

NNTC NEWSLETTER



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

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Update on the wildfire recovery and post-fire examination report

Learn about the NNTC's role in the wildfire recovery.

Heritage Plan for Kumsheen Fire Recovery Activities

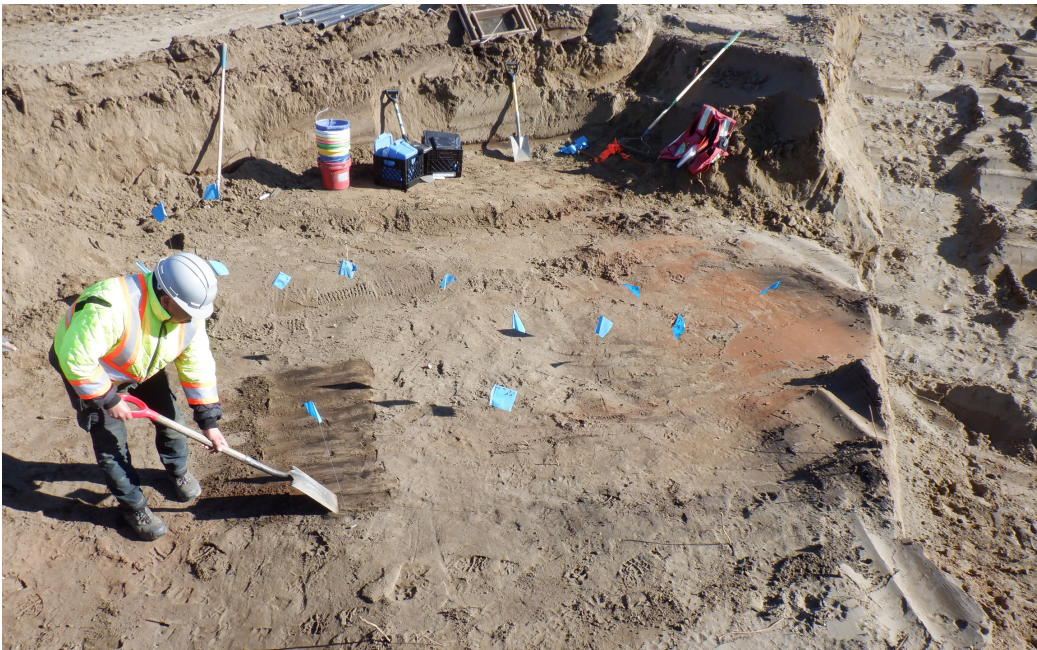
This plan, which was endorsed by all parties, has been under implementation for some time and will minimize, avoid, and mitigate impacts to Nlaka'pamux heritage sites and ancestral remains at Kumsheen

Anniversary of Pasco v CNR and celebrating Grand Chief Bob Pasco

On April 1, we celebrated the 37th anniversary of Chief Bob Pasco and NNTC's stance against the Canadian National Railway – the longest standing injunction in the Commonwealth.

Skagit and its important cultural protection work

NNTC's ongoing work to protect the Upper Skagit River Valley.



Cultural heritage protection work being done by AEW LP at Lot 26 for Lytton First Nation in the fire recovery process.

CONTACT US!

Letter from the Chair

"We will always remember those we've lost and, as we heal and reconstruct our homes, we are doing so with the strength, resilience, and traditions that were passed to us from our ancestors and that define who we are today" - Chief Matt Pasco

Dear Members of the Nlaka'pamux Nation,

Our people have witnessed unimaginable tragedies in the past two years. From the wildfire and atmospheric river and flooding events that decimated our homeland to the many deaths caused by COVID-19 and the discovery of thousands of unmarked graves at residential schools – our communities have been impacted by many challenges. We will always remember those we've lost and, as we heal and rebuild our homes, we will continue to do so with the strength, resilience, and traditions that define who we are as Nlaka'pamux.

Earlier this month, I traveled to the Vatican with other Indigenous delegations from British Columbia to share the stories of survivors with Pope Francis and seek a long-awaited apology, compensation, and documents from the Catholic Church for their role in the residential school system. I look forward to sharing more details from this trip in an op-ed that we will publish soon and in my upcoming blog entitled "Chair's Corner", where I will provide regular updates to the community on the NNTC website.

In regards to the fire recovery, the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council (NNTC) has been actively working in collaboration with our Member Communities, surrounding Nlaka'pamux communities, government officials, and individual community members to recover what was lost during the fire. I recognize the tireless efforts of Chief Webster (Lytton), Chief McIntyre (Skuppah), and Chief Campbell (Boothroyd) in our region's recovery – Your hard work is ensuring that Nlaka'pamux title and rights are protected and advanced every step of the way.

Now is the time for togetherness to overcome these challenges and grow back stronger. As we continue our recovery, the NNTC is committed to keeping you updated and informed on the steps we're taking to get there. These monthly newsletters will provide you with updates on our recovery efforts as well as information on new initiatives and programs to support our community. Each newsletter will also include Nlaka'pamux cultural and historical pieces as part of our communal responsibility to embrace and share our heritage and pass it down to future generations.

I look forward to sharing more NNTC news with the community in the coming weeks. If you would like to have these newsletters emailed to you, please send your email address to nlakapamux@nntc.ca. In the meantime, please take care of yourselves and treat each other with kindness and respect.

Sincerely,

Chief Matt Pasco



Pictured above is Chief Matt Pasco, Chair of the NNTC since 2020.

Progress on the wildfire recovery process

The NNTC is working on a recovery that protects Nlaka’pamux title and rights

We know that the memories of last year’s forest fires are still fresh in the minds of our entire community. Since day-one, the Lytton First Nation (LFN), the NNTC, and all NNTC communities have been working on relief and recovery and will continue to do so in a way that is consistent Nlaka’pamux title and rights.

Many jurisdictional issues exist in emergency response and recovery. Following the Lytton Fire, at the request of member Chiefs, NNTC played an active role in establishing the NNTC-BC-Canada Coordination Task Force to facilitate recovery efforts, and we’ve helped establish two new working groups: the Build Back Better Working Group focused on interim housing, enhanced health support, and implementation of community recovery plans and priorities, and the land-based Recovery Working Group that focuses on land-based assessments and recovery, including wildfire rehabilitation and resiliency. The Interim Housing strategy ensures a plan and funding for interim housing for all affected individuals and their families, and the Food Security working group has been coordinating food access and goods to those that were not evacuated and remained in the Lytton area following the fire. More recently, at the LFN Update Meeting, Recovery Advisor Feddie Louie confirmed that NNTC had secured over \$13 million in additional funding for interim housing for Nlaka’pamux living in the Village of Lytton.

The hard work and collaboration of all Chiefs has been key to the success of our recovery and we thank them for their continued perseverance and support as we continue to rebuild.

As the recovery and rebuilding process continues, we have prioritized the protection of the ancient archaeological site and burial grounds that the Village of Lytton has stood on for generations.



Recovery photo taken on March 22, 2022.



Lytton First Nation (LFN) Chief Janet Webster - one of many chiefs supporting our community's recovery efforts.

By establishing the Tl'kemstin (Kumsheen) Heritage Committee, we are ensuring that all recovery activities meet regulatory requirements and respect Nlaka'pamux values and interests. Additionally, a recent report completed by the BC Fire Smart Committee shed light on the cause and aftermath of last summer's fire, outlining recommendations on how we can build back safer.

As we reconstruct our communities and infrastructure, we must incorporate wildfire resiliency into designs to protect against loss, damage or injury while proactively managing vegetation that can lead to fires; we must review legislative and policy changes needed, and consider new structures, processes, and other forms of co-operation needed that reduce the risk of fires; and we need to build awareness of how this fire occurred and how we can all work together to prevent future disasters. A wildfire resiliency working group is working toward our goal of establishing a long-term, landscape-level approach to Wildfire Risk Reduction that is considerate of Nlaka'pamux Nation title, rights, laws, and jurisdiction.

The NNTC sees the rebuilding process as a chance to do things differently – to truly build back better in a way that is consistent with Nlaka'pamux title and rights. As debris removal activities take place, the NNTC will continue our work to secure the resources we need for a full recovery and an effective response to future emergencies.



Recovery photo taken on March 22, 2022.

Kumsheen Fire Recovery Heritage Plan

Protecting Nlaka'pamux heritage sites and ancestral remains

Our people have been living in Tl'kemstin (Kumsheen) - the Nlaka'pamux name for the Lytton area - for thousands of years. With colonization, our land was wrongly taken without permission or agreement and as the village of Lytton grew, the traces of Nlaka'pamux history were mostly lost.

We know that Lytton was partly built on an ancient archaeological village site and burial ground, both of which are protected by law and cannot be disturbed without permits.



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

In order to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to Nlaka’pamux heritage sites and ancestral remains at Tl’kemstin (Kumsheen), Lytton First Nation and NNTC recommended that a heritage plan be developed with the Village of Lytton and the province, and be shared with the NNTC-BC-Canada Coordination Task Force on Wildfire Recovery and Rail Safety.

This plan, which was endorsed by all parties and is already being implemented by AEW LP, an entity wholly owned by the member communities of NNTC, includes guidelines that specify the appropriate management actions to be undertaken during the fire recovery process. These actions include pre-recovery activity assessments, surveillance and monitoring during recovery activities, and mitigative actions where heritage concerns are identified.

The Nlaka’pamux have been protecting the remains of this heritage at Tl’kemstin (Kumsheen) for many years and the NNTC has continued this work. As we rebuild from the fire, we are making sure not to repeat the wrongs of the past.



Pictured above is a photo of a gravesite near Lytton (Maynard, E-01938 held at the Royal BC Museum and Archives Collection).



Pictured above is a photo of Grand Chief Pasco with Chief Reg Draney during the blockades.

Anniversary of Pasco v CNR

On April 1, we marked the 37th anniversary of Chief Bob Pasco and NNTC’s stance against the Canadian National Railway – an act of bravery that has defined our relationship with the railway and with Canada.

On April 1st, 1985, as CN began work to build a second track through Nlaka’pamux homeland without our consent, Chief Bob Pasco pushed back. He knew he was putting his life on the line by blocking the tracks, but he also understood the consequences of inaction: the destruction of the fishery and the erosion of our way of life. Other Chiefs and community members joined in.

What began as an act of defiance against CN grew into something much larger. After seeking an injunction to stop the construction of the second track, the court ruled in favour of the Nlaka'pamux. Today, the Pasco v C.N.R. Injunction continues to be the longest standing injunction in the Commonwealth.

The injunction remains a symbol of our determination to protect our land and our way of life. It is a source of pride for the NNTC and so many members of our community and a reminder of the fundamental law we follow as Nlaka'pamux: take care of the land and the land will take care of us.

Celebrating Grand Chief Bob Pasco

As Chair of the NNTC for nearly four decades, Grand Chief Bob Pasco fought tirelessly for the protection and advancement of Nlaka'pamux title and rights. Among his many accomplishments is his work to establish the longest standing injunction in the Commonwealth, also known as Pasco v CN Rail.

In 2013, he was conferred the status of Grand Chief after a day long ceremony filled with tributes acknowledging his leadership and dedication to the Nlaka'pamux Nation.



Pictured above is Grand Chief Bob Pasco being blanketed at his Grand Chief ceremony.



The Upper Skagit River Valley as Nlaka'pamux knew it before it was flooded in the early 1950's.

Skagit and the Road to Protecting Nlaka'pamux Cultural History in the Upper Skagit Valley

Nlaka'pamux have occupied the Upper Skagit Valley since time immemorial. Logging and flooding the valley to provide power for Seattle in the 1940-50's resulted in the destruction of the traditional cultural sites under the reservoir waters. Now however, the efforts of Nlaka'pamux Elders and cultural surveyors have helped to identify, map and protect the ancient trails and cultural sites and to reconnect with the ancestors and the temEEwuh.

The decision of all Nlaka’pamux Chiefs in 1991 to ensure that the Nlaka’pamux interest in the Upper Skagit Valley was recognised by the US government was a pivotal moment in this process. The 2009 Hozomeen Gathering at the Canada-US border offered a chance to share knowledge and stories of the Upper Skagit River Watershed. In 2010, a research agreement was finalized by which the NNTC was to identify Nlaka’pamux Traditional Cultural sites along the shoreline of what is now known as the Ross Lake Reservoir in the Upper Skagit Valley.

In 2011 and 2012, Nlaka’pamux surveyors and Elders began their survey. Surveyors Alfred Higginbottom, Barry Charlie, Kevin Duncan and community volunteer John Alec immediately identified the mid-montane trail on the east bank of the old Skagit River and many different sites associated with short and long term stays by their ancestors. For both the Elders and the surveyors, returning to the sites was an intense, emotional experience, knowing that our traditional connections to the land have not been broken.

In the first report to the US Government and Seattle City Light, the Elders had confirmed the principal Nlaka’pamux *wuhalh* (trail) with ten associated sites. The report recommended mitigation measures to protect and preserve the Nlaka’pamux cultural sites, highlighting the risks posed by the shoreline and National Parks recreation activities. These concerns have not been addressed and the NNTC is currently pursuing the registration of the watershed with identified sites to protect them under US law.



NNTC cultural surveyors Kevin Duncan and Barry Charlie recording and documenting their progress along the shoreline. (NNTC, 21 September 2011)

Nlaka’pamux Elders and cultural surveyors will continue their identification of trails and sites this year, starting in April. They will build on our inventory of Nlaka’pamux cultural properties while exploring ways we can protect these sites. Their work is renewing and strengthening our relationship with these traditional lands – a fundamental duty of the Nlaka’pamux.



Pictured above are Nlaka’pamux Elders (the late) Susannah Phillips, (the late) Maggie Hance and Amy Charlie preparing to visit sites selected as potential Nlaka’pamux cultural properties in the Upper Skagit River Valley. (NNTC, September 2012)