

Shuswap Nation Tribal Council Quarterly News



Photo: Skwlāx te Secwépemcúlecw and SFC team members install the enumeration fish fence at Scotch Creek. (Story on back page.)

Slexé'yem from Tribal Kúkpi7

Welcome to the first edition of our Shuswap Nation Tribal Council (SNTC) newsletter.

Within these pages, you will find updates on the work of SNTC, the Secwépemc Fisheries Commission (SFC), the Aboriginal Training and Education Centre (ATEC) and other important initiatives, engagements, and events.

This past quarter, many Secwépemc Bands were impacted by wildfire activity. We recognize the stress and uncertainty these events place on communities and are grateful to everyone who worked to keep people safe. Unfortunately, these extreme weather events are becoming a regular part of our summers.

This year, the Salmon River recorded its lowest water levels on record, creating significant challenges for salmon populations. The low water flows, reduced oxygen levels, and rising water temperatures are cause for alarm and highlight the growing impacts of climate change on our ecosystems and traditional food sources.

While early forecasts suggested a promising year for salmon returns, the numbers did

not meet expectations. Protecting and restoring salmon populations remains a non-negotiable priority, and SNTC remains dedicated to this important work.

One initiative this quarter that I am particularly proud of is SNTC's partnerships and support for traditional fishing camps that connect Indigenous young adults with Elders and Knowledge Keepers. These camps provide meaningful opportunities to share intergenerational knowledge, strengthen cultural identity, and deepen connection to the land.

As we look ahead, SNTC will continue to work collaboratively to address the challenges and opportunities facing members and Secwépemc people. I hope you enjoy reading about the impact of our collective efforts over the past three months.

Kukwstéc-kucw.

Tribal Kúkpi7 Darrel Draney



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Photo: Employees from Simpcw and the SFC disassemble old docks at Dunn Creek.

Simpcw and SFC remove 2,100 kg of debris from Dunn Creek

On August 8, 2026, Simpcw First Nation and the Secwépemc Fisheries Commission (SFC) removed 2,100 kg of debris from Dunn Creek after the materials were identified during a fish habitat mapping project conducted by SFC in 2025.

SFC received funding through the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) to map any disturbances to the stream banks and creek bed in the Boulder and Dunn Creek systems.

The Boulder and Dunn Creek systems provide important spawning and rearing habitat for salmon and support the nearby Dunn Lake Hatchery, making the health of the watershed critical to local trout and salmon populations.

During the mapping project, SFC identified two dilapidated docks that had broken free from the lake and became lodged in Dunn Creek upstream of the hatchery. The docks were constructed using tires and other materials that posed a potential risk to salmon habitat and water quality.

“The docks were found in a very important spawning location,” said Jordan Motruk, Fisheries Biologist at SFC. “Both docks were built with tires which have the potential to leach highly toxic compounds into the water. The compounds can be especially harmful to juvenile Coho salmon, but also pose risks to all salmon species.”

While research into tire-derived contaminants in aquatic environments is still emerging, SFC documented the need

to remove the structures and included the recommendation in its final report to Simpcw and project funders. Simpcw immediately supported the cleanup effort and provided staff to assist with the removal.

“Dunn Creek itself gets really warm, so every little bit we can do to help the fish, we will do it,” said Tina Donald, Fisheries Manager at Simpcw. “I really appreciate working with the SFC because there are a lot of like-minded people that want to provide a clean environment for our fish.”

Tina said she was surprised to see such a large group there to help.

“That’s what’s great about collaborating with communities and working together,” Jordan said. “Many hands make light work, so it was surprisingly easy to remove all the materials in one day. It felt very fulfilling because we had an immediate, visible, and positive impact on the watershed.”

Removing the debris from the creek helps reduce potential risks to water quality and salmon habitat while protecting a key spawning area. The cleanup also demonstrates how habitat monitoring and restoration projects can identify environmental risks and lead directly to meaningful on-the-ground improvements for salmon and the watershed.



**Secwépemc
Fisheries
Commission**

Secwépemc Nation advances priorities in CRT discussions

The Secwépemc Nation continues to play an active role in the ongoing modernization of the Columbia River Treaty (CRT), working alongside Columbia River Basin First Nations to advance Indigenous rights, stewardship, and community priorities within the future management of the Columbia River system.

Over the past year, progress has continued on several key priorities, including governance, salmon restoration, Indigenous Cultural Values, redress, and benefit sharing. While the broader Canada-United States negotiations to modernize the Columbia River Treaty have been paused since March 2025, following a decision by the United States to suspend negotiations while reviewing its international engagement, Secwépemc participation in domestic discussions continues with Canada and British Columbia.

Two of the Nation's most important priorities are: addressing the historical impacts experienced by Secwépemc people following the construction and operation of treaty dams and salmon restoration.

The return of salmon to the upper Columbia Basin represents a significant opportunity to restore ecological health, strengthen cultural connections, and support future generations.

Negotiators continue working toward long-term benefit-sharing arrangements that seek to ensure First Nations share in the economic benefits associated with Columbia River operations. The Nation remains committed to advancing a future that respects Indigenous rights, supports healthy watersheds, and creates lasting benefits for communities throughout the Columbia Basin.

Chris Haller, Fisheries Assistant

SFC Employee Spotlight

Chris discovered his passion for supporting salmon habitat while working in a hatchery in his hometown of Bella Coola. Encouraged by his former manager to pursue further education, he enrolled in Vancouver Island University's (VIU) Fisheries and Aquaculture Diploma program.

As a recent graduate of the program, Chris accepted a summer position as a fisheries assistant with the Secwépemc Fisheries Commission (SFC).

"Being out in the field this summer has been a really great experience," Chris said. "It was an opportunity to see everything in person and learn first-hand instead of just seeing it on a screen in school."

Chris' long-term goal is to be a biologist or fisheries technician. He explained that his time at SFC has helped him build practical skills and gain valuable experience. Throughout the summer, he supported a range of projects, from facilities maintenance and equipment cleaning to habitat restoration and water monitoring in the field.

"One project that I've been working on is training an AI model to count fish using sonar data," Chris said. "The sonar captures video of fish swimming by, and with enough training, we hope to use AI to accurately count the fish."

Chris said one of the highlights of his placement was the opportunity to work alongside people with a wide range of expertise and backgrounds. He encourages other students in work placements to take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way.

"It was definitely a great work environment," Chris said. "I wasn't scared to try new things. I worked with people who had different training and experiences, and I tried to absorb as much knowledge as I could."

Through hands-on experience and mentorship, Chris gained valuable skills while contributing to projects that support healthy salmon populations. To learn more about SFC, visit shuswapnation.org/fisheries.





Salmon Unity Camp brings youth together for shared learning

In September, Cstélen (Adams Lake Band) and SNTC hosted the Salmon Unity Camp, a land- and water-based cultural learning experience that brought together young adults from the Ktunaxa, Secwépemc and Syilx Okanagan Nations. Through hands-on activities, participants reconnected with traditional salmon harvesting practices, food preparation, ceremony, language and one another.

The young adults were welcomed into the Salmon Warrior program of *Bringing the Salmon Home: The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative*, a collaborative effort led by the three Nations.

Greg Witzky, Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and Adams Lake Band member said the idea was inspired by a meeting hosted by the Shuswap Band and Ktunaxa Nation. With salmon absent from parts of the Columbia system for more than 87 years, there was an opportunity to bring people together to share knowledge and strengthen relationships ahead of the salmon returning. Greg is also a Secwépemc Indigenous Knowledge Counsel member of Bringing the Salmon Home Initiative.

“The best way to know about fish is to

work with fish, so we wanted to invite everyone to our longstanding fish camp at Adams Lake,” he said. “These camps are good for relationship building and knowledge sharing.”

Greg said he believes the salmon will eventually return to the Nations in the upper Columbia and it’s important for the culture to return as well.

An ad hoc steering committee organized the camp with additional funding from BC Hydro and FortisBC, and in-kind support from Adams Lake Band and the local Lakes Secwépemc Bands. The committee invited the young people to spend a week learning through hands-on cultural, harvesting and leadership activities. The fish camp began with a salmon ceremony attended by Salmon Warriors, students from Chief Atahm School and other community members.

Each day centred around an Elders’ fire, where participants shared meals, discussed the importance of salmon reintroduction, and reflected on issues that mattered to them. Activities included fish processing, salmon canning, and nighttime spearfishing. There were

also community dinners during the week.

“After the first day, the youth picked up salmon processing really fast,” Greg said. “The knowledge transfer was seamless, and they took over once they knew what to do. They were learning to lead. They were stepping up and speaking up even though it was a bit out of their comfort zone in the beginning.”

Devin Capilo, Guardian and Junior Salmon Chief for the Shuswap Band said it was an amazing experience.

“I enjoyed filleting the salmon because there were so many different people willing to teach me how to do it their way, and they understood that I still haven’t found my way of doing it,” Devin said.

He added that everyone was really welcoming and willing to teach.

As discussions begin about hosting the camp again next year, organizers hope participants carry what they learned back to their communities. While the return of the salmon to the Columbia system remains a long-term effort, the Salmon Unity Camp demonstrated that the knowledge, relationships and cultural practices connected to salmon are already being strengthened for future generations.

Salmon Festival in Invermere



Photo: A canoe brigade paddled from Kinsmen Beach to James Chabot Provincial Park as part of the Salmon Festival.

Shuswap Band celebrated the first launch of its new 20-person canoe, Íswell, at the Salmon Festival in Invermere on September 12, 2026. Named Íswell, meaning "loon" in Secwépemctsin, the canoe's first journey on the water marked a proud moment for the community.

Skítsesten Fish Camp



Participants at Skítsesten Fish Camp learned a variety of fishing and fish processing techniques at Steele Head Provincial Park in August. One of the preservation methods taught was wind drying where the fish is cut horizontally and hung to dry naturally in the wind.



ATEC support helps launch Bigfoot Bannock

Jamie and Wydell Rain - Culinary Arts Program, Thompson Rivers University

In July 2026, Jamie and Wydell Rain achieved a goal more than a decade in the making when they opened Bigfoot Bannock, a Kamloops-based catering company specializing in Bannock-inspired meals.

“When we moved to Kamloops about 10 years ago, we wanted to put down roots for our kids while also working toward a goal that was important to us,” Jamie said. “We have always had a passion for food and bringing people together, and we knew that we wanted to operate our own food business one day.”

Recognizing that education would help turn their vision into a reality, Jamie and Wydell both enrolled in Thompson Rivers University’s Culinary Arts Program in 2018 and completed Levels 1 and 2 with support from the Aboriginal Training and Education Centre (ATEC)’s Skills Development Program.

ATEC administers funding through the Service Canada Indigenous Skills Employment & Training (ISET) Program for the central interior, helping Indigenous people throughout the Secwépemc and Nlaka’pamux Nations access training, develop skills, and connect to meaningful employment opportunities.

After completing the two-year program at TRU, Jamie and Wydell gained hands-

on experience working in high-end dining restaurants.

“Those experiences helped build our skills, confidence and understanding of the food industry,” Wydell said.

While their culinary training provided a strong foundation, they knew running a successful business would require additional skills.

Wydell recently completed an accounting program while Jamie completed a Business Management program at Sprott Shaw College supported by ATEC funding that helped them gain the qualifications needed to move closer to their goal of operating their own business.

“One of our biggest challenges was balancing education, employment, raising our children, and trying to build a stable life in a new community,” Jamie said. “It took a lot of commitment and perseverance to continue going to school while supporting our family, but we always kept our bigger goal in mind.”

Over the years, they continued building experience, with Wydell working as an accountant and Jamie taking on administrative roles that strengthened their business knowledge.

“All of these different experiences, from culinary and customer service to accounting and business management,

have now come together as we pursue our original dream of building and operating Bigfoot Bannock,” Jamie said.

They both agreed that the support and funding they received from ATEC helped create opportunities that brought their long-term goal within reach.

“Our journey didn’t happen overnight,” Wydell said. “It has been years of education, work experience, raising a family and staying focused on our long-term goal. Today, all those experiences have come together to help us build Bigfoot Bannock.”

Their journey reflects how education, perseverance and community support can help turn long-term goals into reality.

To learn more, follow Bigfoot Bannock Catering on Instagram @bigfootbannock. For more information about ATEC’s programs and services, visit <https://atec-training-employment.com>.



Listen to this story



Jaime Dickson, Summer Student

ATEC Employee Spotlight

As a Kinesiology student at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Jaime was looking for an opportunity to work one-on-one with clients in an office setting as part of her summer placement. She found that opportunity as the Summer Student Employment Coordinator at the Aboriginal Training and Education Centre (ATEC) in Kamloops. In this role, Jaime helped eligible clients and employers access wage subsidies for summer student positions.

“It was really rewarding to celebrate successes with clients,” Jaime said. “I was proud when I got to assist clients and they would report their good news back to us. Seeing people work hard and achieve their goals felt great.”

ATEC serves the Secwépemc and Nlaka'pamux Nations by providing access to training, skills development, and meaningful employment opportunities.

“I really enjoyed the days when I went out into communities to conduct the intakes in-person,” Jaime said. “I learned a lot about the surrounding Indigenous communities and had the opportunity to work with people from many different backgrounds.”

“Even though the role was not a direct fit to kinesiology and sport, I learned a lot about myself and what I want to do in the future,” Jaime said.

To learn more about ATEC, visit <https://atec-training-employment.com>.



Advancing Secwépemc law

SNTC's Engagement Team and three representatives from the Elders Council visited the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU), an independent research unit housed at the University of Victoria's Faculty of Law.

ILRU is dedicated to the revitalization of Indigenous law through collaborative research and the development of educational resources that support learning and understanding. The unit previously partnered with SNTC to publish *Secwépemc Lands & Resources Law*, a resource grounded in Secwépemc legal traditions and teachings.

During the visit, participants learned about ILRU's research methodology and explored opportunities for future collaboration to advance Secwépemc law and support community-led research initiatives.

Photo: Marlyece Sampson, Cassidy Chelsea, Katrina Kenoras and Elder representatives Hank Gott, Debbie Sampson and Bertha Robbins at ILRU in Victoria, B.C.

Scotch Creek enumeration fence

In August, Skwlāx te Secwepemcúlecw and several SFC employees installed an enumeration fence across Scotch Creek for the early summer run of adult sockeye.

Operating since 1994, the project is managed by the Skwlāx Fisheries Department with support from the Skwlāx Guardians. SFC administers funding through the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (AFS) Program, liaises with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and provides administrative, technical, and field support. Together, this work produces important data that help track salmon populations throughout the region.

“Scotch Creek is one of eight key

stocks within the Fraser Sockeye Early Summer Run timing group,” said Torrie Bell, Fisheries Biologist at SFC. “When the enumeration fence is fish-tight and fully operational, it provides a high-precision count of the adult sockeye entering the creek. These data help assess the Scotch Creek population and contribute to our understanding of the broader early summer run group.”

Installed on August 14, the fence operated for five weeks. Fish were manually counted as they passed through the structure.

“There was a two-week stretch where we were doing 24-hour a day shifts,” said Wayne Levesque, Sr. Fisheries Tech Supervisor at Skwlāx te Secwepemcúlecw. “The guardians are a big part of this project because



they assist with the install and counting. There was a lot of work that went into making this a successful year.”

Skwlāx also conducts carcass surveys and collects biological samples, providing data that helps assess salmon health and estimate future returns.



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The Shuswap Nation Tribal Council acknowledges that we are located on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory, situated within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation. We honour and respect the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and Secwepemcul'ecw.