



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# THE RAVEN MOTHER

BY HETXW'MS GYETXW (BRETT D. HUSON) ILLUSTRATED BY NATASHA DONOVAN

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain who the Gitksan are.

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2. Who is Nox Gaak? How many chicks does she have?

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3. What is Lasa ya'a? Why is it a special time for the Gitksan?

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4. Why do ravens adapt so well to almost every ecosystem?

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5. What are the young ravens learning to do during the Budding Trees and Blooming Flowers Moon?

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6. Explain how ravens and other hoarders are beneficial for the environment.

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7. Why do the Gitksan have great respect for the raven?

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8. What are thermal updrafts? How do the ravens enjoy them?

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9. What is K'uholxs? What do the Gitksan celebrate at this time?

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10. Describe how the ravens and the wolves help each other.

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11. Read the list of Gitksan Moons. What does tell you about the Gitksan?

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12. What did you find the most interesting in this book? Explain.

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# Answer Key

1. Explain who the Gitksan are.

*The Gitksan Nation are Indigenous peoples from unceded territories in the Northwest Interior of British Columbia. They live on 35,000 square kilometres of land at the headwaters of the Xsan River. The Nation follows a matrilineal line, which means that all rights, privileges, names, and stories come from the mothers. There are four clans: Lax Seel (Frog), Lax Gibuu (Wolf), Lax Skiik (Eagle), and Gisghaast (Fireweed). The four clans are divided by the Wilp system. A Wilp (house group) consists of one or more families. Each Wilp has a Head Chief and Wing Chiefs who are guided by Elders and members of their Wilp. There are currently 62 house groups.*

2. Who is Nox Gaak? How many chicks does she have?

*Nox Gaak is the raven mother. She has two chicks.*

3. What is Lasa ya'a? Why is it a special time for the Gitksan?

*Lasa ya'a is a time period known by the Gitksan as the Spring Salmon's Returning Home Moon. It is a special time for the Gitksan because the salmon are arriving so the Gitksan can enjoy fresh salmon chowder (hagwiltsum). Other species also return to the land at this time, replenishing the food web and giving the Gitksan access to more variety of food.*

4. Why do ravens adapt so well to almost every ecosystem?

*Ravens adapt so well to almost every ecosystem because they are among the best scavengers in the animal kingdom but they are also great hunters when they work together. Ravens also look after one another and help each other raise their young.*

5. What are the young ravens learning to do during the Budding Trees and Blooming Flowers Moon?

*The chicks are taking short flights away from the nest and they are learning how to scavenge, hunt, and store food by watching their mother.*

6. Explain how ravens and other hoarders are beneficial for the environment.

*Ravens and other hoarders store caches of food all over their territory. The seeds they bury grow into new trees and plants and other food they hide helps fertilize the environment.*

7. Why do the Gitksan have great respect for the raven?

*The Gitksan celebrate the raven in songs and stories because they spread new growth across the land.*

8. What are thermal updrafts? How do the ravens enjoy them?

*Thermal updrafts are air currents that rise due to heat. The ravens like to chase each other and do acrobatic flying in the thermal updrafts.*

9. What is K'uholxs? What do the Gitksan celebrate at this time?

*K'uholxs is a time period known by the Gitksan as the Stories and Feasting Moon. The Gitksan celebrate the previous seasons of sustenance and share stories that pass on teachings of life and thankfulness.*

10. Describe how the ravens and the wolves help each other.

*When Nox Gaak sees a frozen moose carcass, she sends out a special call to the wolves. When the wolves arrive, Nox Gaak flies to the moose carcass to show the wolves where it is. While the wolves use their strong jaws to crush the frozen moose, the ravens grab any pieces that they couldn't get on their own. Also, when the ravens create new life through their hoarding, the wolves keep larger animals from overgrazing the land.*

11. Read the list of Gitksan Moons. What does tell you about the Gitksan?

*It shows that the Gitksan are very tied to the land/nature. Their lives revolve around the activity on their land and they have great reverence for it.*

12. What did you find the most interesting in this book? Explain.

*Various responses.*