



Solidarity with Sekw'el'was



Sekw'el'was and supporters' peaceful protest in Cayoose Creek

The community of Sekw'el'was issued a press release on January 16, 2014 to raise awareness about the District of Lillooet's decision to install a water intake in Cayoose Creek (recently renamed Seton River) without adequately consulting Sekw'el'was.

The press release explained that, as government agencies had side-stepped their due diligence and failed to uphold the honour of the Crown, access to the lands near the Fraser River would be blocked, effective 7:00 a.m. on January 17, 2014.

A peaceful protest was held at the entrance of Cayoosh Campground. It ended on January 28 to allow construction crews to enter the campground and complete work not related to the contested water intake infrastructure.

The protest was not illegal. Protesters allowed District of Lillooet staff to enter the lands daily for routine maintenance and water sampling. Although the district sought an injunction from the court, they were not able to obtain one because protesters did not block access and did not prevent district staff from performing their duties.

As a result of the protest, the Environmental Appeal Board issued an interim stop-work order to allow for a proper review of this project.

"With the provincial Environmental Appeal Board agreeing to review this project, I am satisfied that we have achieved our short-term goal of preventing work that could damage fish habitat in Cayoose Creek," Sekw'el'was Chief Michelle Edwards said.

"Sekw'el'was, together with the other St'at'imc communities, are caretakers of the watershed and the community takes its responsibility of governance and conservation seriously. The watershed is an important habitat for salmon and trout. This section of Cayoose Creek is only seven kilometres long and is already impacted by four hydro-dams.

"We sincerely hope the District of Lillooet has realized that our concerns are valid and that communications between us needs to be significantly better."

Sekw'el'was has tried numerous times, without success, to arrange discussions and consultation sessions with the district.

Despite a lack of consultation, the district attempted to proceed with the controversial water upgrade, raising a number of issues, including: the potential for incubating eggs to be smothered by construction equipment; the threatened vitality of this section of the river to Coho, Steelhead, Chinook, Pink, Sockeye, and Bull Trout for spawning, resting, and fry-rearing; adverse impacts to salmon, and in turn, negative impacts to bears, eagles, owls, and Blue Heron; and the destruction of shade trees needed to keep the water cool.

Salmon and its habitat are of critical importance to the Sekw'el'was community and the St'at'imc nation. They are the foundation of our culture and sustenance. Any loss to this resource negatively impacts St'at'imc cultural and economic practices.

"It seems strange that more than 15 years after the landmark Delgamukw decision, the Province and the Union of BC Municipalities are still funding projects that have failed to properly engage First Nations in these land-use decisions," Chief Garry John, Chair of the St'at'imc Chiefs Council said. "The St'at'imc hold the Province to higher standards than what is being demonstrated"

The community of Sekw'el'was wants to acknowledge all St'at'imc members and non-Aboriginal residents of Lillooet who showed support for the protection of the salmon habitat.

The St'at'imc will continue to intervene when projects threaten our lands, resources, and way of life.

Roosevelt Elk Management Program



Roosevelt Elk Recovery in the Lillooet River Area

Xa'xtsa Chief and Council have been working with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to recover elk in the Lower Lillooet River area.

The objective of the program is to reintroduce Roosevelt Elk back to the territory. Xa'xtsa supports the program, with the intent of the species becoming huntable for the community once the population is stable.

In December 2013, 15 Roosevelt Elk were released around the Lower Lillooet River area. Although there will be more sightings as a result of the release, the elk population will not reach a 'sustainable harvest' level for at least five years. Everyone is asked to refrain from hunting Roosevelt Elk at this time.

"The goal of our community is to successfully bring up the

elk population. One component of this will depend on a stable management plan, which will ensure the survival of the species," said Xa'xtsa Councillor Darryl Peters.

"Our nation's cooperation and involvement in the management plan will result in the successful management of Roosevelt Elk in our territory."

The animals introduced to the territory as part of the program will be properly monitored and their habitats will be regularly assessed.

There is concern that the introduction of elk could lead to the degradation of the salmon habitat in the area. Xa'xtsa is prepared to help with monitoring salmon habits, once training is provided. The community is also looking into its own trail cameras to monitor key trails in the area.

Recognizing that adding elk into the area has the potential to increase predator activity, Xa'xtsa is working with the Ministry of Environment to ensure support will be provided and appropriate action will be taken to maintain human safety and protect other important wildlife species should predators, such as wolves, become problematic.

Xa'xtsa's community goals are to: establish a huntable species and create a long-term economic development strategy that includes guided hunting, with elk being a part of that strategy; to educate nation members to support the restoration of the population; and to be involved in management strategies and decisions in regard to the species.

SGS Human Resources Manual

The SGS recently finalized the organization's Human Resources (HR) manual and is one step closer to reaching its goal of having a complete policy package, including manuals that are transparent and hold the organization accountable to communities.

On January 9, 2014, the SGS executive board accepted the new HR manual, wrapping up a lengthy process that began in September. The new SGS executive board is committed to being accountable to communities by ensuring updated policies and procedures are in place.

The HR manual is the second manual to be finalized this year. At the beginning of the fiscal year, the SGS underwent a similar process to update the operations manual. With the two manuals complete, the SGS will now work on updating the financial policy before the end of this fiscal year.

The SGS understands the importance of ensuring accountability and transparency in operations for nation members. All communities will have access to the SGS's policy package and will be able to use it as a template in their policy development if they choose.

ASK Researchers Turn St'át'imc Data into Useable Knowledge

Initiated by the St'át'imc Government Services (SGS) Heritage and Culture Team, the ASK project (Exploratory Analysis of St'át'imc Knowledge) has a mission to organize existing information on St'át'imc knowledge.

The ASK project is a collaborative effort between several parties; Nadine Gray (SGS Heritage and Culture Project Archaeology), Larry Casper (former SGS Stewardship Advisory Coordinator), Dr. Dave Levy (SGS Fisheries Advisor), Dr. Sue Senger (SGS Environment Biologist), Rose Ellen Narcisse (Heritage Field Assistant), and Nora Billy (SGS GIS Technician) are all working together on the project.

The project began as a pilot study in the winter of 2013-2014 in an effort to document and sort the extensive data that has already been collected about St'át'imc people.

The group started the project because they realized there was a great deal of valuable information that has not yet been analyzed or organized.

"ASK asks what we can do with the knowledge we have on hand," said Dr. Levy. "It's a starting point."

For Nadine Gray and the SGS Heritage and Culture team, the ASK project is about accessing important data that will be incorporated in the nation-level Land-Use and Occupancy Study (LUOS), one of the projects outlined in the Archaeological Management Plan in the BC Hydro Agreement.

As Gray notes, "Understanding what data gaps we have in the knowledge base will help us to develop a Land-Use and Occupancy Plan that reflects St'át'imc knowledge and values."

Asked about the project, Rose Ellen Narcisse says, "The Exploratory Analysis of St'át'imc Knowledge (ASK) project is very beneficial for present and future research initiatives to see where the various gaps are and need to be filled from the archived documents held by SGS."

The SGS Environment team is currently collecting data on grizzly bear, mule deer, plants and species at risk. This is an example of a new research effort where previously collected data could be incorporated.

"Finding a balance between scientific knowledge and St'át'imc knowledge is key to making this project reflect a St'át'imc perspective."

The ASK project is still in its early stages; the group is focusing its efforts on turning the materials into usable shape. Using a bibliography software, Narcisse documented over 600 sources in the pilot phase of the project (these included academic materials such as papers and interviews, hand-drawn maps and taped interviews). It's a great start, but the material still needs to be organized. The team has been archiving the materials and Nora Billy (SGS GIS Technician) has been inputting some of the data into a GIS system. "We want to look at what we have and extract the main value from it," Dr. Levy said.

"There is a vast amount of printed data maps that are great references to data that are either inaccessible or lost in the transition. This project helps to organize that and give us an idea of where to find that data," said Billy.

As the project develops, the work being done by the Stewardship Advisory Committee on Information-Sharing Agreements between communities, as well as the work being done by researchers, will be incorporated into this project.

"Finding a balance between scientific knowledge and St'át'imc knowledge is key to making this project reflect a St'át'imc perspective," said Gray. "The data is being organized in accordance with the St'át'imc way of life."

Dr. Levy explained that St'át'imc knowledge is holistic and that it entails a "complex but sustainable way of doing things."

The project involves a lot of slow, painstaking work, but the group is passionate about it. They hope their work will result in this information being more accessible to St'át'imc communities in the future.

Stream Crossings and the Road Footprint Analysis



SGS undertakes project to inform watershed restoration strategies

Water is essential to life, and the quality, quantity and timing of water flow affect all life. Water sources are particularly vulnerable to impacts resulting from the construction and maintenance of roads and crossings. Each road crossing carries the potential for debris and sediment to wash into the water, for alterations in drainage patterns, and for changes in the quality of the habitat along the riverbank at the crossing point.

Given these potential disruptions, road or crossing structures may disturb fish or wildlife movement in or along the water course, and facilitate the introduction of invasive species. Crossing points are also vulnerable to climate change-related events like torrential rain that may block a culvert or overrun the system with sediment or debris.

There are over 10,000 km of roads within St'át'imc territory. These roads cross streams and rivers many times, creating the potential for significant downstream cumulative effects on water quality, fish habitat, and fish and wildlife movement.

The purpose of the new SGS project is to examine the issue of stream crossing to determine which water courses are most at risk from impacts due to roads, as well as to prioritize monitoring, restoration and mitigation activities that will build water system resilience in the face of climate change.

The project started with a preliminary analysis of stream crossings, with an information package expected to be released on February 3, 2014. Community input will then be gathered at community meetings and events, including the spring Water Forum, until April 2014. These meetings will act as opportunities for people with local knowledge to discuss the analysis, point out impacted areas, discuss values that

need to be considered, suggest mitigation strategies, and discuss concerns about future impacts or changes.

Community input will then be integrated with the data package and analysis to create a draft report. If funding can be obtained, with the support from the project's collaborative partners, the draft report will be provided to a select group of advisors with expertise in climate change issues. Project advisors will consider the identified priorities and strategies for mitigation and restoration and assist in refining actions to ensure systems can return to their original form after being altered.

The last stage of the project will be to use all the information and analysis obtained to create a final report that benchmarks the current state of stream crossings throughout the territory, and identifies the priority areas for monitoring, restoration, mitigation and remedial action. This report will be available to communities to create specific action projects. This project is expected to be wrapped up by February 2015, provided all funding and cooperation targets are achieved.



LSTC Hub Update: Save the Date

Mental Wellness & Substance Use Forum

LSTC is inviting all service providers, support workers and community members interested in the mental health and well-being of our Lil'wat, N'Quatqua, Samahquam, Skatin & Xa'xtsa communities to attend the Lower St'at'imx Mental Wellness Substance Use Forum.

When: February 17, 2014, 10:00 a.m – 3:00 p.m.

Where: Ull'us Gym, Mt Currie, BC

A more detailed description of the event will be available shortly.

For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact LSTC Hub Coordinator Joyce Schneider at joyce.schneider@lstc.ca.