



Volume 11, Issue 2

Autumn 2019

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

With autumn well upon us, I hope that we have all had time out on the land hunting and harvesting, enjoying our traditional foods and connection with the land that is so important to us as Kaska. Much has been accomplished over the past few months which I'm pleased to be able to share with you through this autumn newsletter.

The 2019 KDC General Assembly was hosted by Daylu Dena Council and held in Lower Post. The community did a fantastic job of organizing the grounds, ensuring that we had a venue that was protected from the weather, with a welcoming fire going non-stop in the drum circle. Our General Assembly was well-attended, and we all enjoyed the sense of unity we enjoy when we are gathered together. We covered a lot of important business, with an enthusiastic resolution proposed for a spring gathering of all Kaska to discuss land protection through our mutual Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Proposals (see page 7).

Lower Post has just had an historic day hosting Premier Horgan, Mrs. Ellie Horgan and the 3 Nations leaders and representatives. The Premier was invited to visit Lower Post by the 3 Nations (Kaska, Tahltan & Taku River Tlingit) in 2018 regarding the Lower Post Residential School. On Oct. 1st, Leadership and representatives from the 3 Nations, joined together in support of Daylu Dena Council and the community of Lower Post to impress upon the Premier the impact that this building has had on northern nations, the continued impact on Lower Post and the need for its removal.

The Premier met with each of the 3 Nations individually with the focus of his visit with Kaska being the removal of the residential school and the construction of a multi-purpose cultural center. We are pleased to say that the Premier left with a commitment to work with the federal government to remove and replace the old building.

As your Chair and as a Kaska, I felt immense pride during the Premier's visit, witnessing our people and our neighbouring First Nations stand in unity with such strength, resiliency, integrity and grace. I look forward to the year ahead. I am confident that with continued unity, communicating with each other and working side by side, we will create a future that as Kaska Dena we will all be proud of.

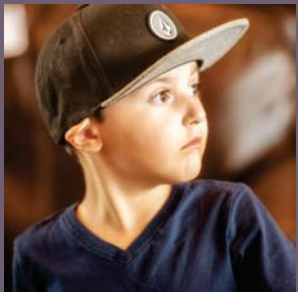
Mussi Cho,

Danny Case, Chair
Kaska Dena Council



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Kaska Dena News

PREMIER HORGAN TRAVELS TO LOWER POST, VISITS FORMER RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Premier John Horgan is the first premier of British Columbia to visit Lower Post to spend the entire day meeting with leaders and community members.

Premier John Horgan travelled to Lower Post on October 1st, and met with leaders and representatives from the Kaska, Taku River Tlingit and Tahltan First Nations. His visit was part of a 2018 commitment made to visit Lower Post along with the 3 Nations regarding the Lower Post Residential School. Daylu Dena Council has made efforts with the federal government for over two decades to remove the building and replace it with a building that meets the community's needs.



Premier Horgan is drummed into the former residential school led by Deputy Chief Fred Lutz and followed by Councillor Groat.

This was an historic meeting, as it was the first time a Premier of British Columbia has travelled to Lower Post to spend the entire day meeting with leaders and community members. It was also the first time that a Premier of BC has demonstrated such willingness to learn and share powerful moments with leaders and the community.

The Premier's meeting with Kaska centered on the issue of the Residential School. Daylu Dena Council Deputy Chief, Fred Lutz Sr., Councillors Harlan Schilling and Malcolm Groat talked with the Premier about the history of the residential school, but also about the present and future needs for the community and its youth. They provided copies



Councillors Malcolm Groat, Harlan Schilling, Premier Horgan and Deputy Chief Fred Lutz Sr.



Premier Horgan meeting with Daylu Dena Council and other Kaska representatives.

of the architectural drawings of the proposed multi-purpose cultural center along with countless letters supporting Daylu Dena's efforts to remove the residential school.

The Premier spoke during the community feast about the Residential School and about his government's efforts towards reconciliation, which elicited a standing ovation. A superb feast was

Photo credits: Manu Keggenhoff and Stephen Hargreaves

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Premier Horgan with Principal, Susan Derkson and students at Denetia School, Lower Post.

provided by the community, prepared by community cooks, Marilyn Miller, Pansy Forsberg and, Ellen Jensen in the Denetia School. The Kaska drummers were present throughout the day with prayer and healing songs.

In a press release following his visit, the Premier confirmed his commitment to seeing the residential school removed and replaced. The Premier said, “For generations, the former residential school has brought so much pain to the community in Lower Post. It is unacceptable that this building remains today as the community’s administration building. I was honoured to be invited to hear the concerns and possible solutions from the Nations and frontline workers, and our government will work with federal government partners to replace the building with something that we can all be proud of.”

Danny Case, KDC Chair said “The Premier’s acknowledgement of our past and his commitment to the future of

our children left our community feeling hopeful that together with this provincial government we can finally change the course of history.”

Daylu Dena Council, Kaska Dena Council and the 3 Nations will remain diligent in following up with the province and the federal government to ensure the residential school is removed and the new multi-cultural center is built.



Premier Horgan speaking at the Community Gathering/Feast.



Community Feast at Denetia School.

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KASKA DENA COUNCIL 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

From August 9-11th, Kaska Dena gathered for the KDC Annual General Assembly in Lower Post. This year's General Assembly was hosted by Daylu Dena Council and together with Daylu community members, did an outstanding job of preparing the grounds, hosting the event and showing warm and welcoming hospitality to all who travelled to Lower Post from far and wide for the gathering.



L to R: Emil McCook and Hammond Dick.

The General Assembly was well attended and as always, Kaska enjoyed being together, learning about the work that has been

undertaken over the past year, eating traditional foods, playing hand games and visiting with friends and family.



Back L to R: Emma Donnessey, Danny Case, Emil McCook, Sam Donnessey. Three ladies in front: Clara Donnessey, Annie Donnessey and Theresa Donnessey.

The theme of this year's General Assembly was one of profound importance to Kaska namely, 'Protecting Our Land'. The meeting opened with guest speakers Hammond Dick, Elder from Ross River, and Emil McCook, Elder from Kwadacha. With powerful words, they reminded us of what it means to be Kaska, our history of working



Back L to R: Craig McCook, Mary Jean Poole
Bottom L to R: Willie Poole, Charlie Pete and Felix Charlie.



Traditional Hand Games.

together and the effort that lies ahead to fulfill our traditional stewardship responsibilities and protect our Ancestral lands and waters for the generations to come.

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KDC's report on the business activities of the organization included a comprehensive report by Chief Negotiator, Bill Lux, who gave an update on Reconciliation and the status of discussions with the federal and provincial governments.



Harlan Schilling and daughter Olivia, and Danny Case.

In keeping with the theme of Land Protection, further presentations were made on the Kaska Land Model and on the BC Kaska proposed Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area that the DKI team, under Corrine Porter's leadership have been developing.

A resolution was endorsed by the General Assembly directing leadership to explore the possibility of holding an all Kaska Gathering hosted by DKI and KDC in the spring of 2020. Its purpose would be to



Chief Donny Van Somer and Clara Donnessey.

discuss and explore ways that Kaska in BC and in Yukon can, together, support each other in advancing their respective Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area Proposals and to celebrate these collective Kaska efforts to care for and protect our Ancestral Territories.

Tanya Ball gave a very moving presentation on the remarkable work of the Kaska Land Guardians.

A big shout out to Pam Moon and her helpers for such wonderful meals. Delicious moose meat featured prominently on the menu and was appreciated and enjoyed by all, particularly by the Elders.

It was a memorable Assembly and we thank everyone for contributing to its success.



Bill Lux Addressing the General Assembly.

A big shout out to Pam Moon and her helpers for such wonderful meals. Delicious moose meat featured prominently on the menu and was appreciated and enjoyed by all, particularly by the Elders.



Photo credit: Maureen Garrity



Kaska Dena News

Dene K'éh Kusān

One of the key priorities of the Dene K'éh Kusān is to create a conservation-based economy with new long-term jobs in land stewardship through an expanded Indigenous land guardians program and ecotourism ventures.

To ensure our people and ancestral lands will thrive today and into the future, we've built a plan for protecting a large and vital piece of these lands. In our language we call it *Dene K'éh Kusān*, which means *Always Will Be There*. At 40,000 square kilometres, the *Dene K'éh Kusān* will be larger than Vancouver Island.

We're asking the government to work in partnership with us to ensure that Kaska Dena ancestral territory:

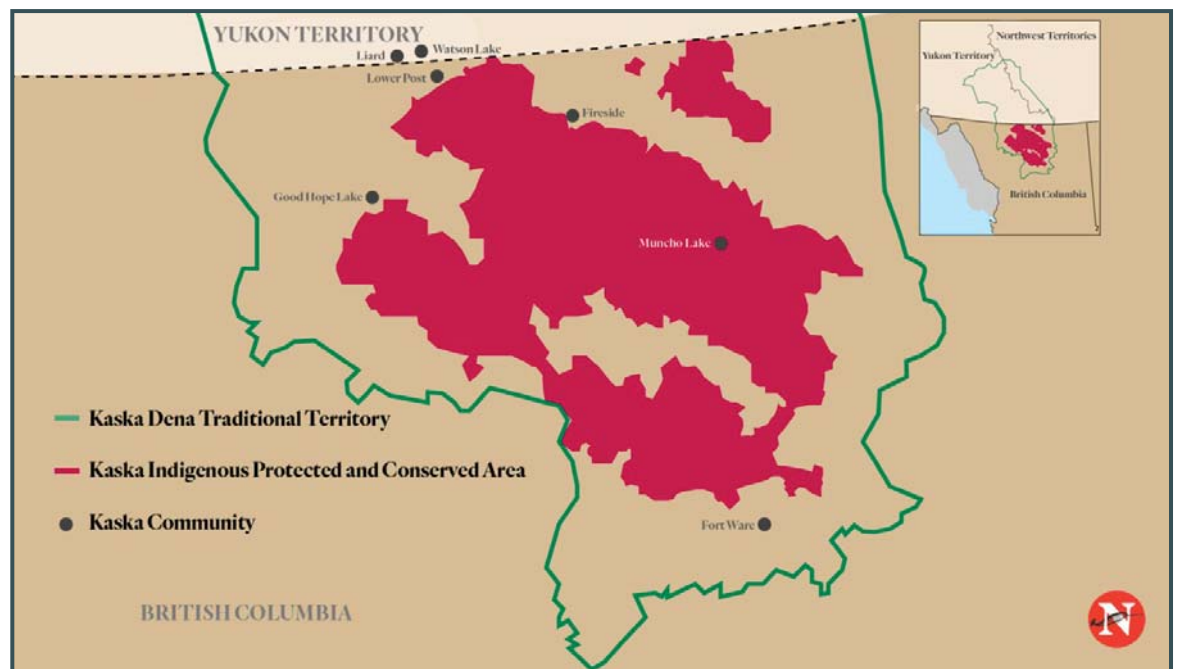
- Does not suffer the devastating effects of climate change and biodiversity loss occurring across British Columbia, Canada and around the world.
- Remains intact, which is critical to preserving Kaska peoples' material, cultural and spiritual lives.
- Continues to shelter caribou, a species struggling to feed itself and breed in other parts of the province.
- Sustains and creates economic opportunities for Kaska and others in northern communities.
- Becomes a world-class protected area for all British Columbians to explore and enjoy.

Priorities of the Dene K'éh Kusān

The key priorities of the *Dene K'éh Kusān* are to:

- Maintain healthy functioning ecosystems in the boreal forest, a carbon sink known as the northern lungs of the world;
- Protect and preserve habitat for some of BC's healthiest caribou herds, Stone sheep, mountain goats, moose, grizzly bears and other key species, particularly in the face of climate change and the impact this will have on wildlife habitat;
- Ensure resource extraction, including logging and mining, takes place on the periphery of the conserved area, while current land uses such as guide outfitting and commercial trapping are grandfathered in.
- Create a conservation-based economy with new long-term jobs in land stewardship through an expanded Indigenous land guardians program and ecotourism ventures.

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Kaska Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area. Map: Carol Linnitt / The Narwhal.



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Dene K'éh Kusān Cont'd.

Partnering with Government

The Kaska proposal, is supported by a number of organizations, including the Indigenous Leadership Initiative and CPAWS, and we are moving forward in obtaining commitments from the federal and provincial governments with the ultimate goal to negotiate a creative and long term plan directed by Kaska leadership to protect **Dene K'éh Kusān**.

In mid-August, the **federal government** confirmed it will provide \$587,500 to advance the initiative, one of 67 conservation projects supported through the Canada Nature Fund, which aims to expand the country's connected and protected areas as part of the government's pledge to meet its international commitments to protect 17% of Canada's lands. These funds are being matched by Foundations and ENGOS.

On September 10, 2019 Kaska Leadership met with **BC Ministers** in Victoria to discuss

the Kaska proposed **Dene K'éh Kusān**.

Kaska leaders received a very positive response from the Ministers and look forward to a productive partnership with BC in advancing this initiative.



Corrine Porter, Executive Director of DKI, showing a map of the Dene K'eh Kusan to BC Ministers (left to right), Heyman, Fraser and Donaldson) on September 10, 2019.

Dane Nan Yé Dāh Network - Kaska Land Guardians

The Dane Nan Yé Dāh Network is an important initiative for Kaska, as wildlife and land stewardship have always been and remain an integral part of Kaska Dena culture. Our Land Guardians practice responsible stewardship in many ways, including helping to educate the public, interacting with hunters during peak hunting season, providing local knowledge, undertaking harvest data collection, and monitoring wildlife health and climate change. Guardians report all poachers and polluters into the Province's 24-hour RAPP line.

It has been a busy summer and fall for the Guardians. In August, the Guardians hosted a journalist and photographer from The Narwhal in Kaska territory and took them up the Kechika River. While on their journey they came upon a fire that was burning from a campfire that had not been properly put out. Guardian Robbie Porter was able to extinguish the fire, while Tanya



Robbie Porter talking with journalist Sarah Cox at site of fire. Photo credit: Taylor Roades

Ball documented the coordinates on her cell phone app and took photos to submit to the Ministry upon their return. This incident was evidence of the important role the Kaska Guardians play as eyes and ears on the ground.

Lisa Shepherd attended a Northern Contaminants workshop in Whitehorse (Oct 8-10, 2019). Tanya Ball recently

While on a journey up the Kechika River, the Land Guardians, along with a journalist and photographer from The Narwhal in Kaska Territory, came upon a fire caused by a campfire that had not been properly put out.

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attended Canadian Parks Conference in Quebec City (October 8 & 9, 2019), and presented on a panel regarding Indigenous-led programs in Canada. Pamela Moon recently completed her Traditional Ecological Certificate through UBC, and the Oil and Gas Commission in Fort



Guardian Robbie Porter at work. *Photo credit: Taylor Rodes*



Kaska Culturally Modified Tree.



Kaska Guardians James Malone, Jordan Marten, Duane Seymour, Tanya Ball, Lisa Shepherd and Robbie Porter. Missing: Pam Moon, Brian Carlick, and Thomas Massetoe. *Photo Credit: Taylor Rodes*

St. John (Sept 16-27, 2019). Duane Seymour and Thomas Massetoe spent 3 days in Tahltan Territory with Tahltan Land Guardians Brianna Tashoots and Clements Brace. Their goal was to learn how Tahltan collect traditional and community knowledge on culturally important plants and wildlife and how they use tools for community-based decision making related to medicinal uses, land uses and harvesting.

Guardians are working on an archeology site within Lower Post that was found due to the forest fire that went through community last year. Culturally modified trees within the area were marked and measured and is an ongoing project.

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