

ANNUAL REPORT 2023~24

BRINGING THE SALMON HOME



BRINGING *the* SALMON HOME

kł cpǎlk stím i? ntytyix

ʔatł suʔkinił swaqmu

Tspelq'entém re Sqlélten

The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative

Photo: Fernando Lessas

IT TAKES A RIVER OF PEOPLE TO BRING THE SALMON HOME

Bringing the Salmon Home: The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative is the Indigenous-led collaboration of the Syilx Okanagan, Secwépemc and Ktunaxa Nations, with British Columbia and Canada. This Initiative is centred in unceded Indigenous territories.

This work is supported by substantive in-kind contributions from the three Indigenous Nations and funding from the Province of BC, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Columbia Basin Trust.

Along with continued governance development and relationship building, we've been hard at work increasing our capacity in Indigenous knowledge, technical inquiry, communications, and cultural engagement.

We've created a strategic Road Map with clear actions, timelines, and responsibilities to support our transformation into an enduring Indigenous-led organization.

We published our first round of technical studies, informing our next stage of expanded technical work.

We have the track record, and the technology is available. The fish are already coming home. Through the combined efforts of our Initiative and US Tribes, salmon are swimming in the upper Columbia system, including the Arrow Lakes.

Tagged salmon fry released in the upper Columbia made it downriver through all the dams, matured at sea, and several were detected returning as adults to the lower Columbia River in 2023.

Through a collaborative monitoring project, we observed adult salmon released by Colville Confederated Tribes returning into Canadian waters and exhibiting spawning behaviour.

The cultural foundation required to support and sustain the technical work is being strengthened in many ways, including:

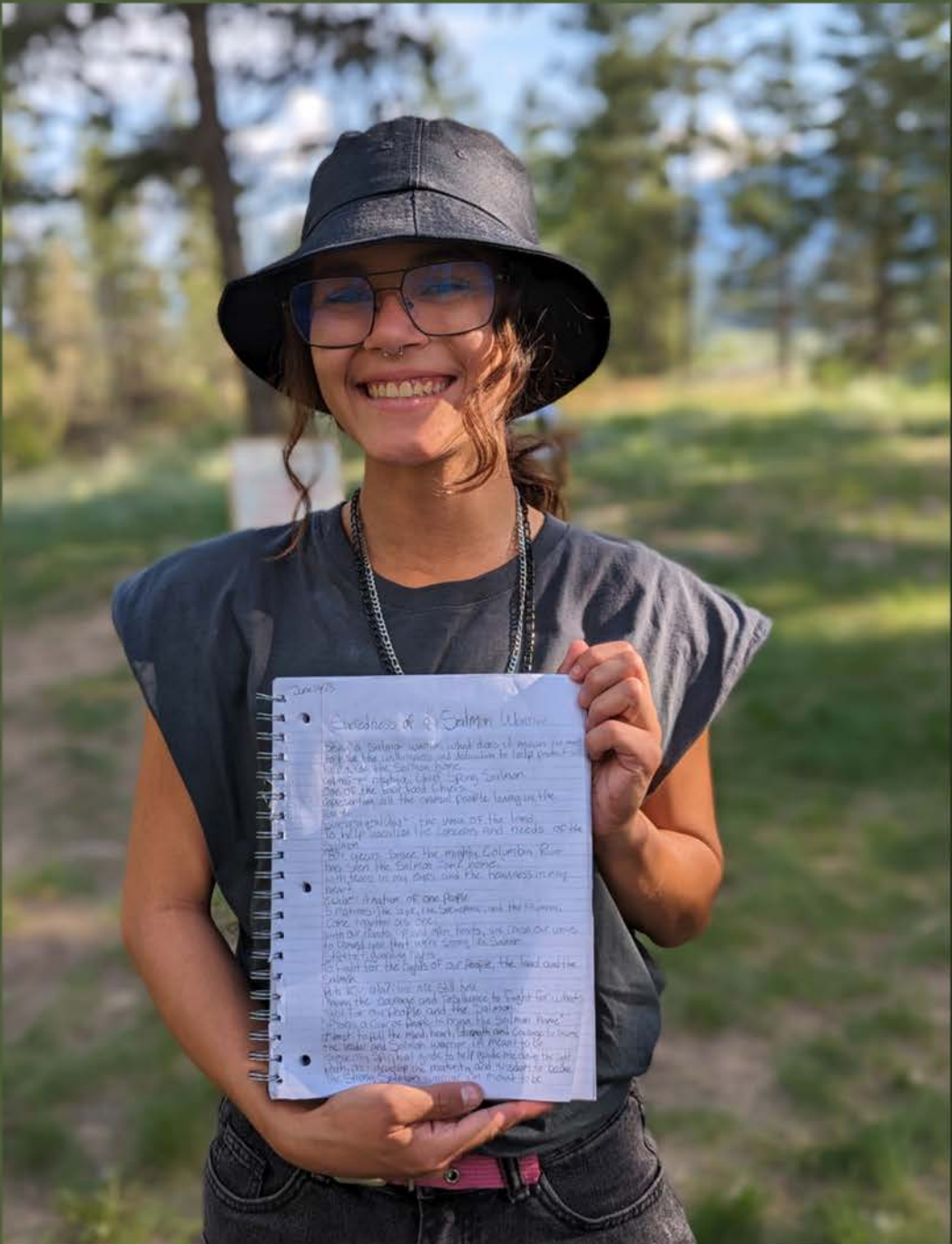
- Annual tri-Nation ceremonial salmon fry releases throughout the upper Columbia, with salmon supplied by the Syilx Okanagan kł c'páik sti'ń hatchery;
- Annual Salmon Warriors youth gatherings;
- The historic tri-Nation Indigenous Knowledge Cultural Gathering held in early March 2024; and,
- Screenings of our award-winning *Bringing the Salmon Home* film are increasing public awareness and engagement.

Dams have blocked salmon from returning to the upper Columbia River for some 85 years. We are advocating for substantial long-term sustaining funding to support the generations of coordinated efforts ahead.

We are committed to continuing to strengthen collaboration with US Tribes and allies in a One River process to bring the salmon home.

The salmon are calling us to work together.

Bringing the Salmon Home:
The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative
c/o 101, 3535 Old Okanagan Hwy
Westbank, BC V4T 3L7
ColumbiaRiverSalmon.ca

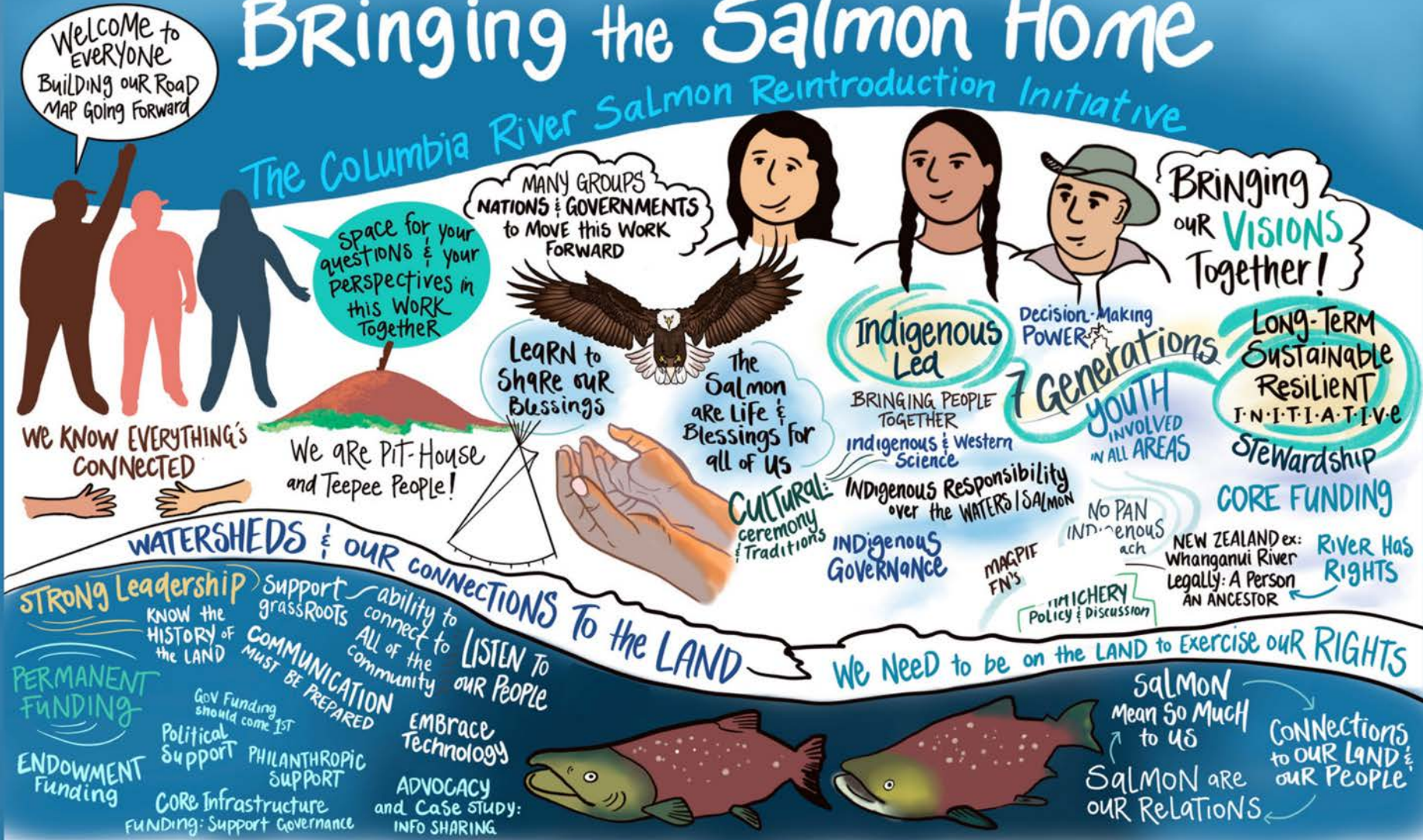


Reflecting on the sacredness of being a Salmon Warrior
Serenity Baptiste, Syilx Okanagan Nation member
Salmon Warriors Gathering 2023

*All photos by Bringing the Salmon Home Initiative, unless otherwise noted

Bringing the Salmon Home

The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative



Implementation of the Road Map vision is focused on six Critical Success Factors:

1. Revitalized Salmon Culture;
2. Strong Leadership;
3. Adequate Capacity;
4. Permanent Funding;
5. Enduring Organization;
6. Evidence of Salmon Returning

Graphic recording by Michele Buchholz

WORKING GROUPS

EXECUTIVE WORKING GROUP (EWG)

The EWG has focused on the critical next steps to develop and implement a plan to establish an enduring and sustainably funded Indigenous-led initiative to continue the vital work of the Bringing the Salmon Home Initiative. This action was called for in the 2022 Addendum to the July 29, 2019 Letter of Agreement. This work included a Visioning Session in Castlegar in April 2023, followed by a workshop in Vancouver in September. The new Road Map Implementation Plan lays out six critical success factors, activities, timelines, and responsibilities through March 31, 2025.

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM (IT)

The IT meets monthly and provides direction to the Technical Working Group and Management Team and makes recommendations to the Executive Working Group. A data and knowledge sharing protocol continues to be developed. An application submitted to the BC Salmon Restoration Innovation Fund (BC SRIF) for a three-year contribution to support our scientific and Indigenous Knowledge and cultural engagement work was approved for \$5.1M (for activities through March 2026).

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE COUNSEL (IKC)

The IKC provides cultural perspectives and guidance to all working groups. The IKC's work this past year has included preparing the Indigenous Knowledge statement to clarify the foundational importance of Indigenous Knowledge to bringing the salmon home and what this means for the Nations. The Counsel has also been building its capacity to support Nation-based cultural research and tri-Nation coordination, alongside efforts to advance a knowledge sharing protocol amongst the Indigenous Nations. It has been working closely with the Technical Working Group on an approach for interweaving cultural knowledge and priorities to help inform the technical work. The IKC has also been providing valuable guidance for development of the Bringing the Salmon Home Transboundary Outreach Tour. In March 2024, the Counsel hosted its first tri-Nation cultural gathering drawing together Knowledge Holders, Elders, and youth Salmon Warriors from the Syilx Okanagan, Secwépemc and Ktunaxa Nations.

COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY GROUP

The CAG guides activities under our High-Level Communications Protocol, and supports the Communications Advisor and the Nation-based Outreach & Engagement Organizing Team.

Our third online Bringing the Salmon Home Festival in early May 2023 drew over 1,000 audience members.

Our annual tri-Nation Salmon Warrior gathering brought together 21 young people with elders and knowledge keepers to reconnect with salmon culture at the Columbia River's headwaters in late June 2023.

We've produced the new half-hour *Bringing the Salmon Home* documentary film. Thousands of people are witnessing our story in community screenings across the Syilx Okanagan, Secwépemc, and Ktunaxa Nations, and in national and international non-Indigenous forums. The film has been chosen to feature at five festivals to date, and garnered the Best in Fest award at the Fernie Mountain Film Festival in February 2024.

Bringing the Salmon Home representatives have been supported in numerous public presentations including for the Columbia River Transboundary Water Governance and Ethics Symposium, *siwłk^w (Water) For All – Co-Creating Futures* Environmental Flows Conference, and the *kł cǫǫk stim i? siwłk^wtət* Transboundary Mining Conference.

The Communications & Engagement Team is coordinating with the Working Group Chairs to plan the Bringing the Salmon Home Transboundary Outreach Tour, launching in late May 2024. We will be deepening our relationships with US Tribes and allies along the river and elevating our story to international forums.

MANAGEMENT TEAM (MT)

The MT provides support to all the working groups, communications, fundraising coordination of grants and budgets, and financial administration and reporting.

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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

The TWG completed its three core technical studies in the past year focused on: risk assessment, habitat assessment and synthesis, and experimental reintroduction design. Detailed results of these studies are publicly available on our website at ColumbiaRiverSalmon.ca.

The three Indigenous Nations collaborated, alongside Colville Confederated Tribes, on an adult chinook salmon movement study which tracked salmon released at Northport, Washington and their movement into Canadian waters. For the first time the three Indigenous Nations also collaborated on an experimental release of tagged juvenile sockeye salmon at two locations in the Canadian portion of the Columbia River to help answer questions about downstream movement and survival through the Columbia River system. Looking ahead to the long list of questions of interest to decision makers, the Technical team has been scoping out and developing its workplan for the next two years. In addition to supporting ongoing studies, forthcoming studies are anticipated to include work related to:

- Understanding impacts of climate change and related salmon vulnerabilities,
- Modeling the upper Columbia River salmon life cycle to support salmon reintroduction decision making,
- Habitat data collection and modelling,
- Exploring near term / long term fish passage options and study needs at Canadian hydroelectric facilities, and
- Summarizing knowledge to best inform decision making amongst the five governments.



Clockwise From top right: releasing tagged salmon fry into the upper Columbia River; tri-Nation team tagging fry at the ONA's k̓c̓əłk̓ st̓iŋ hatchery, Penticton; Technical Working Group members at Keenleyside Dam, Castlegar



The historic Indigenous Knowledge Cultural Gathering organized by the IKC brought together Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Salmon Warriors from the three Indigenous Nations for ceremony, cultural exchange and a hatchery tour. Hosted by the Okanagan Nation Alliance, En'owkin Centre, March 1-2, 2024 Penticton, BC

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE STATEMENT

The primary purpose and responsibility of the Indigenous Knowledge Counsel (IKC) is to be the foundation of the Indigenous-led Bringing the Salmon Home Initiative. This responsibility involves the continued collaboration and commitment amongst the three Indigenous Nations: the Syilx Okanagan Nation, Secwépemc Nation, and Ktunaxa Nation. This will ensure that Indigenous Knowledge, cultural values, and worldview are respectfully recognized and integrated to ground the intention, guidance, implementation, and coordination of these efforts through ongoing learning and developments.

Our respective Nations' customs and cultural practices make us distinct. Through our respective "Creation Stories" the Indigenous Knowledge Counsel provides inspiration and guidance to move forward. Although our stories are different and vary, the common messages have been carried through millennia about our Indigenous responsibilities in carrying out the intimate connection of all living things. These stories embed the principles of reciprocity and respect of the spirit of the natural world; they teach and support the health and well-being of our co-existence and relationship to all living things, including all the human beings. These ancient knowledge systems or ways of knowing provide stamina in the face of barriers and hardship. These systems have been passed down for millennia, signifying the importance of Place in our stories.[1] One of these stories is about our relationship with the salmon, as our relatives continue to carry out their responsibility to feed the land and all things. We depend on the salmon for our survival – our food and spiritual source. Our stories are not just anecdotal stories, they are encoded messages which represent the specific Knowledge, Protocols, and Laws that define and are sacred to the Syilx Okanagan, Ktunaxa, and Secwépemc Peoples.

From our tribal perspectives of "all living things," our Indigenous Stories, Worldviews, and Laws uphold as sacred the water, animals, plants, lands, and People of the Columbia River.

The health and well-being of all things depends on how we carry out these sacred responsibilities to protect all species – which are interconnected and linked to that of other animals, to the waters, to the forest, and to the ocean.

One species we are focusing on is Salmon, who truly live in reciprocity for the next generation by providing life to the waters and lands where they spawn. Our Salmon family is, and was historically, larger than just sockeye and chinook. For all Indigenous Nations up and down the Columbia River system, this family is inclusive of resident and ocean-going species, such as coho and pink salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and lamprey, where each species has a meaning and a responsibility to each other. The connection among all living things in the Columbia River basin has been disrupted. Our worldviews can guide the scope and focus of this Initiative beyond salmon as they have done for thousands of years for the best chance of survival for all.

We, the Indigenous Peoples from the Columbia River system, respect and maintain tribal responsibilities to honour our creation stories and each other along this One River in a way that is not divided by the international colonial border separating Canada from the United States. Through our varied and diverse worldviews, languages, and laws, we maintain collective approaches for a healthy and vibrant future.

Prior to contact, we built, maintained and continued to rely on our relationships with each other, in ceremony, in social customs, and our traditional economies and trade systems. Through these practices, our cultural continuum affirms our ways of being: the practices and agreement protocols that support the sustainable management responsibilities of sharing salmon along the River.

As Indigenous Peoples we also acknowledge the differences amongst us (caused by colonization) and will focus to address the larger threats to the planet and specifically for the restoration of our shared and collective interests – the salmon. We know our tribal relationships can together lead, contribute, inspire, and persist in the collaboration among Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to Bring the Salmon Home for the holistic health of the land and each other.

[1] <https://www.syilx.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Fish-Passage-Captiwlk.pdf>
<https://rootsandblues.ca/secwepemc-stories/>
<https://www.ktunaxa.org/who-we-are/creation-story/>

Each of our Nations have distinct languages, ceremonies, protocols, laws and governing institutions for how we have maintained continued use and occupation. Even when there is no more salmon, the memory guides as our oral traditions and storytelling signify the capacity and perseverance in the restoration of salmon as the Salmon People. We acknowledge and understand the severe impacts of colonization upon all Indigenous peoples. However, the laws and teachings expressed through our languages (tmixw, tmícw, ? aknumúctitit, and ?a-kxañis qapi qapsin) and actions express our ways of caring for ourselves in and on the land as our lives and our future depend on it.

Salmon are a vital part of a healthy Columbia River ecosystem and remain under ongoing threat. Salmon returning to the Columbia Basin have also been displaced for more than 80 years since massive hydro-electric dams have blocked the natural migration and return of salmon throughout the Columbia River system. As other western experts continue to inform, discuss, and announce through modern day applications what the salmon need for regeneration, Indigenous Peoples have been fierce in our assertions and advocacy in the carrying out of these same responsibilities.

The salmon show us how we must carry on even through the most difficult times and continue to find a way to work with each other, no matter how turbulent the waters may be. The salmon are showing us the way for what we need to do. Our lives depend on how we uphold and advance our responsibilities together.

This makes all the difference in our collective survival. It is through our collaborations among the Nations and with other federal, provincial, and international governments and forums that we have been the most successful in recovery for each other and salmon.

We can't talk about just western science recovering salmon without the Salmon People. Salmon are a part of who we are. Our community input is a necessity in the cultural and technical research being undertaken to ensure that the information and perspectives from Elders and Knowledge Holders are being considered within and across the three Indigenous Nations.

Indigenous leadership needs to continue advancing collective approaches through the growing and supportive Bringing the Salmon Home partnerships.

We observe many things in our lives and the cycles of life, and the full regeneration of life is not something humans can control. How we co-exist on the planet is a responsibility we all share. We know our Indigenous Nations have a deeper understanding of the salmon, the plants, the trees, and the water for our survival, and "they do not need us". For these reasons, the integrity by which we carry ourselves forward must be strict, known, upheld by all, and not be compromised. Respect for each other relies on the respect we have for ourselves. The salmon remind us that life is short, life is a journey, and that we must always remember where we come from. This work is more than just salmon recovery and reintroduction and all that entails. It is for the healing and the health of all things, including all the people who are a part of this journey with us. We will never give in or give up, especially on each other.

We would like to thank all those who have dedicated their lives in this way. Our teachings, that are passed down through our ancestors, are continuing to be heard through the voices within the Columbia River system and echo through time in the work that we are doing together to Bring the Salmon Home.

~ *Indigenous Knowledge Statement created by the Syilx Okanagan, Secwépmc, and Ktunaxa Nation members of the Indigenous Knowledge Counsel of Bringing the Salmon Home: The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative (September 2023)*



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Bringing the Salmon Home film screenings reach thousands of people
Dozens of documentary screenings included (clockwise from top left):
Presentations at the Secwépemc Winter Gathering at Splatsin; opening film at the
Fernie Mountain Film Festival; community dinner and discussion with Syilx
Okanagan Nation members, Osoyoos Indian Band



EXECUTIVE WORKING GROUP (EWG)

Mark Thomas, EWG Chair, Secwépemc Nation
 Chief Barb Cote, Secwépemc Nation
 Chief Keith Crow, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Chief Byron Louis, Syilx Okanagan Nation,
 Jason Andrew, Ktunaxa Nation
 Avery Gravelle, Ktunaxa Nation
 Sarah Murdoch, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 TBA, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 David Travia, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
 Stewardship, BC
 Mike Turner, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
 Stewardship, BC

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE COUNSEL

Chad Eneas, IKC Chair, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Dixon Terbasket, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Fred Fortier, Secwépemc Nation
 Wenecwtsin (Wayne Christian), Secwépemc Nation
 Marty Williams, Ktunaxa Nation
 Vickie Thomas, Ktunaxa Nation

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM (IT)

Rosalie Yazzie, IT Chair, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Jay Johnson, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Murray Ross, Secwépemc Nation
 Adam Neil, Secwépemc Nation
 Vickie Thomas, Ktunaxa Nation
 Robin Louie, Ktunaxa Nation
 Eddy Kennedy, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 Dean Allan, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 Heather Dempsey, AAROM Support, Fisheries and
 Oceans Canada
 Eva Schindler, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
 Stewardship, BC
 John Krebs, Ministry of Forests, BC

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)

Misun Kang, TWG Co-Chair, Ktunaxa Nation
 Ben Meunier, Ktunaxa Nation
 Ryan Benson, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Michael Zimmer, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Braydi Rice, Secwépemc Nation
 Scott Cope, Secwépemc Nation
 Will Warnock, TWG Co-Chair, Ministry of Forests, BC
 Tyler Weir, Ministry of Forests, BC
 Howard Stiff, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 Lauren Weir, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)

Tara Montgomery, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Valerie Michel, Secwépemc Nation
 TBA, Ktunaxa Nation
 Alexandra Coutts, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 Eva Schindler, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
 Stewardship, BC

SECRETARIAT

**Hosted by Okanagan Nation Alliance*
 Pauline Terbasket, Host Administrator
 David Marshall, Co-Facilitator
 Marc Nelitz, Co-Facilitator
 Teresa Marshall, Communications Advisor
 Carla Hunt, Administrative Coordinator

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT ORGANIZERS

Valerie Michel, Secwépemc Nation
 Billie Jean Gabriel, Syilx Okanagan Nation
 Melissa Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation

IK CULTURAL COORDINATORS

Rhona Bowe, Secwépemc Nation
 Clifford Dorian, Ktunaxa Nation
 TBA, Syilx Okanagan Nation



Road Map Visioning Forum participants at the Columbia River, Castlegar BC



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ʔatʔ suʔk̓iniʔ swaq̓mu

Tsp̓elq̓ent̓em̓ re S̓ql̓élt̓en

The Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative

The new 30 minute documentary film
ColumbiaRiverSalmon.ca

Photo: Eiko Jones

