.” That’s Connie Bielert, from the Kelowna office of the B.C. Wine Institute, praising Sam Baptiste, general manager of Inkameep Vineyards, Limited. Owned by the Osoyoos First Nation, Inkameep is located in the Okanagan Valley, 20 kilometres north of Osoyoos, B.C. It is the first vineyard in Canada with 100 percent First Nation ownership, and is one of the largest wine-grape vineyards in British Columbia. It is operated by an appointed board of directors composed of Osoyoos members.

When Sam Baptiste, a former Osoyoos chief, joined Inkameep Vineyards as general manager in 1989, the company had already been in operation for over 20 years. Baptiste has made substantial contributions to the business. He takes a hands-on approach to grape growing. “I have supervised the planting of every grape here since 1990,” he proudly announces. In 1990 revenues were \$590,000, and by the 1995 season revenues had risen to \$1.2 million.

Crop sprayer protects vines from insect damage.



This unique and modern company has set

itself apart from other British Columbia vineyards. Inkameep risked planting Vinifera grapes when most B.C. vineyards were still growing the hardier French hybrid grapes. Inkameep grapes are consistently ultra-premium quality, providing the vineyard with a loyal group of buyers —



local and across the country. “We are producing grapes which can compete with any cool climate grape-growing area,” boasts Baptiste.

Dick Cleave, an Oliver-area vineyard manager with 22 years’ experience in the industry, agrees. “Sam and I are both very much quality oriented. It’s no secret that we both produce very high quality grapes.” He also praises Baptiste’s management skills. “It’s all in the management. Sam’s a hell of a manager.” Cleave gives credit to “excellent location, excellent varieties and excellent quality” for Inkameep’s success. Cleave claims that “when there will be a surplus of grapes in the valley in a couple of years, our grapes will still be in demand.”

Inkameep has agreements in place with many of Canada’s top wineries, including Gehringer Brothers, Summerhill, and Vincor, and is currently working on an agreement with Quails’ Gate. Andres buys 40-50 percent of Inkameep’s crop. The agreements are comprehensive, defining the variety of grape to be purchased, approximate tonnage, indices (which include maturity standards, pH and sugar levels), picking times, testing, delivery and much more.

Vincor International, the largest wine company in Canada, produces several quality wines under different labels. Vincor Okanagan Cellars, located on adjacent leased Osoyoos reserve land, owns Inniskillin Winery, which incorporates petroglyphs found on Osoyoos traditional territory into its label art. A few of its 1994 wines were made with 100 percent Inkameep grapes, and placed the name of Inkameep Vineyards in the variety name (for example, the Chardonnay is called 1994 Chardonnay Inkameep Vineyard). Inniskillin’s wine sells in the \$13-\$18 range, and the 1994 vintages, many of which were given exclusive sales in upscale Vancouver restaurants, such as Umberto’s and Bishop’s, have nearly sold out. Art Kendall, Inniskillin’s Director of Marketing, Western Canada, says that the Osoyoos First Nation is very proud of what it’s been doing. Kendall expresses that “it has been a win-win situation. There’s no negative. People are in awe.”

Inkameep Vineyards presently employs 20 part-time and seasonal full-time staff. Although almost every employee is a member of the Osoyoos First Nation, two horticulture students from France were

hired for the summer. Many Inkameep staff have been a part of the organization for up to 27 years.

A large number of Inkameep's employees specialize in vine care. They pound posts, string wire, tie plants — just about everything from the ground up, from plant to harvest. Mike Olson, a labourer at the vineyard, enjoys his work. “It's never boring. At first it's just a plant, but then you start to learn about the different varieties and their traits. It's interesting.” The vineyard produces large quantities of Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Small crops of many others varieties are also growing at Inkameep Vineyards, including Pinot Gris, Pinot Meunier, Sauvignon Blanc, and Gamay Noir.

Baptiste, educated in horticulture from Wenatchee Valley College and specializing in viticulture, is always trying to upgrade his knowledge of the wine industry. “I read everything,” says Baptiste, grinning at me over a desk piled high with wine industry magazines and reports. “I talk to all the better growers. We all learn from each other. It's a small industry. Everybody gets along with everybody else. Good will is what this industry is all about.”



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment
Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service
that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

“We believe the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada must change. We believe it can. The cycle of blame and guilt, grievance and denial, frustration and fear can be broken. It is time to renew, to turn the page.”

(Judge René Dussault)

“Aboriginal reality in Canada has become a vicious circle of cause and effect. If that vicious circle is to become a healing circle, the roots of injustice must be addressed. Instead of problem feeding problem, solution must feed solution.”

(Georges Erasmus)

With these words, Co-Chairs Judge René Dussault and Georges Erasmus launched the five-volume Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) on November 21, 1996.

Established in August 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was tasked with a broad range of issues, many of which are complex and deal with long-standing matters in the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The RCAP final report

represents extensive consultations with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada on various subjects.

The final report's 440 recommendations cover a wide range of Aboriginal issues and will have long-term and far-reaching implications that require cooperative efforts across governments and by all interested parties. Progress has been made over the past three years in key policy areas such as the inherent right of self-government and claims. Progress has also been made in improving living conditions in Aboriginal communities, through comprehensive programs that result in better housing, upgraded water and sewage systems, enhanced labour skills, and increased economic development opportunities.

Commission Highlights:

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommends that:

- the Queen and Parliament issue a royal proclamation acknowledging mistakes and committing governments to a new relationship.
- an Aboriginal Parliament, to be known as the House of First Peoples, be created.
- an independent lands and treaties tribunal be created to decide on land claims, and to ensure that treaty negotiations are conducted and financed fairly.
- the Métis be provided with an adequate land base.
- the federal government spend \$1.5-to-2 billion annually for 20 years to improve Aboriginal housing, health, education and employment.
- two new federal departments — the Aboriginal Relations Department and the Indian and Inuit Services Department — replace the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.
- the Canadian Human Rights Commission be authorized to inquire into the relocation of Aboriginal communities and to recommend remedies to address the negative effects of relocations.
- federal, provincial and territorial governments commit themselves to training 10,000 Aboriginal professionals in health and social services.

Some Initial Reactions to the Royal Commission Report

“The report should be viewed as a valuable tool for Aboriginal leaders, federal, provincial, and municipal governments and educators — all Canadians will be interested. We are also very interested in their reaction to the recommendations.”

(Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Minister Ronald A. Irwin)

The RCAP report is “too valuable to ignore, too far-reaching to disregard, and too historic to neglect. The commission report represents the last chance this century to achieve economic equality and social justice for Aboriginal peoples.”

(National Chief Ovide Mercredi, Assembly of First Nations)

“Politicians, Aboriginal peoples and the public need to take the time to review and understand the report, its recommendations and its proposed 20-year plan of action. And in due time, the Prime Minister should bring the first Ministers and Aboriginal leaders together to determine how and which recommendations should be dealt with.” **(Grand Chief Edward John, Tl'azt'en First Nation, and member of the First Nations Summit)**

“I am reassured...In British Columbia we have a process that means that some of the things that are recommended are already happening. We are working toward solutions through the treaty process.”

(B.C. Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Cashore)

“Something has to be done to give pride and dignity to First Nations people...this report is a good step in this direction.”

(Chief Arthur Manuel, Neskonalith First Nation)

“At the end of the day, the rest of Canada could find that the British Columbia treaty-making process, dealing with contemporary issues, provides the template for solving the important issues raised by the commission. An essential element of such solutions must be the development of a new and lasting relationship between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, a relationship based on trust and on respect for each other's values.”

(Chuck Connaghan, first Chief Commissioner of the B.C. Treaty Commission)

“We are optimistic that the report will create an opportunity to bring serious outstanding issues to the forefront.”

(Chief Lynda Prince, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council)

“Everyone is concerned about how much it cost. Actually, they should be looking at the content... the recommendations are consistent with the principles of the union.”

(Chief Frank Boucher, Red Bluff First Nation, and member of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs)

“I believe their report, tabled Nov. 21, raises Aboriginal hopes unfairly because workable, affordable solutions to the many tragedies of life on Indian reserves must be worked out together with all the other issues facing Canada, not in a vacuum. Instead this commission cooked up a pie-in-the-sky wish list.”

(Reform MP Darrel Stinson, Okanagan-Shuswap)

“I hope the commission will finally give a focus to discussions with First Nations and the provinces.”

(Chief Manny Jules, Kamloops First Nation)



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment
Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service
that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

NO MORE TEA- COLOURED WATER — Bella Bella Treatment Plant is in Business

by Carla Robinson

Chuck Windsor holding "before" and "after" water.



After two glorious months of clear clean water, residents in the Heiltsuk First Nation's coastal village of Bella Bella seemed to have forgotten what it was like before the new water treatment plant started up. It was short-lived. In the last days of August, when the water was at its murkiest, a small on/off switch broke, and rudely brought back the brown, heavily silted water everyone knew so well.

Arlene Wilson, the First Nation's Chief councillor, said the response the Public Works department received was immediate. "It was funny how fast people got used to having clear water." The technical manager of the new Bella Bella Water Treatment Plant, Chuck Windsor, said because of the system's design, the water was safe to drink all along. The corrosive and potentially harmful microorganisms were still being removed, but the colour removal phase had to be shut off until the valve was replaced.

Until recently, heavy chlorination was the only treatment Bella Bella's very soft, highly-coloured, corrosive and contaminant-prone water received. "It looked like dark tea," Lester Neasloss said, "and was really chlorinated. All you had to do was add sugar and you'd have your own special blend." The community television channel would frequently issue Health Canada's boil water orders because of the unacceptable levels of bacteria and viruses, such as coliform, giardia and cryptosporidium, that were found in the drinking water.

The treatment process, which is sometimes referred to as the Metlakatla process, is new and was developed for water found in marshy climates such as Bella Bella's. The process includes colour precipitation (alum is added to help with sludge removal), slow sand filtration, and limestone contactors (the water is passed through limestone rocks) to condition the water and reduce its corrosiveness. Chlorine is still added as a final precautionary step, but not as generously as before.

Although the plant is high tech, it has been designed to be simple and reliable, using as little electro-mechanical equipment as possible. Mike Green, the Band's technical liaison, said while the plant is based on Metlakatla's design, Bella Bella has a few more obstacles to overcome. "It was a challenge getting the bugs out of our system because it's ten times bigger than the Metlakatla plant, so you get ten times the problems." Green said. "Plus, when you live in an isolated community like this it makes fixing problems a lot more difficult."

The facility was in prime condition, however, for its grand opening in early October, which was attended by DIAND Associate Regional Director General Bill Montour and KWLGS, the engineers who developed the process. On a tour of the new \$4.8-million water treatment plant, Chuck Windsor explained how he is taking correspondence courses from the Department of Health in Sacramento, California, so that he and his crew can do on-site repairs, without having to fly in expensive technicians. He says their next goal is find a way to recycle the used filtering sand because of the high cost of shipping it in from up north.

For residents used to living along the rugged and isolated midcoast, the difficulties the treatment plant experienced were just a part of coastal life. After the first few days of filtered water, though, people like Pauline Waterfall seemed relieved to have one area of their lives made a little easier. "Last weekend, I ran the tap to fill our tub to bathe my one-year-old

granddaughter. In my 52 years of life, it is the first time I have ever seen such clear, clean, pristine water. It was a shock not to have the cedar-brown stuff that smelled like sludge.”



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment Plant
is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service that
Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

Federal Aboriginal Procurement Strategy Gears Up

Aboriginal business entrepreneurs take note! Last Spring, in support of Aboriginal economic development, the Aboriginal Procurement Strategy (APS) was officially launched by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's Minister Ronald A. Irwin. As a result, Aboriginal businesses now have a greater opportunity to supply goods and services to all federal departments and Crown corporations.

And make no mistake, government procurement is a huge market. Every year, federal departments buy about \$14 billion worth of goods, services and construction. Ninety percent of the contracts awarded are for amounts less than \$100,000. Why not get some of that business?

For a business enterprise to qualify as a supplier under the APS, the business must be at least 51% Aboriginally owned and controlled. In addition, if a company has six or more full-time employees, at least one third must be Aboriginal.

DIAND, B.C. Region, has already geared up to promote Aboriginal businesses, both in-house and to other federal departments and Crown corporations. All DIAND regional staff have been informed about the new initiative and are busy spreading the word. In cooperation with other federal departments, B.C. Region is compiling a comprehensive data base of Aboriginal suppliers of goods and services. Mailouts and brochures describing the program and soliciting interest have been distributed to Aboriginal businesses, and supplier development workshops have been coordinated with Public Works and Government Services Canada and Western

Economic Diversification. In Ottawa, DIAND is busy developing policies to encourage joint ventures with, and subcontracting by, Aboriginal suppliers. Nationally, DIAND is also working with other federal departments to establish procurement targets and to develop policy changes.

A “set-aside” program has been in place since April 1, 1996, to ensure that Aboriginal suppliers are used for all direct federal procurements benefiting populations at least 80% Aboriginal and where the value of the procurement is over \$5,000. For example, if a federal department is preparing a brochure which is to be distributed primarily to First Nations people, the contract, subject to federal procurement guidelines, will only be open to bid by Aboriginal businesses.

The Aboriginal Procurement Strategy holds great promise. It provides federal departments with the motivation and flexibility to build long-term contracting relationships with Aboriginal companies. At the same time, it provides Aboriginal companies with the opportunity to market themselves, build experience, win contracts and use the experience gained to go after new customers and new markets. The Aboriginal Procurement Strategy lets the federal government tap into one of the most energetic and successful groups of businesses in the country — Aboriginal businesses.

ABORIGINAL PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

If you would like more information about the APS, please contact David Hooper, Inter-governmental Affairs Advisor, DIAND, B.C. Region. Tel: (604) 666-7762; fax: (604) 666-9812; or E-mail: hooperd@inac.gc.ca.



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitsoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal
Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE
TEA-COLOURED WATER
— Bella Bella Treatment
Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal
Procurement Strategy Gears
Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community
Service that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitsoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest
member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry
Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

JGN GAS BAR: Community Service that Really Pays Off

by Jolayne Madden-Marsh

The summer staff of the JGN Gas Bar.

If you were going out to buy milk, would you rather travel ten kilometres or two blocks? Logically, most people buy from the nearest store that stocks what they need. Things are no different on the Fort Nelson First Nation's



reserve, in the northeast corner of British Columbia. The First Nation has strong buying power due to the number of successful businesses on reserve. Without any retail stores on their reserve, members of the First Nation watched as their money went into stores and services in the nearby town of Fort Nelson. That's when Joe Netsena saw an opportunity to provide a service in his community, and he has met the challenge head-on.

Netsena's business is the thriving JGN Gas Bar and Convenience Store located in the middle of the reserve. Netsena named the site Ama Yukue, in honour of his mother, and built it across the road from his own home. In the days when the business consisted of a single gas bar, Netsena and his young daughter Bonnie would stay at home and watch out the window for cars to drive up, then run across the street to serve them. Things have really turned around since then. Business became so brisk Netsena needed to conduct a serious search for reliable staff, and decided to hire only Fort Nelson First Nation members. "I went through

the whole reserve and found the best,” he says. JGN used to staff up to six full-time employees, but now that most of the work is done electronically, only three are required.

Netsena explains that in the first weeks of business he had only about 10 customers. “I start small and work up,” he says. At first he stocked three brands of cigarettes. Now, a huge variety of cigarettes, as well as lotto tickets, gas, diesel, groceries and fast food — everything from soup and bannock to hamburgers and fries — can be found at JGN Gas Bar. Soon the business will include a post office drop. “I make sure we have the stuff people want. It really does well,” says Netsena.

Three of Netsena’s secrets of success are: exposure, exposure, exposure. He advertises on the local radio stations and in the local newspapers. He distributes thousands of hats, jackets, pens and cups emblazoned with the company logo (a profile of a man in headdress, which looks very much like the Chicago Blackhawks emblem.) “I hand them out because people are too cheap to buy them,” Netsena jokes.

If exposure gets people in the door of JGN, the prices keep them coming back. Netsena claims to sell cigarettes to Natives for “damn near a couple bucks less” than his company’s counterparts in the town of Fort Nelson. For non-Natives, gas prices in town are around 68 cents per litre — Netsena’s price for non-Natives is 60 cents per litre. The prices are about 10 cents lower for First Nations people, who don’t have to pay gas taxes. Even his fast food prices are low, and people are rewarding his business acumen. “These people are just loyal. They’re really great,” says Netsena. Anyone can enjoy the benefits of JGN’s low prices — you don’t have to be a member of the First Nation to shop there. “Some non-Natives from town believe they can’t come on reserve for any reason, but we have 25 or 30 regular buyers from town,” Netsena says. He also claims to have had visitors from all over Canada — as far away as Manitoba — and from the United States.

Aboriginal Business Canada gave Netsena a grant of \$40,600, and he obtained a forgivable loan of \$26,400 from All Nations Trust of Kamloops, B.C. The Bank of Nova Scotia loaned him another \$14,500, and Netsena provided \$20,000 in personal equity for the convenience store addition. “If it wasn’t for All Nations Trust and Aboriginal Business Canada, JGN Gas Bar wouldn’t have gone ahead,” he claims. He has been so successful with his JGN Gas Bar that his loans were completely paid off within 13 months of receiving them. Netsena saves his company money by doing almost all of JGN’s books himself. Netsena only hires an accountant to do his year-end financial statements and other advanced accounting. Chief Harvey Behn of the Fort Nelson First Nation explains, “We (the First Nation) didn’t bankroll him for start-up or operations costs. He’s a stand-alone entity

— he takes the risk and the glory.”

How did Netsena, a retired RCMP drill instructor, undercover homicide and drug enforcement officer, an ex-Band manager and experienced carpenter, and member of the Fort Nelson First Nation, get involved in a gas bar on reserve? “I had this idea and couldn’t let go of it. I wanted to do it,” he says.



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED WATER
— Bella Bella Treatment Plant is in
Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service that
Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

Kitasoo's Percy Starr: Order of Canada's newest member

by Carla Robinson

Percy Starr receiving a gift of recognition from the Heiltsuk people for the work he has done to promote a good relationship between the Kitasoo and Heiltsuk First Nations.



In his classic green work shirt and heavy duty jeans, Percy Starr looks like a no-nonsense man. His salt-and-pepper hair is kept very short and he walks with a quiet, purposeful stride. Over the past 35 years, people who have worked closely with Percy say he has been “the backbone” of the tiny community of Klemtu, B.C., which is located halfway up the coast in a small cove on Swindle Island. With its own salmon hatchery, fish farm, seafood processing plant, Band store, and now a ferry service agreement with B.C. Ferries, the Kitasoo First Nation is fast becoming a model to other coastal communities — both Native and non-Native.

Which brings us back to Percy. “If it wasn’t for him,” says Don Reimer, Kitasoo’s financial controller who has made Klemtu his home for the past four years, “we wouldn’t have such good housing and education. He’s the reason this Band does so well.”

Since his early 30s, Starr has been either Kitasoo’s elected Chief councillor or Band administrator, and has been a major

force on the school board, and housing and various seafood and business committees. “You name it, I’ve done it,” Starr said. “I’m just turning 66 and I see myself doing this job for as long as I’m needed, or as long as I’m able to without killing myself.”

A commercial fisherman for most of his life, Starr has worked hard to make sure the 300 people in his village, who still depend primarily on the ocean’s resources for their livelihood, have had access to and control over the natural resources in their area. When the fish stocks in the area began to drop in the 1980s, for example, he and other people in the community didn’t wait for instructions from anyone.

“We started our hatchery with a little five-gallon bucket in the school,” Starr said, “and then built an incubation box. It was very successful, and once DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) saw that, they began to give us support.”

It was this take charge and professional attitude in all its self-started fishery projects that brought Kitasoo to the attention of former Fisheries and Oceans Minister John Crosby, whose office nominated Percy for the Order of Canada. Bruce Rawson, DFO’s former Deputy Minister, said of Starr, “He’s a determined and forceful grassroots kind of leader with very focused goals. Percy wanted to do three things — conserve resources, build the community and create employment. His efforts to reestablish fishing as employment were a great success.”

“I’ve been able to drag (seafood) processors and Asian money into Klemtu to run a plant, fish farm and hatchery,” Starr said. “I can also get the fishers, shore workers, and people for the dive fishery, and provide them from my community.”

One of Starr’s current ambitions is to bring down the price of freight service to Klemtu. “At the moment, it costs 25 cents a pound to ship into Klemtu — you can imagine how much that adds to 100 pounds of flour,” Starr said. A year-and-a-half ago, Starr explained, he and Archie Robinson, Kitasoo’s Chief councillor, got the break they were waiting for when B.C. Ferries began looking at the central coast for creating new tourism-oriented ferry runs. But, from the start, the negotiation process was not easy. “They (B.C. Ferries) wanted 100 percent support — Bella Bella, Bella Coola, Shearwater. But more importantly, the criteria was that the service must pay its own way.”

For Klemtu, and the other small communities involved, it was close to impossible to promise they would be able to provide enough local passenger traffic to make the run profitable. “So we developed a one-hour walking tour of our hatchery and processing plant, and provided food and cultural entertainment at the community centre. Now we’re evaluating the program and might even expand it,” Starr said.

Starting in early 1997, Central Coast Carriers, a trucking company that Starr is launching with a local businessman, will begin supplying co-op type freight services between Vancouver / Port Hardy and Bella Bella (Waglisla), Shearwater, Ocean Falls and Klemtu. Realizing the difficulty of gathering the large amount of capital needed to start a trucking business in such remote communities, Starr approached the Heiltsuk First Nation early on about becoming a joint partner in the company. The two communities just recently released Central Coast Carriers’ aggressive ten-year plan.

To the people in Klemtu and neighbouring communities, Starr’s leadership style has become well known and well respected. “If you don’t know him he can come off really strong and opinionated, but he isn’t,” says Don Reimer. “He’s been a leader for so long he’s had to be hard-nosed. When he knows he’s right he doesn’t take no for an answer. But he’s very fair; he works very hard to be fair.”

Starr will travel to Ottawa in February 1997 to receive his Order of Canada medal from the Governor General.



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission
on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment
Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service
that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest
member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

FIRST LADIES

by Lyse C. Cantin

A well-developed sense of humour helps carry the first ladies of the Opetchesaht — (left to right) councillor Irene Tatoosh, councillor Nene Van Volson, Chief Judith Sayers — through their working day.



Sometimes they do it with the iron-fist-in-the-velvet-glove approach. Sometimes they just do it with an iron fist. Most times, though, they do it with the velvet glove. Whichever way they do it, they do it with style and grace, strength and determination. That, along with a strong bond of friendship and a generous dose of humour, carries them through the day.

Enter smiling, the Opetchesaht Band Council. Chief councillor, Judith Sayers and councillors Irene Tatoosh and Nene Van Volson make up British Columbia's first all-woman Band Council team. They make governing appear effortless — a contrast to the challenges that face them every day.

Ask anyone and they'll tell you Chief Judith Sayers is not a woman to be taken lightly. Equipped with a business degree from Brigham Young, a law degree from the University of British Columbia and Honorary Doctorate of Law from Queens, she can hold her own in any meeting, whether at the treaty negotiation table, in front of the tribal council, or participating in cultural activities.

“What we try to do here,” says Chief Sayers, “is empower the people. It's the people in the community who have the power and make the decisions.”

The Opetchesaht Council has introduced several programs and

initiatives to help the community recognize its own importance in self-governance. “Our biggest challenge,” says Chief Sayers, “is to build meaningful involvement for community members — something that makes it all worthwhile.”

Tawney Lem has been working with the Opetchesaht Council as its Land Claims Manager since spring '96. She says that she's noticed some unique characteristics in the way the Opetchesaht women govern. “I've noticed that governing for this council is not what some people might like to stereotype — it's not an airy-fairy kind of thing. These are all strong women and they address some of the hard issues that their male counterparts might rather forget about.”

“The real difference in how this council manages is in its problem-solving style,” explains Louise Tatoosh, as she visits her aunt, Irene Tatoosh, and the other council members. Louise recently graduated from the University of Victoria with a Bachelor of Arts, Child and Youth Care program. She is keenly interested in the way the Opetchesaht women have been carrying out council business. “Rather than having a linear-type problem-solving orientation, this council encompasses the whole, that is, the whole person and the whole situation and how it affects the overall community. There is more concern about the emotional and the physical.”

“Meaningful involvement in the community is what it's all about,” says Chief Sayers. The council has been innovative in the ways it has tried to promote that involvement. The Band Council office does everything from sending out information packages and making phone calls to doing door-to-door canvassing and holding information sessions. Open meetings are held at regular intervals to cover everything from unemployment, family violence and land claims to community celebrations and local community parade involvement.

“As a council,” explains Chief Sayers, “not only are we accountable to our membership, we also set the example. As a group, we talk things through until we reach agreement.” So far, the Opetchesaht council has never had to go to a vote to settle any particular issue.

Councillor Irene Tatoosh graduated from St. Thomas Aquinas in North Vancouver and has business college training. She also has counsellor training with the National Native Alcohol and Drug Program. Tatoosh puts all her experience and skills to good use when it comes to inviting community involvement. “More and more people are coming out to the council meetings. We average about 70 percent of our membership for attendance. We like to make the meetings fun and everyone is involved in what goes on

here.”

Active involvement from the Opetchesht youth is of particular interest to Tatoosh and the other council members. “We work a lot with our young people,” Tatoosh says. “ We even have a youth representative who attends many of our council meetings.”

Nene Van Volson is not far from being a youth representative herself. She is the youngest councillor the Opetchesht First Nation has ever had. Voted to council at age 25, she has been educated in business administration and has graduated from North Island College with a diploma in early childhood education. “It’s great to see the community thinking as a community instead of in an individualistic kind of way. As a council, we work really hard at fostering that collectivity. We work hard at making empowerment a reality for the people who live here.”

Van Volson puts it quite succinctly. “Managing a community is not about the administration. It’s about the people. Today and tomorrow.”



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment
Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service
that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

Trade Show Attracts Local Craftspeople

by Jolayne Madden-Marsh

Harold Isaac, Fort St. James-based artist and drum maker, displays his craft.

The Stoney Creek First Nation Reserve is only a short drive from Vanderhoof, in the geographical centre of British Columbia. Melanie Labatch, 24, and her sister Shana Schwentner, 26, members of the Stoney Creek First Nation, had always felt something was missing in their lives. Having grown up in Vanderhoof as “townies”, some connection to their cultural roots was not fulfilled. This past summer they found a way to integrate their own cultural re-education with economic and tourist gain for their First Nation. With little experience, and lots of determination, they organized and hosted the first annual Northern British Columbia Native Arts and Crafts Trade Show. The show exhibited the unique and rich creative life of northern British Columbia’s First Nation communities. Close to 750 people travelled from Vanderhoof, Prince George, Fort Saint John, and even as far away as Vancouver, to see the goods on display.

Held in July in Galbanaye Buyoh (the Stoney Creek Multiplex), the trade show was fun for the whole family, and a great opportunity for craftspeople and artisans to share their knowledge and skill. In addition to the booths, the show featured marketing and small business seminars for the artists to learn how to better ply their trade. Local First Nation dancers, bead workers and story tellers gave demonstrations of their skills periodically throughout the three-day event, and a traditional medicine woman illustrated



how she uses local plants for medicine and food. The show was not juried, so information sharing and exposure were the incentives for artisans to participate, rather than prize money. “My main goal was to open doors for people, allow them to show their wares, make contacts, meet the public and wholesale buyers,” says Labatch.

Shana Schwentner (left) and Melanie Labatch, organizers of the trade show.



In addition to making contacts and getting exposure, many craftspeople made money selling their work. Harold

Isaac, a drum maker and artist who owns a gallery in Fort St. James, sold more in one day at the trade show than his gallery sells in a month. “I know it did the whole community good,” says Labatch. “If one family makes enough contacts to make money, it will benefit.” Although the artists made money, the organizers were depending on the \$1 per person entrance fee and food concession, which featured salmon, freshly made bannock and hamburger soup, to break even.

The process of preparing a funding proposal required a steep learning curve for Labatch and Schwentner. They learned fast, with help from June Clark, regional manager of the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture, and from Barb Mowat, a Vancouver-area businesswoman with a strong interest in women’s and home-based businesses. “When it was done we were so proud,” says Labatch. Their hard work paid off in a large number of sponsors, including the B.C. Ministry of Small Business, Tourism, and Culture; the Bank of Montreal; B.C. Hydro; the Prince George Native Friendship Centre and various local businesses.

The trade show wasn’t easy to put together, though, and the women did struggle. “We almost quit when we found out our funding wasn’t going to be as large as we had thought. But we decided to go ahead. I’m glad we went for it,” explains Schwentner. They were both employed in other jobs, so this work was all done in their spare time. Luckily, they were not alone. “There were a lot of people who wanted to help,” explains Labatch. Their younger sister worked nine-to-five every day in the final weeks before the event, and their grandmother was a wise and supportive advisor, who kept their spirits up when they

got discouraged. The women also learned the power of momentum. “If we’d started a year earlier people may have lost interest.”

In case anyone did lose interest, or was discouraged by the fact that this was the first event of its kind, there is good news. “The potential is here for an annual event,” says Schwentner. “Everybody wants to go in a successful show, but it won’t be a success unless people go in it,” adds Labatch. The women are already planning the event, which will again be held in the Stoney Creek Multiplex. And they know what they’ll do differently to attract more exhibitors. This year they sent press releases to the local media, which garnered much radio and newspaper exposure. They also contacted regional First Nations and followed up on contact referrals. Next year the women intend to visit the local communities in person, give information sessions and calls for submissions, as they found word-of-mouth to be the most effective advertisement.

“I think we really have accomplished something,” says Labatch. “I’m a young Indian girl. I’ve got so much going on. I’ve realized that we can do whatever we want.” If things go according to their plan, these two young women might convince people to drive to beautiful Stoney Creek Reserve to see the arts and crafts of British Columbia’s First Nations every summer, and they will be proud.



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED WATER
— Bella Bella Treatment Plant is in
Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service that
Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

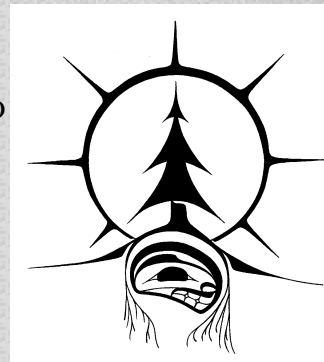
[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY PROGRAM

by Ron Maides, Canadian Forest Service

In B.C., forestry is to the economy what trees are to the forest: essential to its existence. Although always connected to the forest, the First Nations community has not necessarily been directly involved in forestry. The First Nations Forestry Program encourages First Nations throughout Canada to participate in forest economic development.



Jointly funded by the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) and the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), the First Nations Forestry Program was established in March 1996 to enhance economic opportunities, both on and off reserve, for First Nations. The program provides financial and technical assistance to First Nations to ensure that they have the tools and skills needed to operate and participate in forest-based businesses across the country.

“Opportunities are created so that there is more stability and enhancement with respect to economic growth,” says Nello Cataldo, B.C. Collaborative Forestry Program Manager at the Pacific Forestry Centre. “A major aim of the program is to encourage joint ventures with off-reserve business partners. The program supports activities that identify, encourage and develop partnership initiatives, negotiation, business and forest management skills.”

The First Nations Forestry Program also funds skill development and training in operational forestry activities

such as forest inventories, resource management plans, site preparation, planting and silviculture treatments. Eligible recipients of the program are duly elected Indian Band Councils and tribal councils representing Indian Bands, First Nation organizations and any other First Nation group or company involved in improving economic conditions in status Indian communities who can contribute to the objectives of the program.

In supporting financially viable forestry operations, the First Nations Forestry Program creates more jobs and increases forest-based business and economic opportunities both on and off reserve. Funding for the program is available for three years, with the possibility of a two-year extension. By the end of the program, First Nations will have developed necessary forest management skills to continue in viable long-term forestry business. With this goal of self-sufficiency, the First Nations Forestry Program gives First Nations considerable control over their forestry objectives.

A National Management Committee consisting of the CFS and DIAND provides overall management and direction of the program across the country, exploring funding opportunities (trust funds, venture funding, capital pools) and establishing cooperative arrangements with other federal departments. Provincial or territorial management committees consist of individuals from CFS, DIAND and First Nations and are responsible for the implementation of the First Nations Forestry Program in their respective province or territory. Provincial governments and members of the forestry industry who can contribute to the objectives of the program are also encouraged to participate on the provincial or territorial committees.

“The program targets Bands, tribal councils, First Nations forestry associations and businesses across the country,” explained Cataldo. “The B.C. Management Committee develops plans, allocates funds to specific projects, and maintains communications initiatives within the province.”

By promoting First Nations involvement in forestry, the First Nations Forestry Program continues Canada’s commitment to sustainable forest development and new models of forest management.

For morion and/or an application package, please contact Nello Cataldo, Canadian Forest Service, tel: (250) 363-6014,



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment
Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement
Strategy Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar: Community Service
that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts Local
Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for Success](#)

[Credits](#)

Xexe7ellp Ginseng: A Potent Recipe for Success

by Jolayne Madden-Marsh

LITTLE KNOWN FACT:

Canada's First Nations have used ginseng in much the same way it has been used by the Chinese, as an herbal medicinal remedy, for thousands of years.



Ginseng grows wild in eastern Canada and its close relative, the sasparilla root, grows wild in western Canada. The use of the root goes back 3,000 years in Asian Pacific Rim countries, where it is the most widely used medicinal herb.

American ginseng, *Panax quinquefolium* L., has now taken root in the Skeetchestn First Nation's Reserve, about 400 km east of Vancouver. The world's largest ginseng growing company, Chai-Na-Ta Farms, Ltd., has joined with the Skeetchestn to form Xexe7ellp (potent) Ginseng. The First Nation provides 544 acres of land, labour, and part of the financing, while Chai-Na-Ta provides the balance of the financing, experience, management and will buy all of the product at a guaranteed rate. The ginseng will be sold to the markets in Asia and the United States.

Gerry Gill, president and CEO of Chai-Na-Ta, is very enthusiastic about this venture with the Skeetchestn First Nation. "Ron (Chief Ignace) and his council are looking for long-term potential for capital growth. I was really impressed. I saw a lot of creativity and ingenuity in how they were trying to reach self-sufficiency." He

also praises the joint venture process, saying, “our company’s growth has been through strategic alliance. We have paved the way for other joint ventures to work.” He adds, “I think it will be one of the most successful ginseng operations around, and it will be the largest planting in any one area.”

Historic signing between Chai-Na-Ta CEO and President Gerry Gill (*right*) and Skeetchestn Chief Ron Ignace.



The gross revenue of ginseng is up to \$165,000 per acre, making it the most profitable legal cash crop in the world.

But it also costs a lot to seed, \$50 per pound, and it takes 120 pounds to seed an acre. That means the first 50 acres, planted last fall and ready for harvest in spring 1999, cost \$30,000 just in seed. At least 2800 pounds per acre on 544 total acres of ginseng will yield over a million-and-a-half pounds of the product. Profits will be shared between the two parties 50/50. The project is expected to take at least ten years to complete and will create as much as \$50 million in revenue. Potentially, \$5 million will be paid in salaries for at least 170 jobs, much of which will end up in Skeetchestn members’ pockets, as they have first right-of-refusal on jobs.

Ginseng is a tricky plant to farm. “It requires an arid growing climate, so the Skeetchestn land is ideal; it’s hot and dry in the summer, and cold enough in the winter to put the plants into dormancy,” explains Gill. Ginseng naturally grows under the canopy of hardwood forests, so 70 percent shade was reproduced by covering all of the plants with thick tarps dotted with holes. Seedlings were protected from the winter cold by a blanket of hay, a project which employed seven Skeetchestn people last fall. Soil preparation is also essential: 18 inches of nutrient rich soil were needed to plant in, so barley was cultivated and then mulched into the soil before the ginseng was planted. A lot of back-breaking rock-picking was required to clear the soil for growing the picky plant, which cost \$80,000 (paid by DIAND’s Work Opportunities Program Assay).

Gill says, “We like to control the water on our farms,” so the First Nation built a half-million-gallon water reservoir which is hooked up to nearly four kilometres of underground irrigation pipe. An existing 500 horsepower pump was reconditioned to bring the water from the Thompson River at Deadman’s Creek inlet to the reservoir. Using telemetrics, the irrigation system saves money by

using the power of gravity instead of costly electricity to hydrate the fields. “The water system is the key to unlock the potential of this area,” says Chief Ignace. The reservoir will also provide water for a newly-completed subdivision on reserve, and will service a proposed development to include a gas bar, store and restaurant. Construction on this commercial development should begin in 1997. The First Nations Infrastructure Initiative provided \$250,000 for the reservoir.

“This is a win-win situation. There is little risk to the Band,” says Allan Okabe, a member of the Kitsumkalum First Nation near Terrace. His company, Ganhada Management Group of West Vancouver, has a history of assisting First Nations into profitable deals with corporations, and helped Chai-Na-Ta contact the Skeetchestn First Nation. While protecting the interests and culture of the Skeetchestn people, he suggested that the Band surrender the land back to the Crown so a 20-year agricultural lease could be signed with Chai-Na-Ta. “What’s exciting about this project is that it provides tremendous cash flow to the Band.” An original agreement was met which allows the land to fall back into the control of the First Nation after harvest. Upon harvesting the ginseng, each parcel of land will have pristine soil 18 inches deep with which the First Nation can do anything it likes.

The elixir of life, as ginseng is often called, is said to reduce stress, increase physical stamina, quiet the nerves, enhance blood flow, help control blood sugar and cholesterol levels, help regulate blood pressure, strengthen the metabolism, vitalize glandular functions, slow the degeneration of cells and increase longevity. For the Skeetchestn people, ginseng may also be the elixir of economic opportunity.



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



DREAMSPEAKER

B.C. Region, DIAND — Winter 1996/97

IN THIS ISSUE:

[Heiltsuk and
Kitasoo/Xais Xais
sign peace treaty](#)

[Great Grapes](#)

[Report of the Royal
Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples](#)

[NO MORE
TEA-COLOURED
WATER — Bella Bella Treatment Plant is in Business](#)

[Federal Aboriginal Procurement Strategy
Gears Up](#)

[JGN Gas Bar:
Community Service that Really Pays Off](#)

[Kitasoo's
Percy Starr:
Order of Canada's
newest member](#)

[First Ladies](#)

[Trade Show Attracts
Local Craftspeople](#)

[First Nation Forestry Program](#)

[Xexe7ellp Ginseng:
A Potent Recipe for
Success](#)

[Credits](#)

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Aussi disponible en français



[\[Publications\]](#) [\[Back to List\]](#) [\[Français\]](#)



Région de la Colombie-Britannique, MAINC — Hiver 1996/97

AU SOMMAIRE:

[Signature d'un traité de paix
entre les Heiltsuk et les
Kitasoo/Xais Xais](#)

[Un vignoble qui se distingue](#)

[Rapport de la Commission
royale sur les peuples
autochtones](#)

[DU THÉ QUI N'EN ÉTAIT
PAS — À Bella Bella, l'eau est
enfin claire](#)

[Cap sur la Stratégie fédérale
d'acquisition auprès des
entreprises autochtones](#)

[Au JGN Gas Bar, rendre
service, c'est payant!](#)

[Percy Starr, nouvellement
décoré de l'Ordre du Canada,
fait la fierté des Kitasoo](#)

[Le pouvoir au féminin](#)

[Plains feux sur les artisans
locaux](#)

[Le programme forestier des
premières nations](#)

[Le ginseng Xexe7ellp :
l'ingrédient clé du succès?](#)

[Credits](#)

AU-DELÀ DES CHEVAUCHEMENTS Signature d'un traité de paix entre les Heiltsuk et les Kitasoo/Xais Xais

par Carla Robinson

«Nous nous engageons à nous soutenir mutuellement en mettant en commun nos connaissances, nos ressources, notre expertise et les autres moyens dont nous disposons de favoriser la croissance continue de nos nations et de nos membres dans le respect de nos traditions.»

— Extraits du traité de paix signé le 23 septembre 1996

Le chef Kitasoo Archie Robinson, demande aux Heiltsuk la permission de débarquer sur leur territoire.

La scène aurait pu se passer il y a des centaines d'années : sept pagayeurs heiltsuk escortaient les deux canots des Kitasoo/Xais Xais jusqu'à la rive.

En fait, c'était la première fois depuis plus de cent ans que les Kitasoo/Xais Xais parcouraient cette distance dans leurs canots traditionnels. Toutefois, la cérémonie, qui marquait le début d'un traité de paix entre ces deux nations du centre de la côte, ne faisait pas que raviver le souvenir d'une époque depuis longtemps révolue. Le geste de déférence d'un chef kitasoo demandant aux Heiltsuk la permission de débarquer sur leur territoire a semblé à de nombreuses personnes dévoiler un petit pan de l'avenir que leur réserve



l'autonomie gouvernementale.

«Voilà une journée historique», a déclaré Edwin Newman, négociateur en chef des Heiltsuk. «Ce traité reconnaît la relation que nos deux peuples entretiennent depuis des temps immémoriaux.» M. Newman a ajouté que le traité de paix témoigne des liens étroits de parenté qu'ont les deux nations, et du fait qu'elles ont toujours utilisé et partagé certaines terres et certaines ressources.

«Nous entendons continuer à régler entre nous toutes les questions concernant les territoires traditionnels de nos deux nations et les ressources qu'ils recèlent.»

— Extraits du traité de paix signé le 23 septembre 1996

«Les choses vont beaucoup changer, a dit le négociateur en chef des Kitasoo/Xais Xais, Percy Starr, après la cérémonie de signature. Maintenant, nous allons pouvoir nous exprimer d'une seule voix. Les Kitasoo, les Xais Xais et les Heiltsuk. Si toutes les nations de la partie centrale de la côte s'unissaient, cette voix porterait encore plus.» M. Starr a indiqué que l'accord guidera les deux nations dans leur négociation des traités, tout spécialement en ce qui concerne la gestion des ressources naturelles comme le poisson.

En 1993, les parties ont commencé à se sentir de plus en plus pressées de s'entendre avec leurs voisins immédiats; les Kitasoo, dans le cadre de leur affiliation avec le conseil tribal Tsimshian, et les Heiltsuk ont alors commencé à se pencher en détail sur les ententes-cadres. «Les terres communes, que la Colombie-Britannique et le Canada appellent des chevauchements, sont considérées comme un obstacle à la conclusion de traités modernes, a expliqué M. Newman. Le présent traité montre que nous n'avons pas besoin de la Colombie-Britannique et du Canada pour résoudre la question des terres communes.»

En soirée, pendant les cérémonies, Woyala, c'est-à-dire le chef Reg Moody, chef héréditaire heiltsuk occupant le rang le plus élevé, a déclaré «il suffit de regarder ici dans cette pièce pour voir que nous sommes tous liés les uns aux autres, les Kitasoo, les Xais Xais, les Haida, les Haisla, les Bella Coola et les Oweekeno. Nous ne pouvons pas continuer de vivre ainsi, divisés par les Blancs. Ce soir, nous avons réalisé un rêve que nos deux peuples caressaient depuis très longtemps.»

Le négociateur fédéral principal de la région, Bill McGill, qui assistait à la cérémonie de signature à titre d'invité, a reconnu que la

question des chevauchements doit être réglée par ceux-là même dont les droits ancestraux sont touchés. «Je suis tout à fait convaincu que les Premières nations du nord de la côte sont en bonne voie de régler les questions de chevauchement. Elles veulent les régler d'une façon qui leur convienne, à elles et à leurs voisins.»

M. McGill a ajouté que les chevauchements ne devraient pas empêcher la signature d'ententes de principe mais qu'ils doivent absolument être réglés avant que les traités puissent prendre effet. «Nous concluons des traités avec une seule nation à la fois, pour une série de questions données. Il faut que les traités soient spécifiques.»

Tout comme c'est le cas de la revendication territoriale des Tsimshian, au nord, la revendication territoriale des Heiltsuk chevauche les frontières de plusieurs nations environnantes, dont les Nuxalk (qui ont choisi de ne pas participer à la conclusion de traités avec la Colombie-Britannique, les Haida, les Haisla, les Gwax'sala et les Oweekeno. Évoquant de vieilles querelles, de nombreuses personnes ont dit croire qu'il serait particulièrement difficile d'en venir à une entente avec les Nuxalk et peut-être même les Oweekeno. Cependant, M. Newman, dont le rôle est de faire le lien entre toutes les Premières nations en ce qui a trait aux zones grises de leurs revendications territoriales, semblait croire que les Heiltsuk parviendraient à s'entendre rapidement avec leurs autres voisins.

Lorsque Dennis Hanuse, représentant de l'équipe de négociation des traités des Oweekeno, a décidé de prendre la parole, vers la fin de la soirée, beaucoup y ont vu un signe encourageant. «Je pourrais repartir d'ici sans rien dire, a dit M. Hanuse, mais comme vous l'avez fait pour ce traité de paix, nous allons devoir nous entendre entre nous, et je considère me trouver ici parmi des parents et amis.»

De toute évidence, les personnes présentes au festin ont compris qu'il s'agissait là d'un moment important des négociations entourant l'autonomie gouvernementale. «Quelle incroyable responsabilité que de chercher à bâtir quelque chose, un héritage qui fera que nos enfants connaîtront une vie meilleure que celle que nous avons connue», a commenté Arlene Wilson, conseillère en chef des Heiltsuk. Le chef Moses Humchitt a dit, dans un discours traduit par Liz Brown, «Ce n'est pas nous, les chefs héréditaires, qui allons en profiter. Il est trop tard pour nous. Nous faisons cela pour nos enfants, nos petits-enfants et nos arrière-petits-enfants.»



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