



## November 2023 Newsletter



### Climate Change and Global Warming – Impacts to the Fraser River Wild Salmon

On October 6, 2023, Xwísten put a callout for people to meet at the Fish Ladder at the Bridge River Rapids to rescue migrating salmon stranded below the rapids. This initiative was taken by Chief Ina Williams of Xwísten and Chief Darrell Bob of Xaxli'p. It was discovered that the fish ladders were ineffective due to the record low water levels during the critical salmon migration period, and immediate action needed to be taken. Extraordinary efforts were made by the volunteers who came out to help save the salmon struggling to get past the rapids. The progression of the rescue efforts included:

- October 6-10: A large group of volunteers answered Chief Ina Williams' call, who formed a brigade chain and transferred stranded salmon over the rapids, using fish nets. Approximately 6,500 salmon were transferred this way.
- October 11-12: The volunteer brigade chain continued with rescue efforts until four water pumps were brought in to pump water into the fish ladders so the salmon could use the fish ladders.



- October 13-15: A helicopter was brought in to assist rescuing the salmon, and due to safety concerns the brigade chain ended. The helicopter brought in two large water pumps to replace the four smaller pumps and transported sandbags filled by BC Wildfire Service crewmembers who came to assist in the salmon rescue efforts.
- October 16: A Spider Excavator Machine was used to clear rocks at the rapids and created new waterways for the salmon.
- October 18: the salmon bypassed the fish ladders, using the newly created pools, heading to their spawning grounds.

[Read more here](#)



## Answering the Call: Xwisten (Video)

Answering the call: Xwisten (aka Bridge River Band) put out the call for help to carry salmon upstream. Many people from many Nations came together to help the salmon reach their spawning grounds so that they can continue their life cycle and ensure the health of our ecosystems for generations to come. After months of drought, the Fraser River is lower than many have ever seen in their lifetimes.







# we are **HIRING**

## Open positions:

- Set Program Manager
- Natural Resource & Heritage Manager

[statimc.ca/about/working-at-sgs](https://statimc.ca/about/working-at-sgs)

[Click Here for Job Postings](#)



Image above: PIT antenna installed along the bottom of Portage Creek

## Environment: Portage Creek Chinook Salmon Recovery Program

Portage Creek is home to a genetically unique population of Chinook known as the Portage Chinook. This population has been showing signs of declining returns for the past 20 years, and without intervention would be anticipated to become extinct within the following 10 years.

In 2019, St’át’imc Eco-Resources Ltd. and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) staff started a brood stock collection program to help preserve and rebuild the population. This program resulted in the first successful spawning of the Portage Creek Chinook, with a portion of these juveniles released in early 2020 as fry, with more being released in 2021 as yearling smolts. In 2022, some juveniles began being implanted with small tags that allow them to be tracked as they pass by specialized equipment (PIT antennas) in the river system.



Image above: SGS Wildlife and Lands assistant Darwyn John conducting habitat assessment in Portage Creek



Image above: SGS Environmental completing nighttime snorkel survey in Portage Creek

The stocking program may help increase the population levels of the Portage Creek Chinook, but more needs to be done to fill gaps in our understanding of the factors that may be resulting in the lower population levels. As such, a new multi-part program is being implemented between Lillooet and Seton Portage that aims to provide longer-term actions to help save the Portage Chinook population. Below are some highlights of the program which have already begun!

One aspect of the new program includes the use of a system of PIT antennas. These antennas will be able to detect any fish that has been implanted with a PIT tag that swims over it. Each tag has its own unique identifier allowing for the tracking of movements of each individual fish. There are two existing antennas installed within the region (Portage Creek) with more to be installed in the following year. These will help us better understand the timing of migration as well as potential barriers to fishing passage along their path back to Seton Portage.

A team of technicians and biologists from SGS Environmental and Instream Fisheries Research (IFR) have started working on trying better to understand when and where wild juvenile chinook end up after they emerge from the gravel. The first stage of this work has included doing night snorkel surveys in Portage Creek (see left) where the team can count and measure fish with minimal disturbance.

To measure the number of Portage River Chinook returning to spawn, and to assess the proportions of wild and hatchery Chinook adults returning to Portage Creek, weekly dead pitch surveys are being conducted by the SGS environment team. These surveys involve walking PortageCreek and collecting length, sex, and age data of spawned-out Chinook, as well as collecting scales for genetic analysis and assessing whether the salmon were PIT tagged and if they came from hatchery origins.

In addition to these weekly surveys being conducted, an extensive habitat survey of Portage Creek was completed Oct.19–20th. This in-depth habitat analysis included measurements of bed material, spawning grounds, water velocity, riparian vegetation, off-channel habitat, and disturbance indicators, and will be used to create a watershed restoration plan for Salmon recovery.



These programs are scheduled to continue for the next two years with more strategies being implemented in that time.

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Image above: Yvonne Michell (SGS), Raine Abad (WSP), Myrus Doss (T'it'q'et) and Lowanda Knox (T'it'q'et) are part of the archaeology crew who have worked on the BRTP this year.

## Culture and Heritage: Bridge River Transmission Project (BRTP)

Archaeological impact assessment (AIA) fieldwork for the Bridge River Transmission Project (BRTP) began on October 4th with 23 field days scheduled. The work has involved archaeology crews completing surface surveys and subsurface tests at 25 structures along the 2L090 and 2L091 transmission line. This transmission line runs from the Bridge River Generating Station at the west end of Seton Lake to the Kelly Lake substation near Clinton.

SGS Heritage has been working with WSP and BC Hydro to complete the archaeology scope of work for this project and schedule field crews for the AIA fieldwork. The field crew has included heritage technicians from Tsal'alh, Sekw'el'was, T'it'q'et, Xwisten, Xaxli'p and Ts'kw'aylaxw who have conducted 1426 shovel tests, identified 3 previously unrecorded archaeology sites and updated mapping for 4 registered archaeology sites.

The fieldwork for this year is scheduled to be completed by October 31 but it is anticipated that more archaeology fieldwork will be planned for the Spring. Updates will be provided to Communities as the archaeology plans are developed over the next few months.

Please send any questions regarding the archaeology work for the BRTP project to: Nadine Gray ([heritageprojects@statimcgs.org](mailto:heritageprojects@statimcgs.org))





Image above: With all the shovelling testing, the crew spent a lot of time screening for artifacts.

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## Capital Planning

Workers at the BC Hydro Bridge River facilities were mobilized after the fire, however, as winter approaches some of the steep slope-related work may be suspended until next spring.

Several of the LaJoie related opportunities, like the worker accommodations, are being actively pursued by St'át'imc communities and businesses. This includes meetings with BC Hydro to share information the communities have prepared and to get further information from BC Hydro as the Logistics and Accommodations study(aka KGS study) makes some preliminary recommendations.

One major opportunity that has not yet been pursued is the development and operation of the rock quarry related to the LaJoie Dam Improvement project. This is a significant opportunity with early work (starting this fall) through to the actual dam construction. Communities are encouraged to seek capable partnerships to capture this opportunity.

During the next quarter, including the November 7th Quarterly Capital Planning meeting (QCPM), we expect more detail on the Seton By-Pass project and the Bridge River Transmission Project which will include business opportunities related to archaeological and environmental studies, heavy civil works, and transmission line construction.

BC Hydro provided early notice of two Request for Qualifications during the past month:

RFSQ 13448 (Heavy Equipment and Civil works) and RFSQ 13449 (Hydrovac and hand digging[poles]) are or will be posted to [BC Bid](#), they are public RFSQs that include specific Indigenous implementation advantages should St'át'imc businesses qualify –specifically – those qualified St'át'imc businesses will be able to access those services contracts directly without going through another procurement process.

**The next quarterly Capital Planning meeting will be virtual – please make sure you attend to get the latest project information:**

**November 7, 10:00 am to Noon –  
look for the invitation from Sherry Kane in your inbox.**



Explore project related information at your own pace by accessing information on SharePoint.

Here is a small sample of what you can find on the [St'át'imc SharePoint Information Portal](#):

- Reports on the [Reservoir Archaeology Program](#) and the [Seton Lake Erosion Mitigation Project](#) (SLEMP)
- [List of the BC Hydro projects](#) in St'át'imc Territory
- Copies of the [BC Hydro project opportunities](#) that have been provided to St'át'imc businesses
- Materials and notes on the [Quarterly Capital Planning Meetings](#)
- A [glossary of commonly used project and system terms](#)

TheSt'át'imc SharePoint Information Portal access now requires Multi-Factor Authentication – an instruction sheet has been sent out on how to set this up. The instructions also provide a way to contact tech support should you have a problem.

If you did not receive the instructions,  
please call Sherry Kane at SGS (778) 771-5903)



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