

**GITGA'AT
FIRST NATION**

**Reconciliation Priorities
Engagement Report**

April 2023



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Summary

The Treaty Related Measures 5 communications and engagement team, composed of Eric Anderson and Andreas Krebs, engaged with Gitga'at members about their priorities for reconciliation negotiations in the fall and winter of 2022-2023. This engagement was directed by the Reconciliation Advisory Committee, composed of elected and hereditary leaders, elders, youth, and members living in Hartley Bay and away from home.

Engagement consisted of an online survey and engagement sessions in Hartley Bay, Prince Rupert, and online. The survey asked for a ranking of priorities, and then more specific priorities under each category (survey questions are listed in Appendix A). Engagement sessions gave an overview of the reconciliation process, including the work in Treaty Related Measures 5 (communications and engagement as well as reconciliation implementation readiness). Attendees then participated in resource allocation exercise where they distributed \$100 in “funny money” between the top-level priority areas originally listed in the survey. The top three priority areas from this activity were then discussed as a group, which provided further qualitative data in the following areas:

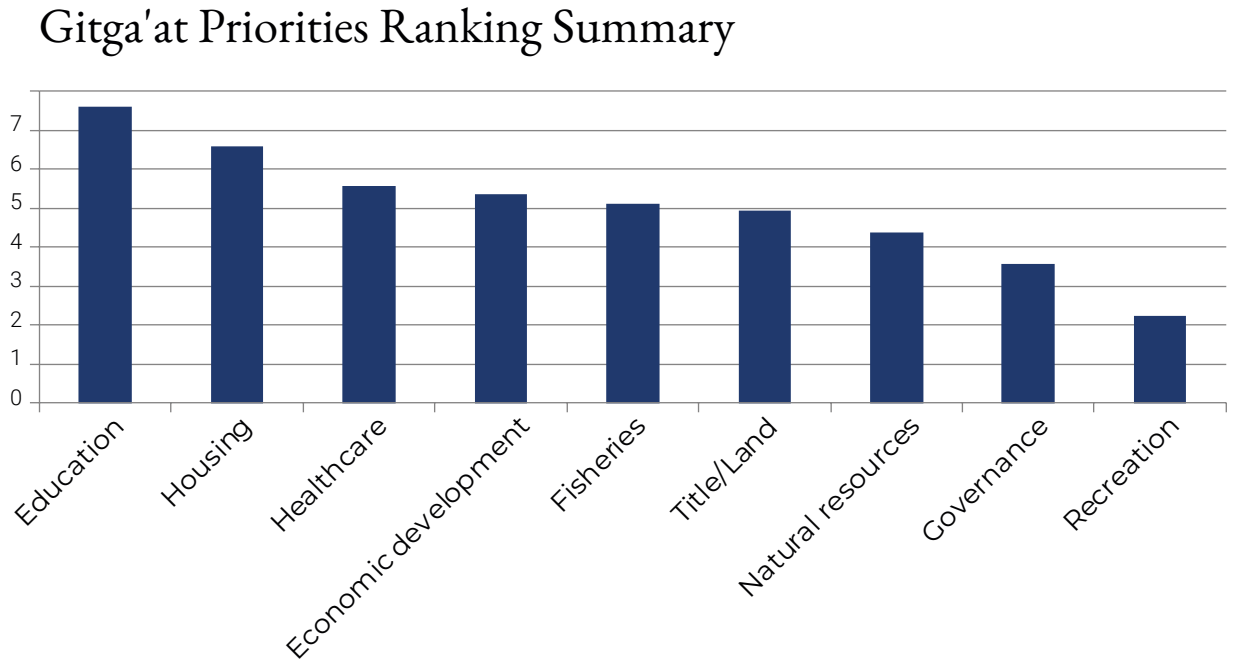
- Language & Culture
- Education
- Housing
- Title/Land

Engagement was very high considering the total Gitga'at membership of approximately 675.

- Survey responses: 61
- Meeting participation: 28

Priorities Ranking

► *Figure 1*
Gitga'at Priorities
Ranking Summary



► As shown in Figure 1, Education, Housing, and Healthcare were the top three priorities of Gitga'at membership during the engagement. This summary table incorporates the data from the online survey and from the resource allocation exercise during the engagement sessions.

Note that after discussion with the Reconciliation Advisory Committee, and considering survey responses and discussion during engagement sessions, it was decided to split cultural and language from education. The Education section of this report still includes culture and language in the summary table from the survey, but discussion of those topics will be focused in the Culture and Language section.

Language & Culture

The top priority for Gitga'at members is learning their language and practicing their culture. The top two priorities in the Education section in the survey were cultural education and language training (see Figure 2 below).

Language

Discussions in engagement sessions focused on how other nations are bringing back fluent speakers. There was a recognition that there are already efforts made in schools in Prince Rupert and Hartley Bay to teach Sm'algyax to students. However, there was also a recognition that without immersion programs, students will learn only the basics (counting, greetings, etc.). Language programming needs to pair fluent speakers with students who are motivated to learn and compensate both teachers and students for their time during immersive learning. One model from Heiltsuk was mentioned where students learn one-on-one with a fluent speaker full time, and thereby become fluent themselves.

Other notes from participants were to target silent speakers, thereby increasing the total pool of fluent speakers who could be eligible to speak the language.

Culture

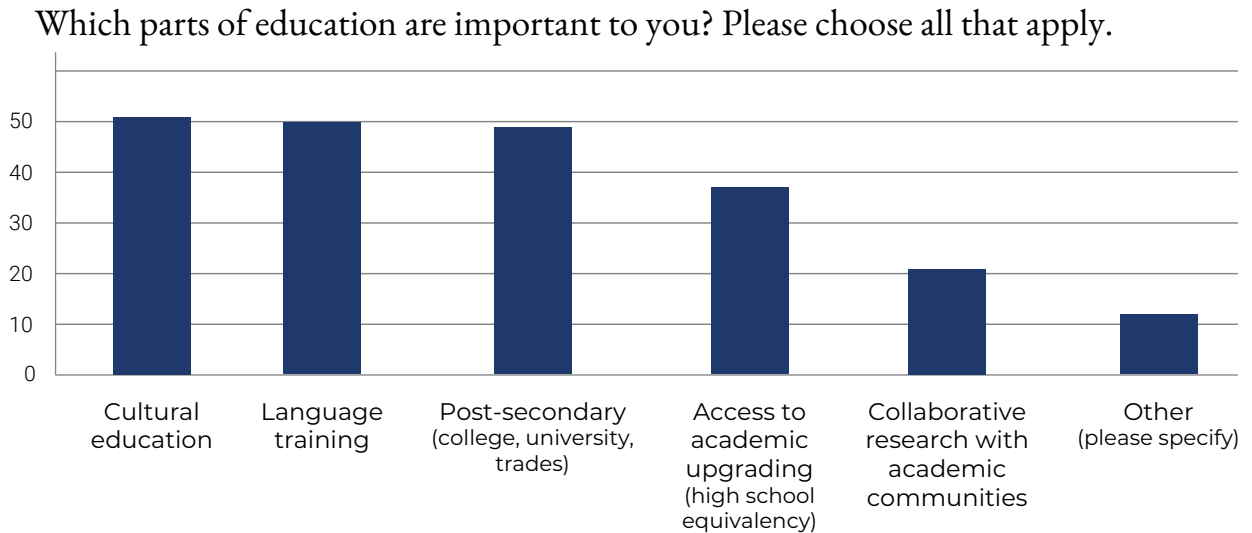
Discussion of accessing culture was broken into three main areas: participating in traditional governance (clans), making cultural activities accessible to Gitga'at members living outside of Hartley Bay, and increasing opportunities for Gitga'at members to get on the land.

Members living outside of Hartley Bay in particular mentioned the importance of integrating all members into the clan system. There was a recognition that without building bridges between Hartley Bay and members living out of community, the clan system may weaken over time. It should also be noted that Reconciliation Advisory Committee members expressed an interest in developing a curriculum for younger members to become more involved in the clan system.

Cultural activities including harvesting, cedar pulling, and weaving were mentioned by participants as important to develop and make available to members. Members living out of Hartley Bay would like to see more opportunities to visit Kiel and participate in seasonal harvests and developing culture camps for members living out of the community, and particularly for youth. There was also mention of the importance of building cabins around the territory for individual and community use, and a recognition that this activity would strengthen claims to the territory for the nation. Workshops on how to weave and do other cultural activities were recommended for Hartley Bay and members living in Prince Rupert.

Education

► *Figure 2*
Education Priorities



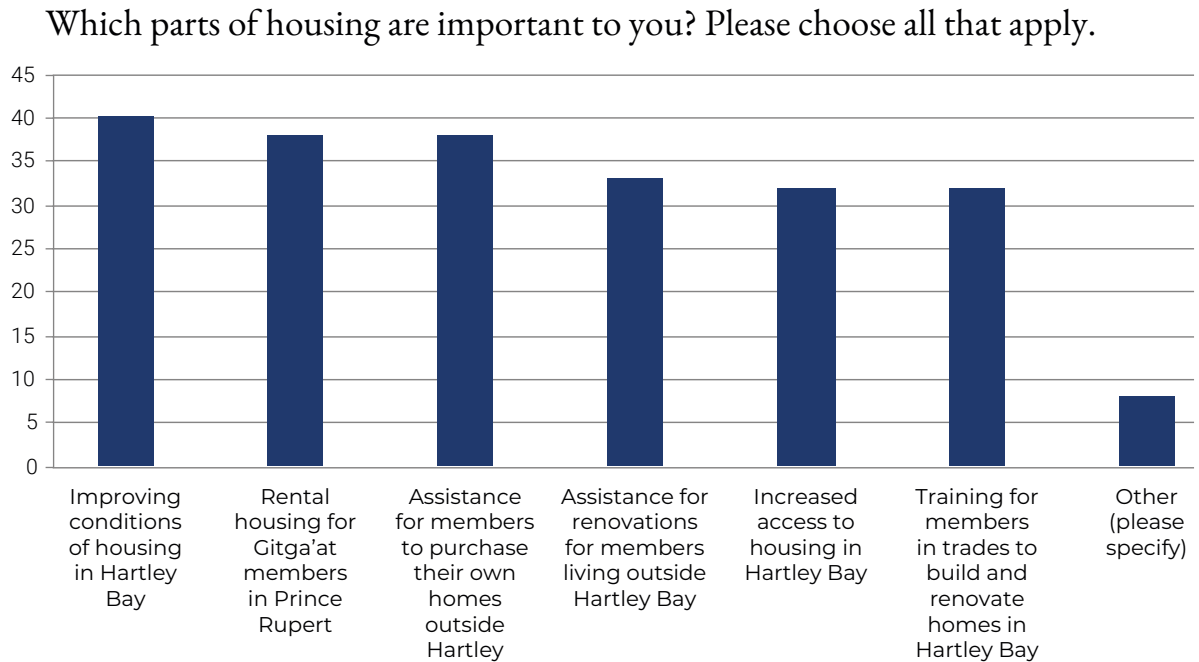
► As mentioned above, the top priorities indicated in the survey and in person were around culture and language. Within education, access to post-secondary was close behind language training. Post-secondary access was also discussed during the engagement sessions.

Trades programs were brought up specifically, and Hartley Bay members expressed interest in developing college programs including trades in Hartley Bay.

The other specific programs mentioned during engagement sessions were business management and leadership. Business management was deemed important for economic development, both for members on their own and for the Nation as a whole. Leadership programs should derive curriculum from both western and traditional Gitga'at systems.

Housing

► *Figure 3*
Housing Priorities



► During the Prince Rupert engagement session, the group developed a phrase that summarizes the consensus among participants at all engagement sessions: Gitga'at First Nation members need safe, clean, affordable, and accessible housing.

Discussion was focused on needs for housing in Hartley Bay, needs for rental housing, needs for elders housing, and how to help members buy and/or maintain their own homes.

Housing

Housing Hartley Bay

All engagement sessions recognized the need for more housing in Hartley Bay. Participants recognized that this housing needs to be mixed – some housing for families, housing for single people, and more accommodation for members who are visiting. Participants recognized that constructing houses in Hartley Bay is extremely costly and recommended looking into innovative solutions such as shipping container houses.

There was also a discussion on policies for houses that have been left vacant by their owner, since in the past some houses were left to deteriorate that could have been offered to others for accommodation.

Rental Housing

There was support in all engagement sessions for Gitga'at owned rental housing in Prince Rupert. Members proposed that this housing could be for both Gitga'at members, and for non-Gitga'at tenants to develop a profitable business.

Participants also suggested incorporating a cultural centre into the housing complex.

Participants recommended developing a rental subsidy for members living outside of Hartley Bay as well.

Elders Housing

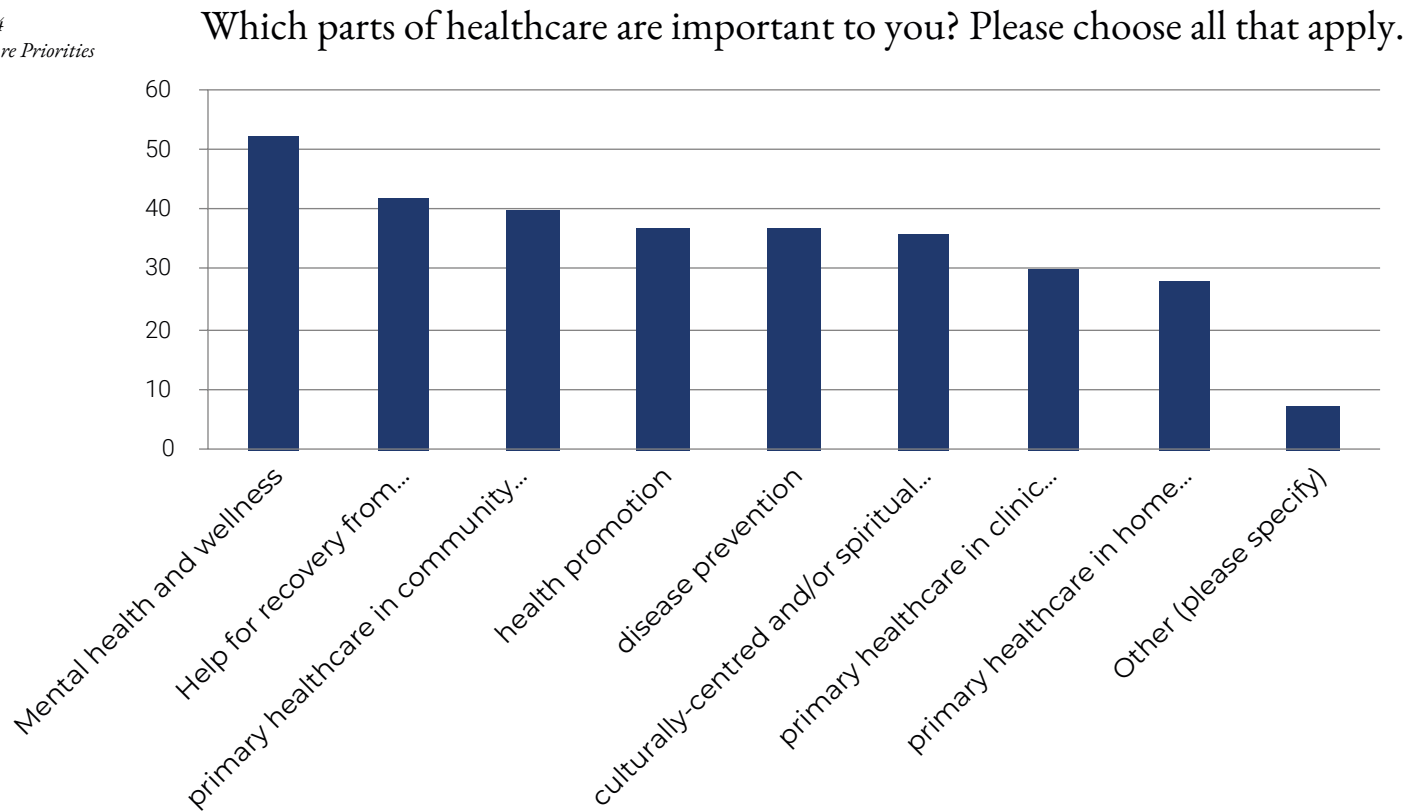
Participants in the online engagement session raised the importance of supporting elders to find housing that meets their needs.

Support to Purchase

There was lively discussion in Prince Rupert about developing a policy for Gitga'at members to access financial assistance to put a down payment on housing to increase the number of members who own their own homes. There should be research into comparable policies, since there are wide variations in funding being made accessible by other Nations.

Health Care

► *Figure 4*
Health Care Priorities



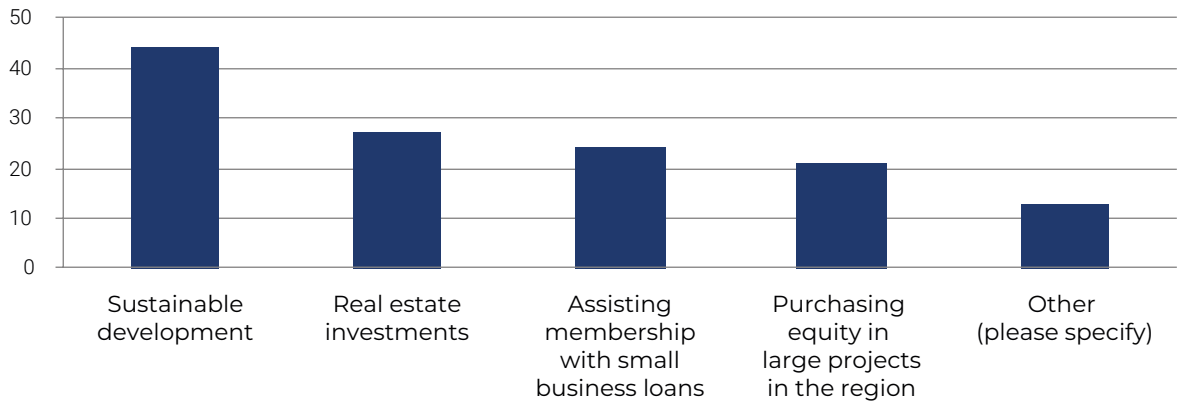
► As indicated by the summary table in Figure 4, Gitga'at members are most concerned about access to mental health and addiction services. There was also discussion during engagement sessions about the importance of holistic approaches to healthcare

through access to programs in the territory. Finally, during the online engagement session, there was interest in ensuring that elders were able to access the health care service they need.

Economic Development

► *Figure 5*
Economic Development
Priorities

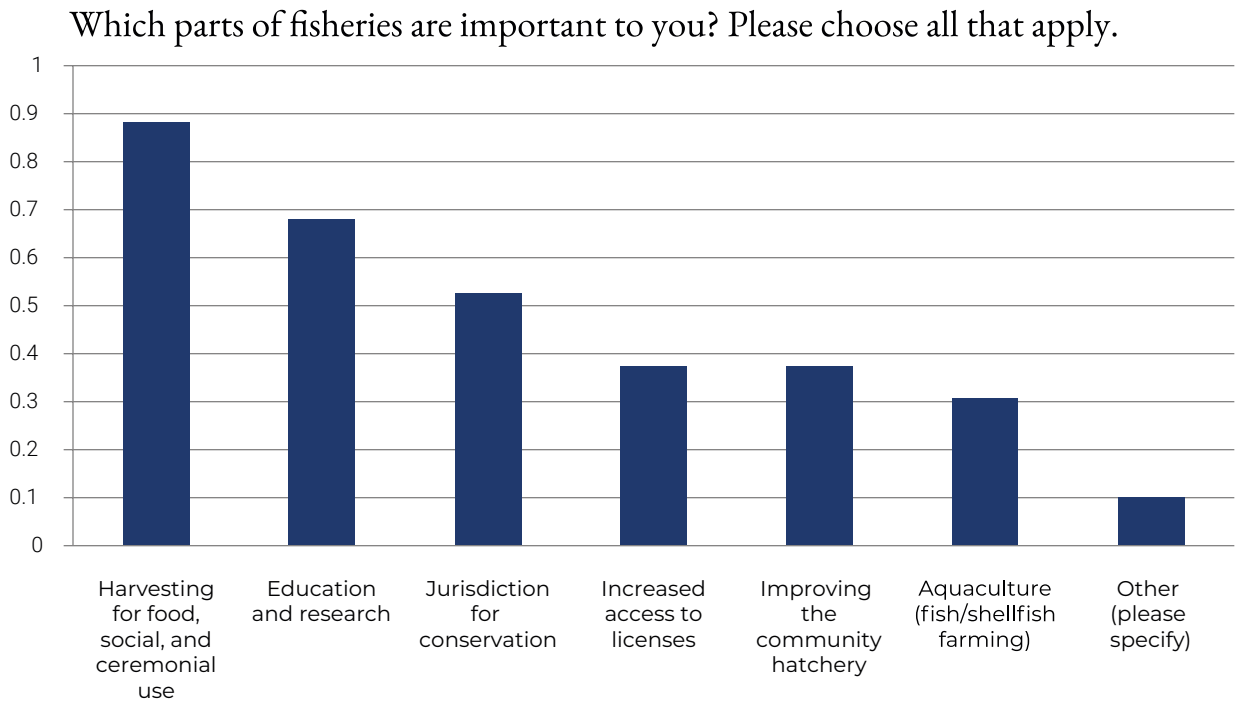
Which parts of economic development are important to you? Please choose all that apply.



► As indicated in the survey responses, Gitga'at members are most interested in ensuring that economic development is done in a sustainable way. There was also interest in real estate investment, which ties in with the need for rental housing for membership, as well as assisting members with business loans, and purchasing equity in major projects. Comments on the survey also indicated the importance of tying jobs for members to investments in the region.

Fisheries

► *Figure 6*
Fisheries Priorities

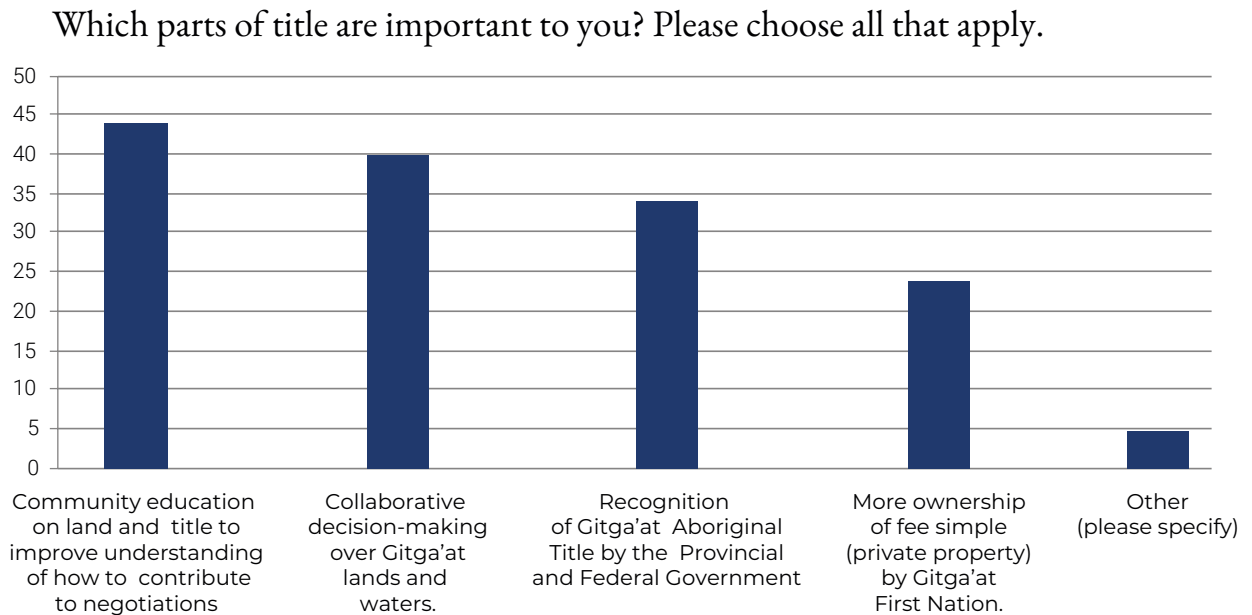


► As indicated by the summary table, the main concern for fisheries is food, social, and ceremonial use, education, and conservation. While there is some interest in access to commercial licenses, Gitga'at members understand that their fisheries

resources have been impacted by overharvesting and climate change, and there is a need to rebuild them. Comments on the survey indicated protecting salmon populations in particular.

Title & Land

► *Figure 7*
Title & Land
Priorities



► Survey respondents indicated that members should be provided education to understand how they can contribute to negotiations.

There was also interest in being part of collaborative decision-making process and ensuring that the Province and Federal Government recognize Gitga'at title and jurisdiction.

During the engagement session in Hartley Bay, participants discussed the importance of balancing stewardship with natural resource development.

Participants in person and through comments on the survey also recognized that economic development opportunities for the nation should

also directly benefit members through employment. For instance, Gitga'at holds a forestry license on Vancouver Island, but there are no opportunities for members to be employed through it.

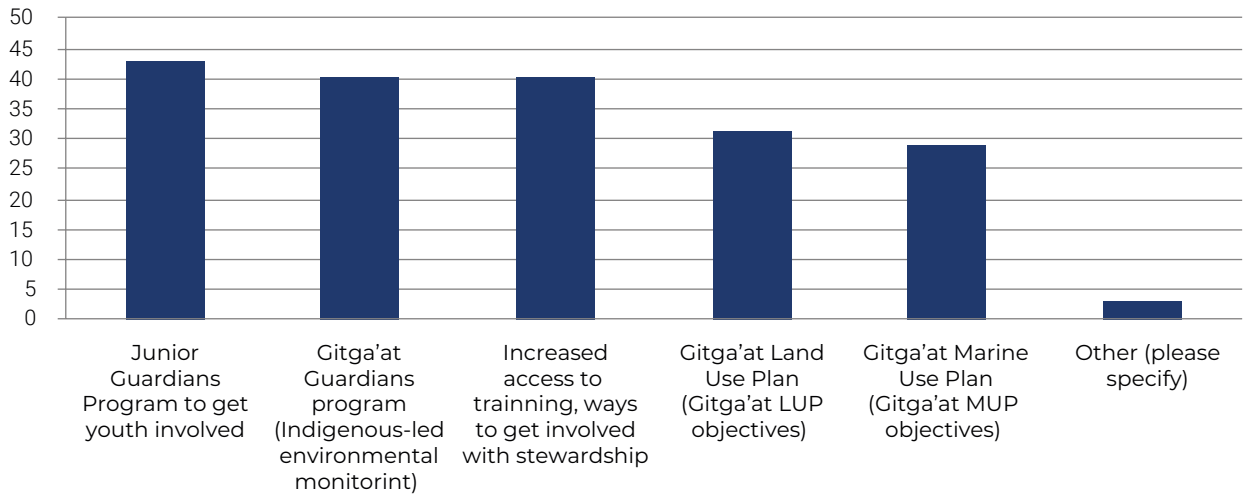
There was also interest in developing protocols and agreements with forestry companies operating in the territory to ensure that activities are being conducted sustainably, and to bring both revenue and employment opportunities to the nation.

Finally, participants noted the need to start restoration of the dam and mines at Surf Inlet.

Natural Resources

► *Figure 8*
Natural Resources
Priorities

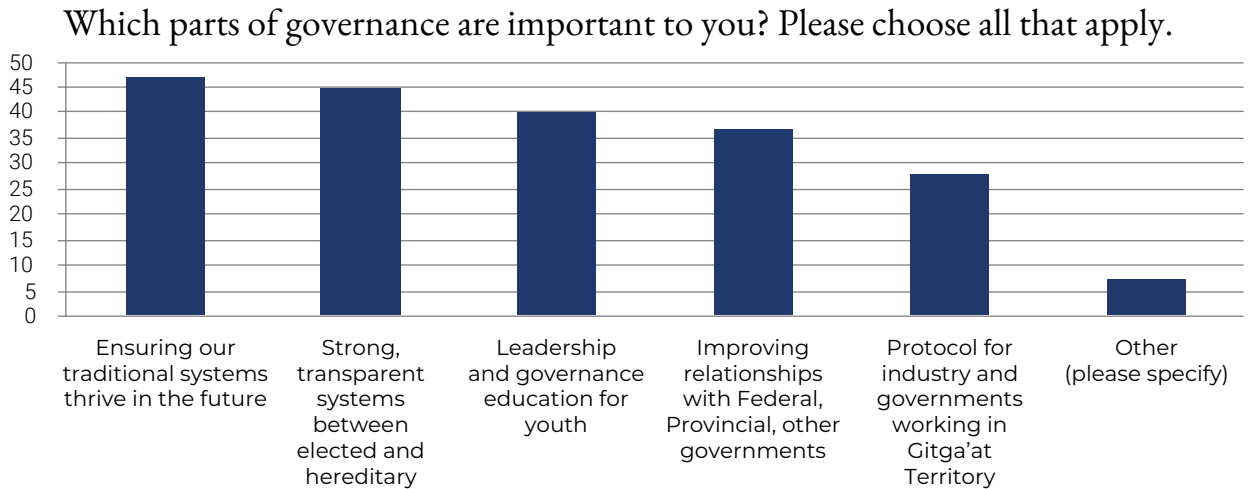
Which parts of natural resources management are important to you? Please choose all that apply.



► As with fisheries and lands discussions, top priorities in Natural Resources pointed to Guardians programs, particularly for youth, to participate in conservation and monitoring programs.

Governance

► *Figure 8*
Governance
Priorities

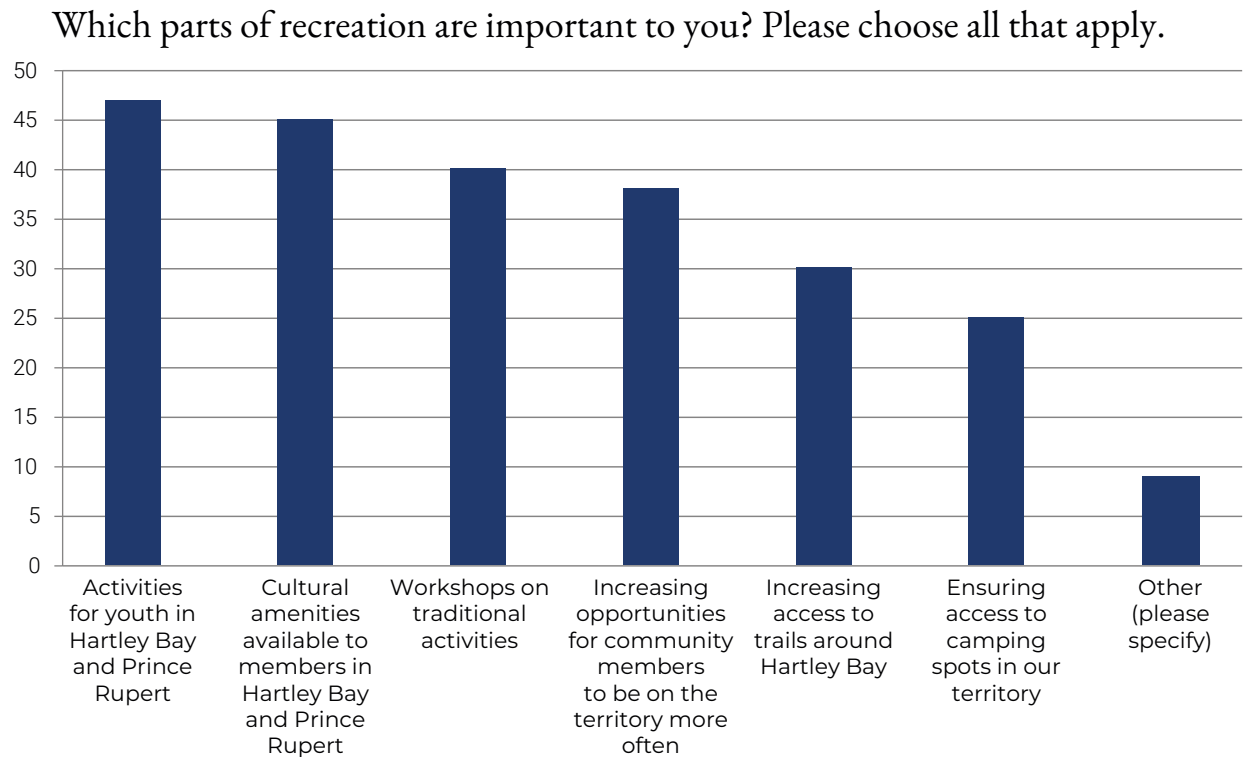


► Governance priorities focused on ensuring that traditional systems have strong foundations to thrive in the future – which also links to discussions around helping Gitga'at members integrate into the clan system noted above in Language and Culture – as well as recognizing the need to link the elected system and traditional system. During engagement sessions, and noted in comments on the survey,

there is an interest in developing a feeling of unity for all Gitga'at members living in Hartley Bay and away from the community. It should be noted that the engagement process that developed this report, and the continued engagement work of the RAC, is increasing ties between the administration and members living outside of Hartley Bay.

Recreation

► *Figure 9*
Recreation
Priorities



- Recreation priorities focused primarily on access to activities for youth, and again went back to cultural and traditional activities. Comments on the survey indicated a need for these activities to be accessible for members living outside of Hartley Bay as well.

Reconciliation Advisory Committee Membership

▶ The Reconciliation Advisory Committee includes the following members:

- Eric Anderson, Chair
- Cam Hill
- Marven Robinson
- Charlotte Anderson
- Austin Basso
- Vanessa Danes
- Spencer Greening
- Arnold Clifton
- Mary Reece
- Owen Green
- Albert Clifton

Administrative support is provided by Andreas Krebs.