

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED until 9:30 a.m. – Tuesday, March 15, 2023

DRAFT 3(TM)

Simpchw First Nation and Gitsegukla First Nation sign historic Declaration to recognize, respect and stand-up each Nation's child welfare jurisdiction

PRINCE GEORGE - The Simpcw First Nation (Simpchw) and Gitsegukla First Nation (Gitsegukla) came together today in ceremony, drumming and songs to sign a Declaration that signifies a commitment to recognize each nation's inherent jurisdiction for their children and families. A solemn commitment to Knucwentwécw ("to help each other"), and, hlimoo gwalk'a ("to help all") for the wellbeing and best interests of our Simpcw Kwes'wséltkten ("Families"), and Gitsegukla will 'naa t'ahl ("Families") is enshrined in the co-created Declaration.

In keeping with traditional practice, Gitsegukla traded sockeye salmon for Simpcw's Tcwasémentem ("Walking Together") Agreement – the only legally binding child welfare agreement of its kind in British Columbia.

"I am filled with a deep sense of happiness remembering our Simgigyet (Hereditary Chiefs) who fought bravely in the face of great adversity for our children and family's jurisdiction that the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed in the landmark *Delgamuukw-Gisday wa* decision." said Chief Annie Howard, Gitsegukla (Wiistiin). "We honour them through the exercise of our traditional trade and enter this Declaration to self-determine how we will work with other Nations based on our Ayook (laws) for the well-being and best interests of our children and families."

"Simpchw has been developing our *Yecwemintem re kwséltkten-kt* ("Looking After Our Relations/People") law through a comprehensive members' engagement process that included discussions concerning Canada's '**Conflict – Stronger Ties**' provision that our Elders immediately recognized sets up fights between Nations when we have children with ancestral belonging to two Nations, or, if a Simpcw family resides in another Nations' territory," said Kukpi7 (Chief) George Lampreau, Simpcw. "Our Elders instructed us to go work with other Nations and develop an agreement that sets out our own self-determined path forward, which today we have achieved."

"My husband is a Gitanmaax community member, and my children have connections to both my Simpcw community, and to the Gitksan Nation through their father," said Alison Green, Simpcw Councillor. "It is especially important to me that my children and family have connections to both Nations and opportunities to learn, practice and enjoy both cultures and spend time on both territories. I am extremely excited to bring our Simpcw Youth to Gitsegukla to participate directly in the salmon harvest that was what brought us together."

Toby Howard, Simoghet Xsgogimlaxhae shared, "I was groomed in the traditional ways and learned from my parents who took me on the land, and to the Feasts where the hosts knew where to put you, why you were there; that is where our ways are passed along. We are born into our Mother's Clan and our Father's Clan has responsibilities. Government doesn't understand or respect our ways, this Ceremony is what needs to happen to strengthen our old ways, how we do things for a long time, it's good to see it come back to life again."

Contact - Simpcw:

Rhonda Kershaw
Band Administrator
Ph. 250.319.7328
E-mail: band.administrator@simpchw.com

Kukpi7 George Lampreau
Chief, Simpcw First Nation
Ph. 250.267.2666
E-mail: George.lampreau@simpchw.com

Contact – Gitsegukla:

Trevor Morrison
Band Administrator
Ph. 778.684.2009
E-mail : trevor.morrison@gitsegukla.net

Chief Annie Howard
Gitsegukla First Nation
Ph. 778.202.0850
E-mail : anne.howard@gitsegukla.net