

Together for Wildlife - Interior Universities Research Coalition Student Research Grant **Final Report**

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Principal Investigator: Dr. Dana Lepofsky (Simon Fraser University)

Project Title: *Ła A'alyaga Laxyuuba Gitk'a'ata* (The Territory of the Gitga'at Speaks):
Place-based Knowledge, Environmental Stewardship, and Indigenous
Law in the Heart of Gitga'at Territory

What has been achieved over the duration of this grant award period?

I have conducted three full field seasons for my PhD project on place-based knowledge, environmental stewardship, and Indigenous law in Gitga'at Territory. My data collection for the project is completed. Each my field seasons surround two specific case studies, one on mountain goats and another on salmon. Each of these case studies involved the same methodological processes: (1) a biological/archaeological study, (2) ethnographic research involving community interviews and archival materials; and (3) autoethnographic reflection of teachings, knowledge.

For my mountain goat study, I utilized camera traps as a biological monitoring approach for assessing wildlife populations, paired with seasonal surveys by foot or on boat. I would report this data to the Gitga'at Oceans and Lands department quarterly to further conversations on Gitga'at stewardship plans. This was complemented by Elder interviews. My monitoring stint and interviews have been completed for this project, which completes my data collection for the mountain goat study. There are two final objectives to be completed: a filmed mountain goat hunt and community feast, which will eventually be made into a short film. We have successfully produced a 5 minute trailer for the short-documentary, though more filming and editing is needed. Currently I am in the final stages of completing a manuscript on Indigenous stewardship values of mountain goat harvesting.

For the Salmon harvesting case study, I have completed archaeological evidence of salmon harvesting activity in the study area. This included the assessment and recording of several traditional fish weirs and rock walls, and finding archaeological deposits of historic salmon caches ranging from recent times to 4000 BCE. This helped me identify the prominence of salmon use in this area, while also identifying species through salmon DNA analysis of ancient salmon remains. I also was involved in several stream walks and helicopter surveys analyzing salmon numbers in spawning habitat. This was then paired with on-site interviews with elders and knowledge holders, or in-home interviews where I would show footage of salmon harvesting sites. I have successfully interviewed approximately 20 Gitga'at knowledge keepers for this project. Alongside this data collection, I was maintaining traditional roles of salmon harvesting for my family and community Elders, where autoethnography can tie into my research methods. In these "real life" situations, deep traditional ecological knowledge was regularly shared, and extremely valuable to this project.

The results of this aspect of the study have turned into a community led fish weir/salmon trap project I will co-manage as a postdoctoral project. We have recently completed our first field survey of where to rebuild the fish weir, and have been given approval from Gitga'at leadership council.

How does this work contribute to the overall project objectives? (i.e., to completion of your thesis)

The project is going as planned, and I have nearly completed my objectives. The filmed Mountain Goat hunt and feast within my community will be done in Winter of 2024. I will submit an academic paper on Gitga'at mountain goat hunting and stewardship philosophies to a leading academic journal in October. On top of this, the groundwork for the project helped kick start the fish weir project mentioned above where we have \$600,000 in confirmed funding.

How have you communicated about this project and work?

- Within the academic community?
- With project partners including non-academic and community members?
- With government staff?

I will communicate this project within the academic community through my paper on Gitga'at mountain goat hunting and stewardship through a paper I will submit to the academic journal People and Nature this October. I have been disseminating knowledge in the community through presentations, and the planned film. I have also held ongoing mentorship roles with wildlife harvesting. This fall I harvested and processed a bear while sharing Gitga'at teachings with youth. Government staff will have access to any published material, as well as the short documentary that is aimed to be completed in 2024.

How have you fulfilled the commitments of your knowledge management plan?

Yes, I have continued to share any data and knowledge with the Gitga'at community through the Gitga'at Oceans and Lands Department. Through this process I have helped managed a cultural database to store all research data, that can be used by the Gitga'at for cultural and educational purposes, while also serving as a resource for employees to use surrounding referrals that impact cultural sites or species.

Where will the data and/or information collected from this project be stored?

As mentioned above, this data will be stored in a community database held by the Gitga'at Oceans and Lands Department. It is a secure database that will be password protected. I will ? continue to manage the database alongside Gitga'at Oceans and Lands Department leadership, as long as I am collaborating with the Nation.

Budget Reporting

Budget Item	Details	Proposed Amount	Actual Amount	Comments
Student Stipend September 2022-August 2023	Research and writing General cost of living (Rent, vehicle, tuition, books, etc. Approximately \$2600 /month)	\$20,000	\$31,200	Writing academic manuscript continued throughout summer of 2023, submitting full thesis for defence in the fall semester of 2023.
Student Travel September 2022-May 2023	Travel from Simon Fraser University to Gitga'at territory	\$5,000	\$4,000	A trip to Hartley Bay and my territory were cancelled due to weather.