

Cultural Resources

The cultural resources of the Nlaka'pamux Nation are vast. Our culture is what defines us as a Nation. Nlaka'pamux culture is living. Our culture evolves over time and over generations but always it remains connected to our land and to our ancestors. Our language expresses our culture. We all share in the responsibility to pass our culture onto the next generation. NNTC works hard to this end.

Language is the foundation of culture. The NNTC formed a language group resulting in a written alphabet, dictionary and curriculum material being developed. Eddie and Amy Charlie and Bev Phillips led the language group. Nlaka'pamuxcin is now taught in the schools which is part of the NNTC's efforts to improve the education system. This has been done by challenging school districts when they act against the best interest of Nlaka'pamux learners, participating in educational planning, providing programming, lobbying, supporting Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux School and working to ensure education is valued.

Protection of our culture is being fostered through the development of a written Nlaka'pamux Cultural Heritage Law which has been undertaken by the NNTC with full community participation. Our laws are based on our stories. NNTC has challenged non-Nlaka'pamux laws impacting our culture such as copyright that alienate language and stories from the Nlaka'pamux.

Protection of Nlaka'pamux cultural heritage sites and archaeological sites is vital. The NNTC archaeology team has many year of experience and a vested interest in doing the best archaeology work possible. Through the team's careful and very thorough efforts, they have found and protected more archaeology sites than was ever done in the past or by others. The Elders guide the work to be done.

Related to archaeological work is the work of NNTC in the repatriation of Nlaka'pamux artifacts and materials from museums and when necessary, the reburial of ancestors.

Interviews with Elders and knowledge keepers that are recorded and transcribed are undertaken at every opportunity. This knowledge helps us to protect our culture, land, and resources and strengthen the Nlaka'pamux genealogy record. NkshAytks are sponsored through NNTC. Pre-pandemic, there were monthly NkshAytks held when Elders and others gathered to tell stories and share their wisdom about cultural traditions and practices. NkshAytks are beginning again in January, 2023 now that it is safe to do so. NNTC arranges gatherings for people to go out together to learn about harvesting traditional foods. The annual hunting and fishing camps sponsored by NNTC are a vital way to keep the culture alive. Gathering roots, making baskets, preparing traditional foods – everyday cultural activities such as these are what NNTC strives to ensure are valued, protected and practiced.

Nlaka'pamux culture must be protected. If we lose our culture, we lose who we are. Nlaka'pamux culture defines the Nlaka'pamux. To define who we are is an inherent right of the Nlaka'pamux. The right to determine identity has been a focus of the NNTC for many years. Identity derives from the land. Identity determines who is a member of the Nation and who shares in the communal benefits and responsibilities of Nlaka'pamux title and rights. Others have tried to take the power to define the Nlaka'pamux in order to extinguish our title and rights and our way of life. The *Indian Act* can effectively extinguish "Indians" by its rules - not so for who is Nlaka'pamux.