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CANADA'S INACTION ON WILD SALMON INEXCUSABLE

For decades, successive federal governments have proven unable or unwilling to address the decline of the Fraser River Salmon stocks through a holistic lens. For decades numerous non-governmental organizations and stakeholder groups have warned of the negative effects of pulp mill effluents, municipal sewage, run-off from crops, pasture lands and logging, and viruses from salmon farms. This year, add almost record-level water temperatures, cuts to the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Stephen Harper's gag order on federally-employed scientists, and potential Fukushima radiation (while last year's testing found minute traces of Cesium - 134 traceable to Fukushima, Gordon Edwards, of Vanier College, reminds us "radiation build up in the food chain over a long time, even centuries").

So what to do?

We, as St'at'imc, have been working on this issue for some time. Through our negotiations with BC Hydro, we now have continual flow in the Bridge River below the Terzaghi Dam; We now have a smolt entrainment initiative on the Seton Canal; We now have an effective fish counter at the Seton Dam; and both our communities of Cayoosh and N'Quatqua both manage spawning channels with limited support from DFO and the Salmon Commission. As well, for 30 years we have foregone fishing the Early Stuart stocks, leaving them for our northern neighbours. And recently we have undertaken the management of 18 research projects designed to rebuild the health of our rivers and salmon stocks. We have inserted ourselves into salmon fishery management, despite DFO's claims of jurisdiction, because our culture depends on the health of these stocks.

Xaxl'ip councilor, Daryl Bob emphasizes, "Its time DFO stopped managing the Indians and start managing the Fraser Basin watershed in a holistic way with its numerous partners."

Everyone has a stake in getting these runs back into a healthy position. We see the value in working collaboratively with the commercial fishing and sporting fishing sectors, said Chief Garry John, St'at'imc Chiefs Council Tribal Chair. "At the end of

the day, it's pretty simple - the river needs to be clean and cold...That's all the fish are asking for “.

In 2010 the Harper Government did the right thing and struck the Cohen Commission to explore the cause(s) of the disastrous 2009 Salmon returns. But in 2013 DFO explains, “We did not create the Cohen Commission (the Harper Government did), and we cannot implement any of its 74 recommendations without the mandate of the Boss -Stephen Harper”.

Chief John replies, “In the midst of Stephen Harper’s reign of terror, DFO should focus on its over-riding mandate - To conserve wild stocks and ensure future sustainability of the fishery. While this year’s Fraser River Salmon run is low, and that is putting stress on all those who depend on the bounty of this river, the real issue here is the long-term viability of the river to sustain Salmon at all”.

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