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UPDATE FROM KASKA DENA COUNCIL

Kaska Dena Council provides support on a number of initiatives in our efforts to protect our lands, protect and promote our Indigenous Rights and Title, continue to develop opportunities for economic growth and prosperity and ensure that our lands, our resources and our culture remain intact and available for the benefit and enjoyment of our children, our grandchildren and our future generations.



We have made advancements over the past year in our initiatives, including advances in the implementation of an Incremental Treaty Agreement and continuing to pursue a Draft Agreement in Principle. 2017 marks the fifth year of our Strategic Engagement Agreement and the parties have agreed to extend it for another three years.

We are preparing to sit down with Yukon Government to discuss setting up a framework agreement to address our

role in land and resource decisions and benefits including the Kaska Resource Management Agency, also referred to as KRMA. This would be similar to the SEA that we have with the BC government.

KDC has supported Daylu Dena Council, Dease River First Nation, Kwadacha First Nation, and Dena Kayeh Institute in their work on building a Kaska Guardian program now known as the Dene Nan Yādā' Program, and this program has been very successful.

Over the past year we have been working with the Kaska communities to discuss the importance of Self-Governance, receiving feedback from Kaska members as to how you envision transparent, effective self-governance.

KDC continues to pursue forestry tenures through negotiations with the Ministry of Forests that will help to secure economic opportunities for our communities. We remain involved in the negotiation and implementation of the Incremental Treaty Agreement to secure and transfer lands to our Nations for



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economic development in advance of a treaty.

We have a new provincial government in BC that has made commitments to establish a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples. They have committed to work in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and with case law. This is very good news for all Indigenous People in British Columbia, and for our on-going negotiations with the province.

In September, KDC representatives attended the First Nations Leadership Gathering in Vancouver and met with



Cabinet Ministers. We have since had a follow-up meeting with Minister Fraser, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and with Minister Donaldson, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development to move our negotiations forward. The new government has expressed strong interest in wanting to develop a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples, and we are hoping that we will see evidence of these changes, as we continue to negotiate with the province of BC.

The Federal Government has also made positive changes in the way Canada does business with Indigenous Peoples. Canada is committed to achieving reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through a renewed, nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership as the foundation for transformative change.

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Dene Nan Yáďā' – Kaska Guardian Program

The Dene Nan Yáďā' continues to be an important initiative for Kaska, as land stewardship has always been a part of our culture. Over the past season four land stewards were hired for the Dene Nan Yáďā' program, and did over 102 trips out onto the land from May to October 2017.

The DNYP is building land management capacity within our communities

and providing jobs for members. We've been building positive relationships with governments and stakeholders which supports us in conservation initiatives. A database had been built and data collected which will be used to inform land management including addressing climate change.

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Dene Nan Yáďā' - Summary of 2017 Field Work	
Data	Purpose
41	Environmental Concerns
59	Wildlife Patrol/Surveys
4	Morel Mushroom Monitoring
35	TK Observations
37	Hunter/Patrol Survey Card
11	Plant/Fungi Observations
2	Climate Change
20	Butterflies/Birds/Insects/Frogs/Toads Identification





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KASKA DENA COUNCIL 2017 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Kaska Dena Council want to send a “big shout out” to the Dease River First Nation for providing such a fabulous venue for the General Assembly, the work that went into set-up, the hunters who provided the meat and the cooks who made us fabulous meals.

This year’s General Assembly was hosted by Dease River First Nation, and took place at Rapid River from July 26-28th. As with all KDC General Assemblies, it was a time for report-outs by KDC about negotiations and the initiatives that KDC has been engaged in over the past year, as well as a time to reconnect with families and friends, socialize with one another, enjoy traditional foods and celebrate Kaska lands and our culture. We want to send a “big shout out” to the Dease River First Nation for providing such a fabulous venue for the General Assembly, the work that went into set-up, the hunters who provided the meat and the cooks who made us fabulous meals.

It was all business for the first two days, with comprehensive, really informative and interesting reports given by KDC Chief Negotiator, Dave Porter. Members of the KDC Negotiating Team, SEA Coordinator the KDC Executive all contributed as well with news of progress from their particular areas of work. It was extremely gratifying to see the growth



and capacity among our people...noting every single report was given by a Kaska member. Long time friend and supporter, Melody Morrison, returned once again to chair the business section of the General Assembly. While we missed the attendance and contributions of delegates from Daylu we are hopeful that we can look forward to their participation



at next year’s Assembly.

Kaska came from as far away as California to attend the General Assembly, and elder Louise McDonald joined us from the Kaska homeland in Muncho Lake. We were also grateful for the presence of Elder Clara Donnessey who helped out with opening both days'

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Kaska musician Norman Jack kept us dancing into the late hours with Auntie Clara outlasting us all!

proceedings with important prayers and spiritual guidance. The traditional foods were a favourite with the elders, as they sat by the fire, sharing stories and watching the moose head roasting and the ground hogs cooking. Danny Case provided moose which the cooks did a wonderful job of preparing and much enjoyed by everyone.

Games and competitions are always a hit at the General Assembly and this year did not disappoint! Tug-of-War, Hand Games, the Archery Contest, and of course the Greased Pole Contest were all highly entertaining and the source of much laughter and teasing. Kaska musician Norman Jack kept us dancing into the late hours with Auntie Clara outlasting us all.

The Canadian Census for 2017 showed that the fastest growing part of the country's population is now among Indigenous peoples. That statistic was surely evident among the Kaska attending this year's GA. There was a wonderful contingent of energetic, playful and mischievous kids taking part in all the games and contributing much to the

happy atmosphere at Rapid River. A number of young people also showed serious interest, listening intently to reports during the business sessions and peppering the leaders with questions and discussion during breaks. Chairman George Miller remarked on how pleased he was to see these Kaska leaders of tomorrow attending.

It was a most productive and happy Assembly, and everyone should feel pride and be congratulated for the many contributions and efforts, small and large, which helped make it so successful.





Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Scientists Build an Alliance at Turtle Lodge – Account from a Kaska Dena Youth

Cole About-Tibbett is a 20-year-old Kaska Dena member, raised on the land near his grandfather's trapline north of Dease Lake. Currently studying at UNBC, he is also an exceptional athlete and holds a 2nd degree black belt in Taekwon-do. In July, 2017 Cole attended a gathering of twenty respected Indigenous knowledge keepers and scientists, who met and formed alliances. This is Cole's account of that historic gathering.

My name is Cole About-Tibbett. I am 20 years old, and I am a Kaska Dena member. From July 9th to 12th, I spent my time listening to the opinions and wisdom of Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Scientists. The meeting was held at Turtle Lodge in Manitoba, and I was there as a Kaska youth representative, and as a voice that was later heard in the meeting on behalf of Dena youth.

In the meeting they spoke of a future that ensured sustainability of culture, language, and spiritual connectivity to the land. As a Dena youth and activist for indigenous rights, I was ecstatic to hear people with so much influence on these issues address how we as Dena should take hold of our nationhood and ancestry that is so deeply rooted within all of us.

Our culture, language, and spiritual connectivity are the fundamental principles that make us who we are and what sets us apart from the rest. I heard such things from Dave Courchene, David Suzuki, and Miles Richardson to name a few. These men voiced their opinions on how to take charge and talk to our elders



and speak to the young people, because they are the future.

Before the colonialism mindset came into play we were the people that managed and maintained this great land, we have given this up and have become comfortable with life as it is. I was asked to write an article on my experience and what I have taken away from this meeting. So, this is what I have gained – **youth are the future of our people; elders hold the wisdom of our ancestral principals and ceremonies.** And also if we are to become as strong as we were before we must take action and start practising our traditional ways more truly again.



Kaska Dena Strategic Engagement Agreement – Update

“The Strategic Engagement Agreement (SEA) between the Province and the Kaska is intended to foster and build upon a positive and respectful government-to-government relationship. The SEA allows for creative and collaborative work between the parties on natural resources in the Kaska Traditional Territory, and maintains a shared system to consider sources of information about natural resources, including Kaska’s traditional knowledge.”

The Strategic Engagement Agreement (SEA) is entering its 3rd renewal, making it one of the longest acting SEAs. As part of the SEA there are various ongoing initiatives that require coordination among the Kaska communities as it relates to lands and resources. One of these initiatives was in the signing of the Highway 37 Wildlife Salvage and Rehabilitation Management Plan. In collaboration with the Skeena Stikine Resource District, the Kaska Natural Resources Society (KNRS), Dease River First Nation and Daylu Dena Council, the objectives within this salvage management plan is to utilize timber damaged by wildfire before significant and further value is lost while avoiding damage to regenerating trees. This management plan reduces the administrative requirements associated with permit application and provides socio-economic opportunities through commercial-sale and domestic-use of the damaged timber.

To access more information on this plan, please contact the SEA Coordinator: Gillian Staveley (403) 465-3385 knrscsea@gmail.com

In addition to the referral work of the SEA Coordinator and Lands and Resource Offices, the renewal of the SEA is also being reviewed by the Kaska, to assess this government to government relationship and shared decision-making process. As part of this examination, the method for consultation and accommodation within this agreement has been evaluated as being endorsed where new mandates from BC in regard to recognized policies of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be utilized going forward.

As part of the SEA, the Natural Resource Council (NRC) acts as the government-to-government forum under this agreement

where representatives meet to discuss initiatives between the Kaska and the Province in the commitment to reconciliation by supporting Shared Decision Making, with respect to the lands, water, and resources in the Kaska Traditional Territory. The working groups within the NRC focus on Fish and Wildlife; Mineral Resources; Conservancies, Parks, and Protected Areas; as well as Economic Development Opportunities.

Four NRC meetings have occurred in 2017, with one community event taking place this past July in Fort Ware. As part of the Kwadacha Nations hosting of this meeting, a site visit was made to the Finbow Airstrip where NRC members and representatives from BC were able to view the remediation that is needed at this future ITA Lands designated site (see photos).

For more information on NRC related initiatives and records of discussion please contact the following representatives:

Tanya Ball – Representative for Daylu Dena Council – dki.gistech@gmail.com

Amy McCook – Representative for Kwadacha First Nation – amymccook@hotmail.com

Roy Carlick – Representative for Dease River First Nation – kididza2001@gmail.com



July NRC Site Visit, Fort Ware

Four NRC meetings have occurred in 2017, with one community event taking place this past July in Fort Ware. As part of the Kwadacha Nations’ hosting of this meeting, a site visit was made to the Finbow Airstrip where participants were able to view the remediation that is needed.



Ne'āh' Conservancy Management Plan

The Ne'ah (Horseranch range), is an area of great cultural and spiritual importance to the Kaska Dena, and we worked for over thirty years to establish protection for this area. On March 31, 2013 the Ne'ah was formally legislated as a Conservancy, following the recommendations of the Dease-Liard Sustainable Resource Management Plan.

A Ne'ah Conservancy Management Plan is now being drafted that will lay out the long-term strategic direction for the Ne'ah Conservancy, and provides guidance for how it will be co-managed into the future. Kaska Dena are now actively involved in helping to develop the Ne'ah Conservancy Management Plan by reviewing the plan as drafted by British Columbia and by collecting and incorporating community input. The Management Plan will identify objective and strategies that include:

- protecting historical and current Kaska Dena occupancy, harvesting and hunting areas and activities, and associated cultural, economic, social, economic, spiritual, and environmental values;
- providing for and promoting present and future Kaska Dena access to the area and activities;
- maintaining the ecological integrity of the conservancy;
- maintaining representative flora and fauna, and protecting at risk plant communities, ecosystems and wildlife species in both terrestrial and marine environments;
- providing economic opportunities for Kaska Dena allowable land uses/activities monitoring by the Dene Nan Yáda' Guardians; and
- protecting the wilderness values associated with key recreational and tourism activities and sites that, in turn, support recreation opportunities for wildlife viewing, wilderness experiences, guide outfitting, tourism, and back country commercial tourism.

Community engagement will be taking place to receive input and feedback from Kaska members for inclusion in the Ne'ah Conservancy Management Plan on important topics such as: language used around vision and culture heritage, allowable uses, and decisions on whether traditional knowledge is included in the plan. For example, do we allow our trails map to be used, or show where our burial grounds are, our sacred sites, cabins, or berry sites? We need to hear from community members on these topics.

For further information please email Corrine Porter at denakayeh@gmail.com or call 250-779-3181 ext 1003.

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www.kaskadenacouncil.com/newsarchives/newsletter-archive.

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