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# Kaska Dena News

Volume 8, Issue 3

Winter 2016

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Our Christmas Newsletter is always a reminder that another year is behind us and causes us to pause, and look back on the progress we have made.

Our theme at the KDC General Assembly this year was “Reinstating our Inherent Authority Over our Lands”, and our work continues toward this. Through our treaty (AIP) negotiations, land discussions remain at the forefront as we continue to negotiate the Kaska Land Model. Through our Strategic Engagement Agreement, we continue to have a Government to Government process that is working, facilitating Kaska Dena participation in decision making over our lands. The lands negotiated under our Incremental Treaty Agreement continue to be transferred to us in advance of a Treaty to support economic development for Kaska Dena. We are looking forward to a successful implementation of the Yukon Government to Government Agreements. We are seeing success with the negotiation of forestry tenures. We have wildlife guardians on the ground in all three of our communities, actively monitoring wildlife, hunting activities and building awareness about Kaska Dena traditional territory with non-indigenous hunters. Community engagement with respect to self-governance has taken place, hearing from members as to what self-governance means to you, and what you want to see in future Kaska Dena governance. These are only a few of the positive initiatives that KDC has supported over the past year. It is through the commitment, engagement and support from our members that this good work continues to advance. Even with these successes, there is still much to accomplish and we look forward to continuing our work in 2017.

Our Kaska Nation is strong, determined and resilient. I welcome the opportunity to work with all Kaska leaders over the upcoming year, bringing our collective strengths together to meet our challenges with determination and unity to create a positive future for our next generations. As we prepare to welcome in 2017, I wish each, and every one of you a healthy and happy holiday season. The Christmas season is time to be thankful; to celebrate our culture, our families, our accomplishments and remember what Christmas is about – the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Souga Sin La

George Miller, Chair, KDC





## KASKA DENA SELF-GOVERNANCE

*Self-governance is about controlling our own lives and setting our own priorities. The Kaska Dena are slowly reclaiming our right to control our lives and our future, our lands and resources.*

Discussions are taking place among our members in our communities about self-governance, about what self-governance means to Kaska, and about our vision for our future as we return to being a self-governing people. “Self-governance” is about controlling our own lives and setting our own priorities.

For 138 years, aboriginal people in Canada have been ruled by a single piece of legislation: the *Indian Act*. This Act has had devastating effects on First Nations people. It stole the control we had over our own lives, forced us onto small parcels of land in our territories, prevented us from legally fighting for our lands and rights, forced our children into residential schools and essentially made the Minister of Indian Affairs entirely responsible for any decisions affecting our lives. Our own systems of organization, policy making ability and the decision-making over our lives were replaced with Indian Act Bands.

Today the Kaska Dena are slowly reclaiming our right to control our lives and our future, our lands and resources. We are involved in negotiations for a treaty that would see the return of a



‘toolbox’ of resources including: ownership of additional lands and resources, co-management, cultural heritage resources, financial resources, economic opportunities, and *self-governing authorities*.

Discussions with our elders confirms that self-government is not new to Kaska Dena. Prior to European contact, our ancestors understood our relationship with the land and resources, understood our roles and responsibilities in managing those resources and caring for our families. We freely moved throughout our territories utilizing our resources in a way that showed respect for the resources and always thinking of the future of Kaska Dena.

In November and December, Michelle Miller and Angela Wesley, along with members of Kaska Dena Council’s technical team, travelled to Kwadacha, Daylu Dena Council and Dease River First Nation to share information and engage in dialogue with members about self-governance and about our future.

From November 1 to 4 in Kwadacha, the team visited with senior students, Kwadacha Elders and community members. An open house was held at the Kwadacha Band Office on November 3<sup>rd</sup> where staff, leadership and adult educa-





*During open house sessions in each community, members engaged in lively dialogue and posed great questions to the team.*

tion students dropped in throughout the day to share in presentations and discussions. During the evening community dinner, Michelle and Angela reported-out on the feedback that was received during the week's engagement sessions.

From November 28 to December 2, the team visited Good Hope Lake and Lower Post and were joined by Dease River and Daylu members for great meals at community dinners followed by introductory presentations on self-governance. During open house sessions in each community, members engaged in lively dialogue and posed great questions to the team.

Members who participated in the sessions – youth, elders, students, staff, and leadership – in all three communities appreciated the opportunity to have

direct discussions and provide their thoughts and ideas in a more informal setting. The team encouraged members

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*The team encouraged members to talk about how Kaska Dena governed ourselves in the past, and how we can bring the traditional values, practices and principles that guided us in the past into our future government structures.*



to talk about how Kaska Dena governed ourselves in the past, and how we can bring the traditional values, practices and principles that guided us in the past into our future government structures. Groups also engaged in discussions around our vision for the future and the short-term efforts we can begin to work towards a brighter self-governing future.

Michelle, Angela and the rest of the KDC team are grateful for the warm welcome and fantastic input and discussions in all of the Kaska Dena communities! They received great input and feedback from members (including youth and elders), leadership and staff that will be useful to design the next round of community meetings which will be scheduled for early in 2017.





## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS GUARDIAN GATHERING

**A** National Indigenous Guardian Gathering was held in Ottawa, from October 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>. This was the first ever Guardian Gathering and had over 200 First Nation participants from across Canada. Kaska were represented by Tanya Ball (Dena Kayeh Institute), Lizann Porter (Kaska Wildlife Guardian), Shawna Case (Kwadacha Nation), and three representatives from Ross River Dena Council (Jack Caesar, Josh Baricello, & Robbie Dick). Three Nation representatives from Tahltan First Nation and Taku River Tlingit First Nations also attended.



L to R: Tanya Bell, Melody Morrison and Shawna Case

Tanya Ball sat on a panel and presented the Kaska Land Guardian Program (Dena Nan Yeda) and also highlighted the Three Nations Wildlife Initiative (Kaska Dena Nation, Tahltan First Nation and Tlingit First Nation).

Numerous guardian programs were highlighted and all programs focused on

protection of traditional territories and protection of wildlife. One of the largest setbacks identified for all guardian programs was securing long term sustainable funding.

TNC Canada is putting together a toolkit for guardian programs, providing info on how to start a guardian program and a mapping network to highlight all First Nations guardian programs throughout Canada. Due to our attendance at the gathering the Kaska Guardian Program has been added to this map. The toolkit can be found at:

<http://www.indigenousguardianstoolkit.ca/#toolkit-home>

Indigenous Leadership Initiative has put in a request to the government to commit to funding of \$500 million over 5 years to support community based land guardian programs.

In a presentation by David Suzuki, he pointed out the importance of First Nations and their initiatives of being land stewards and the importance of land guardian programs.

Many thanks to Dave Porter and Melody Morrison who were a part of coordinating and making this amazing event happen!



Prayer and Smudge on Turtle Island

*David Suzuki pointed out, in his presentation, the importance of First Nations and their initiatives of being land stewards and the importance of land guardian programs.*

## KASKA DENA STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT

**K**aska Dena Council's Strategic Engagement Agreement is coming up to its 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. It has been working very efficiently in terms of meaningful Consultation and Accommodation between the BC government and the KDC through the Government to Government Table on a shared engagement process. Over the past year, BC government staff members working in the three District Offices have provided a great level of support to KDC within the SEA. The three District Offices that are within the Kaska Territory include: Stikine–Bulkley, Mackenzie, and Peace.

As we are approaching March 2017, the Parties agreed to holding an all staff meeting in February to review the SEA based on successes and challenges and to determine if there are any minor changes to the SEA Agreement that would make it more efficient for the coming year.

One of the fundamental challenges with three different District Offices is dealing with critical resource management issues that are important to the KDC. In 2000, the Kaska Dena pursued a Land Use Planning process with British Columbia due to the forest development activities in the Dease River Watershed area of the Kaska Traditional Territory.



In 2004, the Kaska Dena Council and British Columbia agreed on a final land use plan on forestry and wildlife management in the Dease Liard area in the Traditional Territory. This did not take into account wildfires and salvage wood. This winter the Ministry of Forest, Lands and Resources will be working with the Dease River First Nation and Daylu Dena Council to set out a Salvage Wood Plan, so that there will be guidelines for any future applications for access to a large cutting permit. As development slows we can review the overall management issues such as hunting, forestry, mining and other resource matters and look at what needs to be done to help address these issues.

For more information please contact one of the following members:

- \* Daylu Dena Council – Vanessa Law – (250) 779-3161 [ddclro@northwestel.net](mailto:ddclro@northwestel.net)
- \* Dease River First Nation – Myles Manygreghorses – (250) 239-3037 [mrfnreferral@gmail.com](mailto:mrfnreferral@gmail.com)
- \* Kwadacha Nation – Shawna Case – (250) 471-2044 [kfnref@gmail.com](mailto:kfnref@gmail.com)

*An all staff meeting will be held in February 2017 to review the SEA based on successes and challenges and to determine if there are any minor changes to the SEA Agreement that would make it more efficient for the coming year.*





## KASKA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (KRMA)

Under the Framework Agreement the Yukon Territorial Government (YTG) is providing Kaska First Nations with funding to assist Kaska to establish and implement new structures to coordinate Kaska participation in consultation and engagement processes related to land and resource dispositions and authorizations in the Southeast Yukon portion of the Kaska Traditional Territory. During the negotiations of the Framework, this was referred to as the Kaska Resource Management Authority or “KRMA” process.

KRMA meets two main needs:

1. Enable Kaska communities to support their own land and resource management capacity; and

2. Enable greater coordination between Kaska communities so that Kaska can present a united front on any land and/or resource project development on Kaska Traditional Territory in the Yukon.

The design and implementation of KRMA will be led by John Lawson, who will be working with community representatives appointed by Ross River Dena Council, Liard First Nation and Kaska Dena Council and Kaska technical advisors to develop some concepts for how KRMA can best meet Kaska’s needs.

To date the Ross River Dena Council, Liard First Nation and Kaska Dena Council are beginning to develop capacity and a coordinated Kaska approach to land and resource issues while the Negotiation of the KRMA Process continues.

## LAND USE PLANNING

The Ne'ah Conservancy (Horseshoe Range) was established on March 31, 2013 following the recommendation in the Dease-Liard Sustainable Resource Management Plan. The conservancy is named and described in Schedule E of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*.

Conservancies are set aside for the protection and maintenance of: (a) biological diversity and the natural environment, (b) First Nations’ social, ceremonial and cultural uses, and (or) (c) recreational values. Conservancies provide for a wider range of low impact economic development opportunities than Class A parks, but commercial logging, mining and hydroelectric power generation (other than local run-of-the-river projects) are prohibited in a conservancy.

Now that the Ne'ah has been approved

by Kaska Dena and the Province of British Columbia, it will be managed collaboratively by Kaska Dena and British Columbia through a Joint Management plan. This is an ongoing effort as the Parties are looking to identify new resources to support further work on the draft plan.



Horseshoe Range

*Conservancies are set aside for the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and the natural environment; First Nations’ social, ceremonial and cultural uses; and (or) recreational values.*

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## JDS KASKA FIRST ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED!

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**A**s part of the JDS Kaska SEPA, JDS has agreed to contribute \$10,000 annually to establish and maintain a scholarship fund to encourage students from the Kaska First Nations to pursue or complete their post-secondary education on a full time basis. This fund will be maintained as long as the SEPA is in effect, and until the Silvertip Mine permanently ceases.

Dease River First Nation leadership appointed a Scholarship Committee, with a seat provided to Liard First Nation, to review and prioritize applications and award scholarships. This year's committee is pleased to announce that the following five Kaska members have been awarded scholarships:

- \* **Charlene Magun** – Business Administration
- \* **Cassia Jakesta** – Bachelor of Natural Resource Sciences
- \* **Lee-Ann Martens** – Nursing
- \* **Kenny Martens** – Millwright Level Two
- \* **James Malone** – Bachelor of Northern Environmental & Conservation Science

Due to the strong applications and response, JDS was generous enough to increase their contribution this year to include an additional \$2000 to support these Kaska students.

Future applicants are invited to contact the Dease River First Nation office to obtain a copy of the Scholarship Policy and Application form. Applications are due on September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year and the selected candidates will be informed by mail and by announcement in newsletters and *Yukon News*.

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## Dene Nan Yādā' Winter Program

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**T**he Daylu Dena Council, Dease River First Nation, Kwadacha First Nation, Kaska Dena Council and Dena Kayeh Institute continue to work together on building a Kaska Guardian program, formally known as the Wildlife Monitoring Program, now known as the Dene Nan Yādā' Program. They were successful in securing funds to expand the program to include work through the winter months.

Although the program has not been fully developed nor do we have sufficient funds to run a full program we do have enough funds to keep our Dene Nan Yādā' working into March 2016.

Our winter program will include:

1. Conducting community wildlife harvest surveys;
2. Developing a water monitoring program;
3. Community education on moose population dynamics – ex. “Why its important for us to protect Cow moose”;
4. Training on forest health monitoring, identifying critical moose habitat, use of field tools, BC regulations pertinent to the work the Dene Nan Yādā' will conduct in the summer;

5. Updating the communities on the results of this summers program;
6. Further development of education tools i.e. brochures, online information;
7. Planning for what training is required to run a year round Dene Nan Yādā' Program; and
8. Continuation of our work with the 3 Nations.

If you are interested in becoming a Guardian in the Dene Nan Yādā' Program, contact the Land and Resource Officer in your community.



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Kaska Dena News is published three times a year by the Kaska Dena Council. For past issues go to:  
[www.kaskadenacouncil.com/newsarchives/newsletter-archive](http://www.kaskadenacouncil.com/newsarchives/newsletter-archive).

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