



Kaska Dena News

Volume 2, Issue 1

April 2010

Treaty Update

Treaty negotiations in 2010 started off with a Chief Negotiator's meeting on January 28th in Vancouver which was attended by Chief KDC Negotiator, Dave Porter; Chief Federal Negotiator, Gavin Fitch; and Chief Provincial Negotiator, Mark Lofthouse.

During the meeting, both the federal and provincial Chief Negotiators agreed with the KDC Chief Negotiator that the KDC negotiating team should be given time away from the table to do a comprehensive review and re-write, where necessary, of the treaty chapters that had been tabled to that time. Given the restricted travel in and out of Vancouver during the February 2010 Olympics, this was seen to be an opportune time for the KDC negotiating team to do this work, with the Main Table re-convening in Vancouver on March 31st and April 1st.



George Miller, Chair KDC and Dave Porter, Chief Negotiator

Consultation and Accommodation

Approximately two dozen representatives of the Kaska Dena Council met in Whitehorse on March 8th and 9th to discuss the Kaska Dena perspective on the ongoing development of Canada's new policy on "consultation and accommodation". Canada has been developing a new consultation and accommodation policy to respond to the Supreme Court of Canada's landmark 2004 decisions in the *Haida Nation* and *Taku River Tlingit* cases.

The two days of discussions resulted in a number of important recommenda-

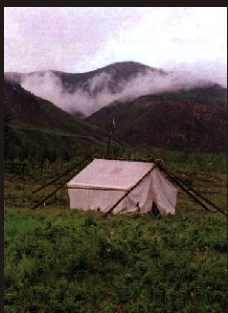
tions that are going to be conveyed to the Government of Canada. Of particular note, the Kaska representatives confirmed that Canada's consultation and accommodation policy must be flexible so as to meet differing circumstances among First Nations. The delegates were agreed that consultation, to be effective, must occur in a timely way. Considerable concerns were expressed by many delegates that, at present consultation is not occurring early enough in the decision-making process. The Kaska Dena representatives also were in agreement with respect to the funding required by the communities to enable them to adequately prepare for and participate in the consultation process with Canada.

There was also strong consensus that the Government of Canada has the primary responsibility for First Nations such as the Kaska and their unsundered traditional territories and, for that reason, it was felt that Canada should not be sitting back and letting the Yukon Territorial and BC Provincial Governments play the lead role on consultation.



Inside...

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Tribute to Kaska People: Helen Miller – Profile of a Kaska Elder

By Michelle Miller with the assistance of Jean Gleason

“Helen went out and shot 6 caribou with 6 shots not long after giving birth to their son Eddie. She knew Edward would be waking up soon and would be hungry, so she worked hard and fast to skin and clean all 6 caribou. She was home in time to feed her son.”

“Hmmmm delicious” is the usual expression when someone has just sunk their teeth into a homemade bun hot out of my grandmother, Helen Miller’s oven. No need for a measuring cup because at the age of ninety it is second nature to her.

Helen, a woman whose family refers to as a warrior and a fighter, was born along the mighty Liard River on October 23, 1920. Her parents, Leo Cormier, a Frenchman from New Brunswick, and her mother, Jean Dot Lutz, a Kaska from Lower Post, separated when Helen was very young. She was raised by her father and her sister Agnes was raised by her mother until the age of seven. At the young age of 5 you could find Helen making fire in their home cabin at Upper Liard. Raised on the trap-line and never attending school, Helen lived a traditional lifestyle. She spoke her native language, Kaska, fluently.

Helen and her sister Agnes had their own trap-line that they maintained at a young age. Their father Leo also built a cabin around the Liard Hotsprings in which they lived for almost two years. Their usual mode of transportation was by dog team. A regular day for Helen and her sister would consist of packing water, packing wood, making fire and trapping. The trails along the Liard River could be found with the moccasin imprints of Helen and her sister. She enjoys talking about her travels and says “I have been everywhere.” Her travels were achievements on their own-unlike today where we just jump into a car and away we go. Her stories are plenty as she has been all over the Kaska traditional territory - Lower Post to Southeast Yukon; Upper Liard to One Ace Mountain; and Blue River to Lower Post, to name a few.

One story that Helen likes to tell a lot is the one where her and her sister went trapping when the creek was very high. Helen tied a rope around herself and then around her sister and proceeded to walk

across a log that was being assaulted by the fast flowing water. Helen says “if Agnes fell into the creek we both could have drowned.”

Helen was raised between Lower Post and Upper Liard. Helen, with her father, Leo and step-mother Lucy, were the only family that lived at Upper Liard. The land was everything to them as it supplied everything they needed, and they traveled according to the seasons. They trapped extensively all through Liard. In the summer they had a huge garden at Liard with a root cellar so that they would have vegetables all through the winter. They had a cabin at McKenna Lake where they put their winter supplies of meat before bringing it back to Liard. They caught their fish at Fish Lake and at Stone Lake. All of their winter supplies were kept at Liard, and nothing went to waste. Even if the carrots froze in winter, they would still be eaten.

Helen and her husband, Don Miller, lived and raised their children in Lower Post and on the trapline. In 1942 Helen

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and Don lived at Upper Liard while Don worked on the building of the Upper Liard bridge. A story I remember hearing that was amazing to me was what I called the "Caribou Story." My grandmother went out and shot 6 caribou with 6 shots not long after giving birth to their son Eddie Miller. She knew Edward would be waking up soon and would be hungry so she worked hard and fast to skin and clean all 6 caribou. She was home in time to feed her son.

Helen is a true matriarch and is very traditional. An awesome example was shown through the traditional pieces she would make for her children. She would bead the flowers on the mitts according to the age of her children. The eldest son

would have more flowers than the other children. She truly is a living example of a woman who lives her life in accordance to the land and respects every living creature. She continues to bake bread and is an expert in re-use and re-cycle. Her house is full of unique ideas of how to reuse sunlight bottles. As the world strives to re-cycle and re-use, Helen has been at it all her life.

Today her hair a beautiful shiny white and her face depicts a woman with years of wisdom and a life well lived. Helen has numerous stories of her adventures and would love to share them, so if you want to hear more about the life of a wonderful, loving and very humorous woman, stop by and have a cup of tea with her.

Twelve New Houses for Kwadacha

It has been a goal of Kwadacha Natural Resources Agency to be able to produce its own lumber for the manufacturing of buildings in Kwadacha, and that goal is one step closer with the current construction undertaking in Kwadacha.

In July 2009, the construction of 12 new homes in Kwadacha began. Utilizing their own lumber and saw mill, Kwadacha Natural Resources produced all of the siding and deck material for these new homes. This has also meant more jobs for Kwadacha residents. With the combined sawmill and construction jobs, Kwadacha residents have comprised 40-60% of the labour required to build these new homes.



Along with the construction of 12 new homes, Kwadacha will soon have its long awaited new Church. For years the community's Church was housed in an old log cabin that was in such a poor state that it was beyond repair.

With the help of dedicated community fund raising efforts, the construction of the new Church is well underway, with completion expected by summer 2010. Over \$6,000 was also contributed to the construction of the Church from the Fishing Derby.

The siding for the Church is also being produced by Kwadacha's own saw mill and the majority of the construction jobs to build the Church have also been filled by local residents.



Utilizing their own lumber and saw mill, Kwadacha Natural Resources produced all of the siding and deck material for these new homes.

Kaska Performers Welcome the World During the Winter Olympics at the 2010 Aboriginal Pavilion



Ross River Dena Drummers;
R. Magun Photo

The Ross River Dena Drummers had the honour of performing Kaska traditional songs at the 2010 Aboriginal Pavilion in Vancouver, during the 2010 Winter Olympics as part of the Yukon First Nation 2010 Cultural Contingent. Comprised of Brian Ladue, Russell Magun, Greg McLeod and Dean Bolton, the Ross River Dena Drummers have performed on numerous stages at a variety of events and celebrations over the years and say they are “proud to share their drum songs, and find it an honour to know and sing the traditional songs”. It is no surprise with their talent and passion for their drum songs that they were invited to be a part of the YFN2010 Cultural Contingent.

Yukon First Nation culture was represented at the 2010 Pavilion by the YFN2010 Cultural Contingent of over 70 delegates who shared their culture with the world through a multi-disciplinary performance of music, song, dance, visual components and poetry entitled **“What the Land Remembers – Tales of Raven and Wolf”**. Other Kaska who were part of the YFN2010 Team were Amanda Brown of Liard First Nation and

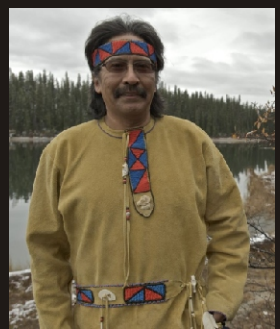
Dennis Shorty of Ross River Dena Council. Amanda was selected by the Four Host First Nations to attend the Indigenous Youth Gathering in Vancouver, and afterwards performed in the Opening Ceremonies. Dennis Shorty had his artwork showcased and sold at the Inuit Gallery of Vancouver.

The Yukon First Nations were joined in performing for the world by over 400 Canadian Aboriginal performers who, like the Yukon contingent, performed on theme days. During the 17 days that the 2010 Aboriginal Pavilion was open, over 240,000 visitors from around the world came through its doors to take in the First Nation cultural experience. Squamish Chief Williams, Chair of the Four Host First Nations Board of Directors said, “This Pavilion will be the Aboriginal gathering place at the biggest potlatch the world has ever seen – the 2010 Games – hosted here within our shared traditional territories.”

Performances at the Aboriginal 2010 Pavilion and past performances of Ross River Dena Drummers can be found at www.youtube.ca and on Facebook.



Amanda Brown;
Robin Armour Photo



Dennis Shorty;
Leslie Leong Photo

Kaska Dena News is published four times a year on recycled paper by the Kaska Dena Council. ♻️

Design assistance by Word Works.