

NNTC NEWSLETTER



Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council (NNTC)'s quarterly news, announcements, and cultural and historical pieces



Pictured above is a photo of Nlaka'pamux rock art.

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Read about the ongoing cultural survey that was started in 2011. **(pg. 7)**

Youth Fishing Camp

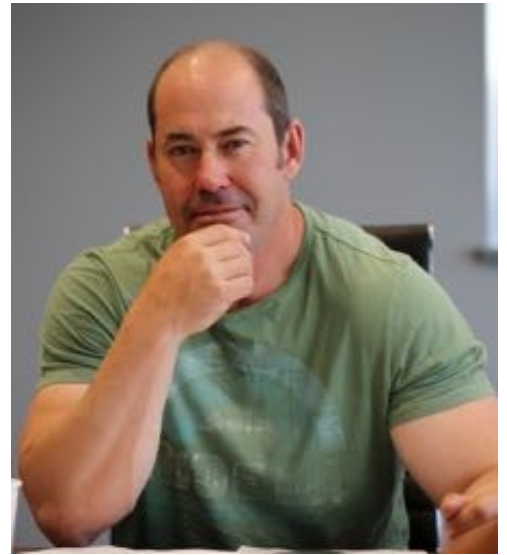
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Chair's Reflections from the Vatican Trip

"The value of an apology, after all, is measured in action. With this apology came nothing – no redress or tangible next steps. It was an apology that paid little attention to the facts of history and the violence perpetrated."

- Chief Matt Pasco



Dear Members of the Nlaka'pamux Nation,

I travelled to the Vatican in April and wanted to share my thoughts about what I experienced with you. Apologies are important. They can mark the beginning of a path to healing and can offer a sense of closure and justice, especially for those who have endured unimaginable pain and suffering.

Survivors of Canada's residential school system, those who faced violence and abuse at the hands of the Catholic Church, rightfully deserve an apology – an apology that should have been offered years ago. But apologies only go so far. A genuine apology should not have to be asked for, much less pleaded for. A genuine apology is never a substitute for tangible action that truly addresses a wrong, uplifts a community, or returns stolen land. Too often and too easily, apologies are just performative reconciliation.

I will admit I was ambivalent about going to Rome. Going and hearing empty words was not my priority. But I did end up going. As Chief of my community and Chair of the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council, I saw it as a responsibility. The inescapable reality is that so many members of our communities had been forced into residential schools, including my dad, Grand Chief Bob Pasco, who attended residential schools for six and a half years. The trauma they experienced is always present. So many Survivors and community members wanted our presence in Rome, and, if Dad was healthy enough, I am sure he would have gone. So, when invited, I went.

What did I see while I was there? I saw challenges that we still must overcome and patterns of behaviour that remain laced with colonialism and confusion.

Like we always do, our people approached this trip with open hearts and good intentions. We brought gifts per our traditions, indicating our respect for creating a reciprocal and just relationship.

The Church's response was underwhelming. It was typical of what we have come to expect from an institution that has been indifferent to the destruction it has caused and the scars it has left. The apology was staged, read, and ultimately limited. It felt more like a public relations exercise for the Church than a genuine apology from the heart.

The value of an apology, after all, is measured in action. With this apology came nothing – no redress or tangible next steps. It was an apology that paid little attention to the facts of history and the violence perpetrated.

The focus was constantly on the Indigenous participants' emotions and how we would "feel." We will "feel" better only when the Church and the Crown take real responsibility for what they took from us spiritually, culturally, and materially. We will "feel" better when measures are in place that meaningfully remedy the harm caused.

There was a feeling of cultural tokenism, a feeling that has persisted throughout colonial history. At times it felt old-school "pan-Indian" – the idea that all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are indistinguishable – as if the Church still does not know who we are.

This entire process felt like it was more the Church's show rather than one shaped by Survivors and our people. While we shared beautiful, traditional songs and dances, the event left me feeling like this was an empty cultural display organized by the Church, just like in the past.

There was also a sense of confusion among the Indigenous delegation. What did we want? Why were we there? Some wanted an apology. Some didn't. Some were surprised by the apology. To me, this confusion reflected the legacy of colonialism: European institutions making us unsure and uncertain of who we are. Unsure of what needs to be done and how things should happen. These institutions continue to make us feel like we need to seek acceptance from others rather than them accepting us.

A culture of healing from past and ongoing trauma and harm suffered by Indigenous peoples is sorely needed. Apologizing is one aspect of healing

but it is just one aspect. A culture of healing cannot and will not emerge to support our people unless a culture of justice accompanies it. Healing comes when just relations are in place structurally, legally, socially, culturally, and spiritually. Just relations must recognize that Indigenous peoples have their own governments, jurisdictions, laws, and sovereignty that are shaped by and support our cultures, family systems, and spiritual traditions.

As these just relations become ever more present, true healing can occur. Individuals and communities can understand the causes and effects of the trauma they have experienced. Survivors can feel safe with support networks that mitigate some of the impacts of this trauma. Collectively, these just relations allow us to continue our work to ensure the harms of the past are not passed on in the same way to future generations.

This is our mutual work – to build a culture of healing and justice between Indigenous peoples and the Church, and Indigenous people and the Crown.

Sadly, this is what I saw in Rome.

Pope Francis came to Canada this July. When he was here, I hoped that we, as Indigenous people, would be clear on what must happen during his visit and beyond. I hope we are clear on the work that must happen to heal and obtain justice and how this must occur on our own terms. And, I hope this work is done more inclusively, in a way that ensures Survivors, and all Indigenous peoples, have a voice in shaping the path forward.

Transparency and Accountability

As part of NNTC's commitment to transparency and accountability, we are pleased to share that we are finalizing financial audits for the 2020 and 2021 fiscal years. Unfortunately, due to the devastating fires and floods in our community over the past several years, our accounting team has experienced delays. We expect all audits to be completed this fall and look forward to sharing updated financial reporting with NNTC members when audits have been finalized.

Interim Housing Strategy

The Lytton Creek wildfire of June 30, 2021 decimated many homes on and off-reserve. To address the situation, NNTC is working with the Lytton First Nation and Skuppah on a second phase of on-reserve housing for off-reserve members living in the Village of Lytton. At LFN, funding has been provided for feasibility work on lot development and a water system to accommodate an additional 30 homes that are needed. For Skuppah, the application for 3 homes for evacuees is ready for submission and construction is anticipated to begin in October/November 2022. These homes will be permanent.

Relief Centre

Lytton is a food insecure area. NNTC recognizes the toll this has taken on volunteers at Relief Centres and supports community-level efforts to establish a centralized and coordinated approach to food security and basic household necessities during emergency response and disasters for affected individuals and families. NNTC's Food Security Coordinator, Jade Baxter, worked directly with communities to assess immediate and ongoing needs for food and other supplies, coordinating the purchase, shipping, delivery and receiving of goods to each community, working with different vendors, including food retailers, freight companies and other transportation to ensure safe and timely delivery using local suppliers in the region. Interim Coordinator, Karen Dunstan is continuing this work. Efforts are underway to secure a centralized location in the Lytton area. The Relief Centre is one example of how driving Nation-based jurisdiction in emergency response and recovery can do more to advance each community in emergency preparedness and safety.

Kumsheen Heritage Committee simplifies the archaeological permitting process

Debris removal and recovery activities have progressed on municipal and uninsured properties in Lytton thanks to the implementation of a single archaeological permitting process and the diligent monitoring of recovery sites by Nlaka'pamux heritage technicians. From the beginning of our recovery, NNTC has sought to make it clear that archaeological work and the protection of Nlaka'pamux heritage would not impede Lytton's rebuilding process. While NNTC has heard claims that archaeological protection has delayed our community's recovery, the progress we see on the ground says otherwise.

The village of Lytton is located on an ancient village site and a burial ground at the centre of the Nlaka'pamux homeland. Although the fire of June 2021 destroyed much of the town's post-colonial history, it also created an opportunity to acknowledge and protect the much deeper Indigenous heritage of the place known to the Nlaka'pamux as Tl'kemstin (Kumsheen). The province has provided funding to cover all heritage and archaeological investigations including the added costs of this monitoring.

Enhanced Health Planning

Enhancing Health Supports for members of NNTC and everyone affected by the fires

The letter of commitment from British Columbia, negotiated by NNTC immediately after the fire, aims to provide enhanced health supports for members of NNTC and everyone that was affected by the tragedy.

As part of British Columbia's commitment to recognizing that enhanced health supports are among the urgent needs for everyone that was affected, we have been working through the Task Force to establish a sub-working group comprised of community representatives and government officials to explore how to best approach the development of short, medium, and long-term strategies for an Enhanced Health Plan.

"British Columbia and NNTC recognize that enhanced health supports, including mental health supports, are amongst the urgent needs for those members of NNTC affected by the fires. Therefore, British Columbia and the NNTC will work with the First Nations Health Authority to develop a plan, including funding, that builds on the current and ongoing supports."

- Provision in the commitment letter between NNTC and BC

Enhanced health includes mental health, traditional wellness, appropriate hospital infrastructure, trauma support, addiction treatment, and prenatal care. More enhanced health supports will continue to be identified. Some of our most urgent matters include the need to address immediate mental health needs and to develop a plan for re-entry and homecoming of evacuees, as well as to support the residents in the area that require equal attention and support. Various options have been explored to address these matters in partnership with the Ministry of Health, including retaining a dedicated resource to conduct a community needs assessment and proposing community-led strategies to complement existing efforts.



Pictured above is Debbie Abbott, Executive Director of NNTC, who has been involved in this ongoing work.

Nlaka'pamux Member communities and designated representatives of health organizations gathered to identify critical mental health needs and what is needed to address them in the impacted region. These were presented to government agencies and third-party health service providers. The two groups worked collaboratively to develop tangible actions to address the mental health needs. Further work is underway for interim clinical and primary care for the Lytton area, and we look forward to updating our readers as more updates emerge.

Nlaka'pamux Cultural Survey Continues in the Upper Skagit River Valley

This is a busy time for work in the Skagit. The survey crew (Kevin Duncan, Chad Edwards, Nathan Edwards with Barry Charlie advising) went down to the Skagit twice this spring to work while Ross Lake was drawn down – giving access to more Nlaka'pamux sites. The three crew members were back down again in September but, due to wildfires, had to evacuate and return home. With the atmospheric river and flooding washing out the Hope Skagit road last fall, the crew has had to travel a long distance to get to Ross Lake. Lots of challenges doing this work! The skill, knowledge and dedication of the crew working through all kinds of weather and rough conditions is much appreciated. Earlier this summer, we spoke with Kevin Duncan, one of NNTC's cultural surveyors. "What does doing this work mean to me?" asked Kevin on his return from a cultural survey of the Ross Reservoir in April while preparing for the team to go out again in June. "Being out on our land and looking, identifying, and strengthening our connection to the land is essential not just for myself but for the benefit of my son, my grandchildren and all our grandchildren – the generations to come. I feel at home here, in the Nlaka'pamux territory, and I want to get our young people out there to start using the land again. That's why I'm so passionate about doing this work."



Pictured above: Surveyor crew

This is the continuation of the cultural survey started in 2011 as part of the 1991 initiative of all sixteen Nlaka'pamux communities to ensure the Nlaka'pamux interest in the Upper Skagit River Valley was recognized. In the report* of the first survey, it was made very clear that this was just the start – there is still a lot of work to do.

Under the second re-licensing process, NNTC applied to continue the Nlaka'pamux cultural survey. The original NNTC survey design and reporting had worked very well, and Seattle City Light liked it, too; it was approved with no changes for use in the comprehensive Seattle City Light CR04 study (Cultural Resources Study).

This year, the crew returns three times for three-week surveys, and in September, Nlaka'pamux Elders will be asked to come by boat to visit the sites and be interviewed. This is the critical part of the work – their say gives weight and integrity to the work and the report.

As of recently, Washington State Archaeological and Cultural History offices have decided to give more weight to the Elders' reports than to the academics.

**The Report is available in the NNTC Research Unit and was provided to the Cook's Ferry office and is available for Nlaka'pamux to look at but it is not public in the interest of protecting sacred cultural sites.*

But the first step is the actual survey on the ground. According to Kevin, it's a tough go trying to find things – it's been 140 years since the boundary and 70 years since the reservoir was built – so that is a huge buildup of duff and pine needles and impacts from logging. However, Kevin says they found segments of the old mid-montane trail – traditionally called The Wuhalh – and many sites associated with our people travelling and staying through the area.

"It's a beautiful and spiritual area. In certain parts, you get the real nice welcoming feeling that you're at home there. I don't need to make connections because our shKeeyKEEyaKT (our ancestors) have always been there – they have never left. I just want to walk the land that our shKeeyKEEyaKT walked. To me, it feels like home," said Kevin Duncan.

Seattle City Light

On May 27, Marion Workheiser and Olga Symeonoglou, the US lawyers supporting NNTC in the Seattle City Light re-licensing application, visited the Nlaka'pamux Nation. A gathering of leaders, Elders and community members was held at Skuppah. The gathering included many stories of the adventures that have been had in the Skagit, the challenges of an international border dividing the Nation, and the legal issues related to re-licensing.



Participants included Chief Janet Webster and Chief Doug McIntyre

Appreciation was expressed to Marion, and Olga for the support they have provided and gifts were given – a beautiful basket made by Vince Brown and a wonderful fish carving created by Charles Brown.

Thanks to Chief Doug McIntyre and Skuppah for hosting everyone in their community and sharing a delicious taco lunch.

People's concerns were listened to and included the ability to harvest, protecting traditional cultural properties from damage, and being recognized by the US government, to name a few. It was a very positive day.



Pictured: Olga Symeonoglou and Marion Werkheiser

NNTC as interveners in BC on the Williams Lake Case

The Williams Lake case has been back in the news recently and is relevant to the Specific Claims work being done by NNTC. In the spring of 2017, the Williams Lake Case was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC), with NNTC as an intervenor. The NNTC was quick to support Williams Lake as an intervenor in their case, starting at the Specific Claims Tribunal. The Supreme Court decision was the last step in a process that began as a Specific Claim in 1993. The Williams Lake case was a case of an illegal pre-emption and a pre-Confederation breach of fiduciary duty by the Crown.



Specific Claims Tribunal visiting Skuppah

The Supreme Court of Canada found in favour of the Williams Lake band, and on June 29, 2022, the community voted in a referendum on whether to accept the settlement offer. The settlement offer to the Williams Lake people is compensation for the taking of their traditional village by colonial settlers 160 years ago. For thirty years, Canada rejected all the Illegal Pre-emption Specific Claims out of hand for all communities, including the Nlaka'pamux.

The NNTC Specific Claims Unit was established in 1985: the NNTC was committed to stopping CNR's plan to double track along the Fraser Thompson canyons at a high risk to the salmon fishery. In the research process, many damages and illegal takings of land were noted in the settlement and the establishment of the transportation corridor through Nlaka'pamux territory. The first Specific Claim was submitted in 1989: it was an Illegal Pre-emption of Village lands in the northern part of the territory.



Field Research for Nlaka'pamux Specific Claims



Chief Mike Campbell on specific claims site visit

In every Nlaka'pamux community, one or two or three or more specific Claims are documenting the provincial or federal authorities allowing the taking of Nlaka'pamux village lands by incoming settlers despite their laws expressly forbidding this. So, the NNTC has submitted 11 Specific Claims documenting the Illegal Pre-emption of village lands. They are very strong claims and very well documented. All were initially rejected – out of hand. All have been re-submitted each time Canadian laws have evolved. In the last three years, eight have now been accepted for negotiation. But the process remains very random – depending on Canada's team and also seemingly on the strength and stature of the community.

Initial negotiations have been dispiriting as Canada's underlying position remains negative. Chief Matt Pasco likened the process to the notorious trials of Epstein and Weinstein – "nobody talked to the victims." In the Claims negotiations, Canada has not recognized that generations of Nlaka'pamux families have been forced to the extreme edges: rocky ledges, no access to water for their little bit of arable land (and that was quickly taken for railways and highways). Forced to farm tiny dry, inhospitable benches has meant a brutally hard and impoverished life for those families evicted from their traditional settlements where rich resources and history had nourished them for centuries.

The Williams Lake award will be a positive factor for Nlaka'pamux communities in their negotiations of pre-emption claims.

Youth Fishing Camp

The annual NNTC youth fishing camp was a huge success again this year. The camp was held over four days from August 4 - 7 at Skuppah. Over 60 people attended each day. The youth learned how to clean, prepare, dry, smoke and can fish.



At the camp, there was a shared sense of the importance of the shkeeyAydin to the Nlaka'pamux. The passing on of knowledge and traditions is invaluable. Thank you to all the Elders, volunteers and staff who shared their knowledge and wisdom. This was a true community gathering with Nlaka'pamux attending from many different communities throughout the Nation.

The gathering reminded us of what we all share in common and the importance of our youth for a strong Nlaka'pamux future. Hearing the jars clang as the fish was processed was appreciated after many years of extremely low fish returns and not many fish to can. The kids' enthusiasm and willingness to work cooperatively and share were inspiring. The kids went home with cans of fish and new gear. The camp's success was summed up by one young participant who said as he was leaving, "I can't wait to get to the river to go fishing."



Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council Logo and its Significance

The NNTC logo was created in cooperation with Dr. Chris Arnett, who has studied Nlaka'pamux rock art for many years. The logo symbolizes the borders of the Nlaka'pamux Nation.

At the top of the band of pictographs is the sun, a central element to Nlaka'pamux. In the NW quadrant (counterclockwise), all images come from the Stein Valley, a reflection of the Valley's significance to all Nlaka'pamux and to commemorate the Nlaka'pamux success in the protection of the Stein Valley from being logged.



Pictured above is the NNTC logo

The Stein Valley was connected by mountain passes to other areas (Mount Currie, Skookumchuck and Squamish) and was a significant place in sptaqlh and recent histories.

An Nlaka'pamux knowledge keeper, Annie York, thought that the Valley was the place mentioned in sptaqlh, where all the game was hidden. The two animals depicted together refer to the plenty or wealth in the Stein and all the adjacent watersheds on the west side of the Fraser. Although the zig-zag pictograph is from the Stein, it is emblematic of all the valleys from Spuzzum north to Texas Creek.

The mountain goat and bighorn sheep are emphasized for their uniqueness to Nlaka'pamux and other interior Indigenous nations.

Deer are found everywhere and symbolized in the circle by the bow and arrow, an important tool used to hunt them.

The "zig-zaggy" imagery of the left half of the circle (referencing the old-style goat wool blankets) is also meant to symbolize the spiritual and economic value of the mountain goat in this area of the territory.

The NE quadrant features a pictograph from Marble Canyon, Tsipaank, and Mount Savona referencing those places.

Lastly, the SE quadrant references the Nicola and Similkameen Valleys. The bottom of the circle represents the Hozomeen area, while the SW quadrant represents the Fraser River canyon Nlaka'pamux.

What would you like to see in our next newsletter?

As always, NNTC leadership and staff are here to answer your questions, provide updates, and support our community in any way we can. We're always eager to share more of our heritage, including Nlaka'pamux cultural and historical pieces.

- Do you have any Nlaka'pamux stories that you'd like to have featured in our next quarterly newsletter?
- Are there any specific updates that you'd like us to highlight next quarter?

We want your feedback!

Send us an email at Nlakapamux@nntc.ca for any ideas or suggestions for next quarter's newsletter!



**Nlaka'pamux Nation
Tribal Council**