



WATERSHED TALK NEWSLETTER

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Fraser Salmon Road Map Process



*"I'm so pleased that we're all sitting here, talking about how we can work together."
Yvonne Scotchman from Tit'qet, pictured here with Robert Leech.*

It was a very productive day and a half at this season's first Fraser Salmon Road Map Assembly.

The work focused on Tier 1 governance options: "How you as a group will organize yourselves, define your interests and determine how you'll work together," said governance consultant Sheldon Tetreault.

"Live polling" - where everyone gets a voice and a vote - along with one-to-one interviews and small group breakout sessions were used to engage participants on their views about Tier 1 governance.

People spoke of their sense of responsibility to their communities. "How are we going to share, around conservation, and prepare for the next seven generations?" is how Greg Wadhams (Namgis) framed the question.

Murray Ned (Sumas) shared a sense of "urgency" too. Charles (Corky) Douglas from Cheam agreed: "We only have an Aboriginal right to fish, if the fish are there."

The next Assembly will be December 9-10.



Thomas Alexis (Tl'azt'en) with "Big Al" Jimmie (Squiala). Just behind them, Michael Kelly from Leq'á:mel.

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Scw'exmx: People of the Creeks

Every spring, Chinook, coho and steelhead smolts journey down Guichon Creek on their way to the Pacific. “All they know is to get downstream, and get to the ocean, as fast as they can,” said Arnie Narcisse (Executive Director, Lower Nicola IB).

Like many creeks in ranching country, there's an irrigation ditch splitting off of Guichon. To smolts, “the ditches look like great little streams. They use them as refuge,” said Sean Bennett (Senior Restoration Biologist, DFO Kamloops).

But the ditches are a dead end. “Smolts only know one direction. The poor little things don't have the sense to turn around and come back upstream,” said Arnie.

This is a big problem. “The ditches can be up to four to five kilometres in length and they can hold thousands of fish,” Sean explained. When fall arrives and the ranchers stop irrigating, there's no water, the smolts are stranded and they perish.

And this has been a tough problem to solve. “There've been 20 years of confrontation between the band and its ranching operations, and DFO habitat staff,” Sean said. But that began to change last year when Sean, along with Sarah Ostoforoff (Restoration Biologist, DFO), asked LNIB Chief and Council for their cooperation.

In the year that followed, Sarah worked with LNIB Public and Capital Works Manager Hyrum Peterson. They came up with a way to keep the smolts out of the Guichon Creek ditch: the Finnegan Screen.



(L-R) Vonna Hall receives, on behalf of the Lower Nicola Indian Band, a conservation award from DFO Restoration Biologists Sarah Ostoforoff and Sean Bennett.

Here's how it works.

“Water comes into the ditch and flows into a concrete box with a stainless-steel screen bottom,” explained Sean. The screen is kept clean of debris by a wheel turned by the current. Most of the water falls through the screen, flows out a hole and continues down the ditch.

But when the smolts enter the box, they stay in the few inches of water that remains above the screen. As the wheel turns, they're swept into a bypass channel, away from the ditch and back into Guichon Creek.

“Simplicity is what makes it work,” said Arnie. That and the hard work of LNIB Public Works: Vonna Hall, Samantha Moses, Barry Jackson and Hyrum Peterson. This spring, when the original screen was damaged by high run-off, they



Scw'exmx (continued)

upgraded with a double culvert and a new screen with a larger wheel. “When it comes to protecting the fish, they’ve the willingness to do the job,” Arnie said.

As a result of everyone’s effort, “the band still gets the water for ranching and the fish get to continue downstream,” said Sean. This was celebrated at a recent Band Council meeting when Vonna, on behalf of LNIB, accepted a conservation award from Sean and Sarah.

People were happy to see that the award was hand-crafted by DFO’s Mike Crowe (Section Head, Salmonid Enhancement Program, BC Interior).

Scw'exmx means People of the Creeks. Looking ahead, “we need to save as many fish as we can,” said Arnie. “If everybody does their best to look after the creatures in their territory, we’re all going to be better off as a result.”

A Quick Visit to the Site.



1. The irrigation ditch splits from Guichon Creek to the left of the boulder and deadfall.



2. Arnie Narcisse at the Head Gate.



3. Samantha and Vonna remove debris.



4. The Finnegan Screen: current enters in the lower right corner; the bypass taking smolts back to the creek is in the upper left corner.



A Change in the Season.



Snow on the Hills



A creek in Stó:lō country.