

M O T H E R S O F X S A N



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# The Wolf Mother

Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson)

Natasha Donovan

# THE WOLF MOTHER

By Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson)

Illustrated by Natasha Donovan

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# IN BLOOM

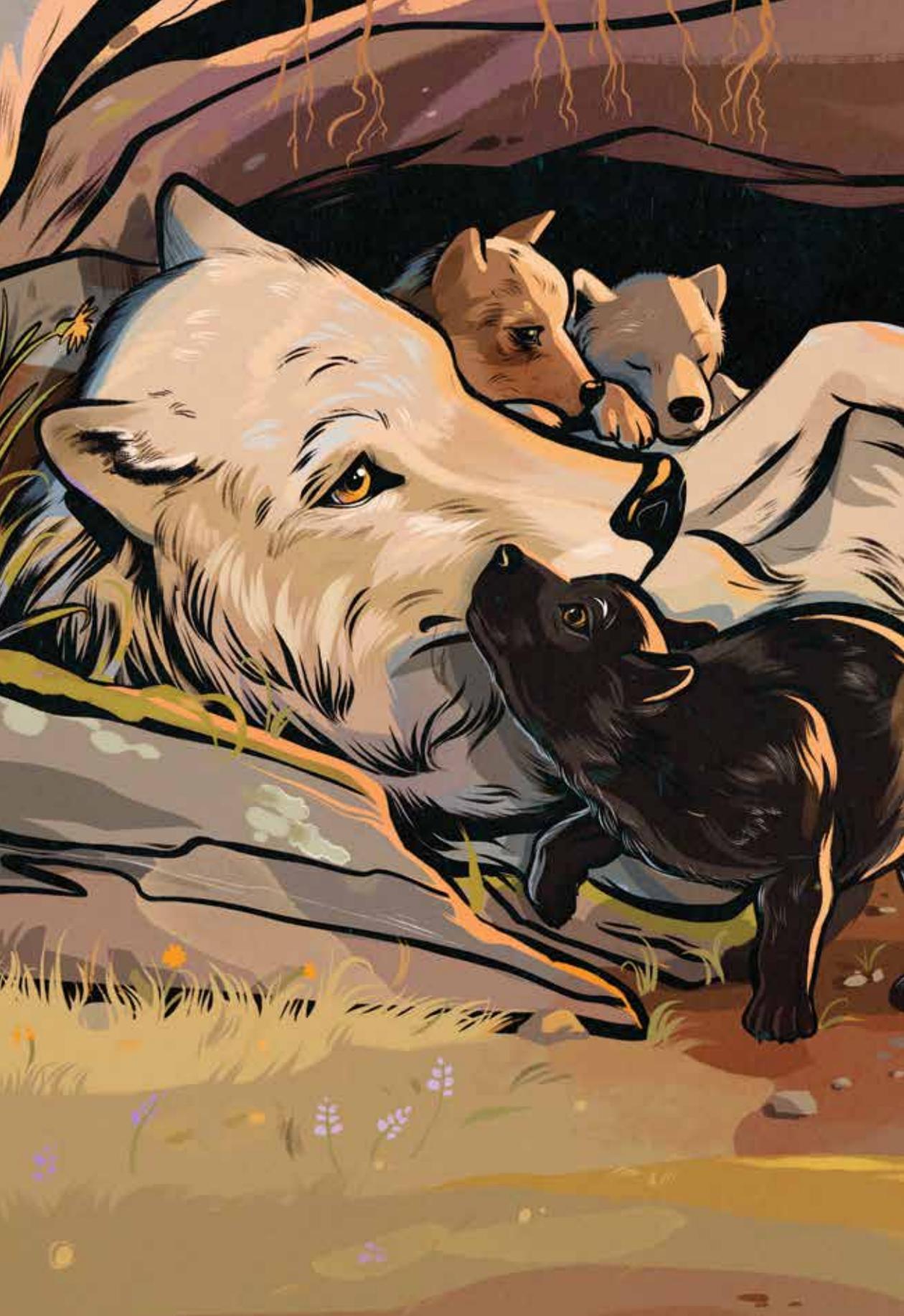
Lasa 'Yan'tsa, the budding tree and blooming flower moon, is upon us. This lunar cycle<sup>1</sup> happens in May when spring takes hold of the land, and the plants begin preparing themselves for the summer to come. The air starts to change as the sun's warmth moves the currents of spring, stirring up the scents of new blossoms. Lasa 'Yan'tsa is a season of birth, and many species of animals are bringing new life into the world, including a pack of wolves who have six new pups<sup>2</sup> born only three short weeks ago.





<sup>1</sup> **Lunar Cycle** – Every 29.5 days, the moon completes a cycle around the earth.

<sup>2</sup> **Pup** – baby wolf



An illustration of a wolf mother and her pups in a den. The mother wolf is lying down, and one pup is sitting up, looking towards the viewer. The den is dimly lit, with some light coming from the left. The background shows the rocky walls of the den.

<sup>1</sup> **Domesticated**  
– (of an animal)  
tame and kept  
as a pet or on  
a farm.

The smallest of the pups is a charcoal black female, who has a tiny strip of white fur above her left eye. The black wolf already has a sense of smell 100 times better than any human, and even domesticated<sup>1</sup> dogs cannot compare to her ability. Right now, she only has a nose for mother's milk. Her ears grow larger every day, her eyesight gets sharper, and her legs stretch farther, and she is beginning to desire to explore beyond their cozy den among the pines.



When Lasa maa'y, the gathering and preparing berry moon, arrives, the little black wolf moves faster and now travels a little farther from the comfort of home. This time of year, there is more prey' for the wolves, including gax, the rabbit, which is a favourite of the pack. The small black pup now has a voracious appetite for meat and will aggressively push her way to the front when the adults return from a hunt. This aggressiveness will serve her well in the future.





<sup>1</sup> **Prey** – an animal that is hunted and killed by another for food.

# THE GITXSAN

The Gitxsan Nation are Indigenous peoples from their unceded territories of the Northwest Interior of British Columbia. This 35,000 square kilometres of land cradles the headwaters of Xsan or “the River of Mist,” also known by its colonial name, the Skeena River. The land defines who they are.

The Nation follows a matrilineal line, and all rights, privileges, names, and stories come from the mothers. The Lax Seel (Frog), Lax Gibuu (Wolf), Lax Skiik (Eagle), and Gisghaast (Fireweed) are the four clans of the people. It is taboo to marry a fellow clan member, even when there are no blood ties.

The four clans are divided among the territories by way of the Wilp system. A Wilp, or “house group,” is a group comprising one or more families. Each Wilp has a head chief and wing chiefs, who are guided by Elders and members of their Wilp. Currently, there are 62 house groups, and each governs their portion of the Gitxsan Territories.



## THE GITXSAN MOONS

<b>K’uholxs</b>	Stories and Feasting Moon	January
<b>Lasa hu’mal</b>	Cracking Cottonwood and Opening Trails Moon	February
<b>Wihlaxs</b>	Black Bear’s Walking Moon	March
<b>Lasa ya’a</b>	Spring Salmon’s Returning Home Moon	April
<b>Lasa ‘yanja</b>	Budding Trees and Blooming Flowers Moon	May
<b>Lasa maa’y</b>	Gathering and Preparing Berries Moon	June
<b>Lasa ‘wiihun</b>	Fisherman’s Moon	July
<b>Lasa lik’i’nxsw</b>	Grizzly Bear’s Moon	August
<b>Lasa gangwiikw</b>	Groundhog Hunting Moon	September
<b>Lasa xsin laaxw</b>	Catching-Lots-of-Trout Moon	October
<b>Lasa gwineekxw</b>	Getting-Used-to-Cold Moon	November
<b>Lasa ‘wiigwineekxw or Lasa gunkw’ ats</b>	Severe Snowstorms and Sharp Cold Moon	December
<b>Ax wa</b>	Shaman’s Moon	a blue moon, which is a second full moon in a single month



Kispiox  
River

Stekyodin

Bulkley  
River

Skeena River

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## PRAISE FOR THE MOTHERS OF XSAN SERIES

*Huson eloquently conveys the fragile interconnectedness of the natural world and the moral imperative to protect it.*

—Publishers Weekly, ★ review

*Beautifully illustrated... [this book] is a treat shared with the reader by the Gitxsan people.*

—Dr. Brian Riddell, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Vancouver, BC

*A wonderful exploration of science and culture... A top selection.*

—School Library Journal, ★ review

In the fifth book of the Mothers of Xsan series, award-winning author Hetxw'ms Gyetxw (Brett D. Huson) introduces young readers to a pack of grey wolves. New pups have just begun to open their eyes, one of which is a striking black female. Every day, her ears grow larger, her eyesight gets sharper, and her legs stretch farther. As she learns to hunt, play, and run with her pack, instinct pulls her to explore beyond her home territory. Will the young wolf's bold spirit help her find a new pack of her very own?

Learn about the life cycle of these magnificent canines, the traditions of the Gitxsan, and how grey wolves contribute to the health of their entire ecosystem.

*The Wolf Mother*

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