



# OFF HOOKE



SKEENA WATERSHED  
CONSERVATION COALITION

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



# Both Oars in the Water

SHANNON MCPHAIL

SWCC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Q. What was a major shift in your perspective from 2017?**

**A. That we can't wait for governments to lead.**

In every campaign, project, event or program we have leaders, partners and collaborators. We are doubling down on the importance of economic development and recognize that those who fight for or against oil and gas pipelines & terminals are doing it (mostly) for the same reasons. We just want a future for our families. So while we may disagree on how to achieve that future, we can and should work together where we can and respectfully disagree where we can't. We can disagree and still be good neighbours, still be respectful. This is missing from politics and I think most people have arrived at this point. Forget partisan politics – let's build a better future together, we can't wait for governments to lead, we need to do it ourselves.

**Q. What keeps you going?**

**A. Getting out on the land and water**

I lost 2 good buddies last year who were important leaders in the conservation movement. Twyla Roscovich and Bruce Hill were two people who deeply cared about communities as their main motivation for doing conservation work. I found this great quote by Bruce Hill that helped me get back on track

*"When I have hit the wall so bad, either screwed up, or just gotten overwhelmed, or lost one I should have won, there is something that always worked to get me back on track. Nature. For the last 25 years that place for me has been the Kitlope. I would jump in the jet boat, and just take the fuck off on my own. 100 miles from town, on my own, and if I screwed up out there, there would be consequences. So I focused on the real. Dry, warm, fed, gun loaded. And to be perfectly honest it is a place of such immense power I would get scared. And after a day or two stuff would start sorting itself out. The scared would leave. I'm sure you have those places too. Go alone, or with a bud, but go and get healed and back on track." - Bruce Hill*

I followed Bruce's advice to help me deal with the loss of him, Twyla and all my world's worries. My husband and I took our zodiac down the Douglas Channel, a place Bruce and his Haisla brother, Gerold Amos, spent a ton of time. It was incredibly healing, energizing and calming. I learned that trying to push my way through grief and stress was far more harmful to my work than taking time off to be out on the land.

**Q. What did someone say, in 2017, that really got you inspired?**

**A. "We are the land and the land is us."**

**What we do to the land we do to ourselves. The health of the land is reflected in the health of the people and vice versa.**

This applies to our relationships with each other. We can disagree and still work together – and honour each other. Healthy relationships are what make good things happen

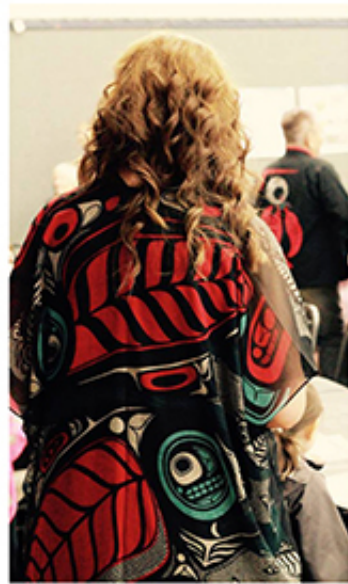


# Take Me to the River:

## SWCC ACHIEVEMENTS 2017 PART ONE

### Ganoonaxxu'm Symposium

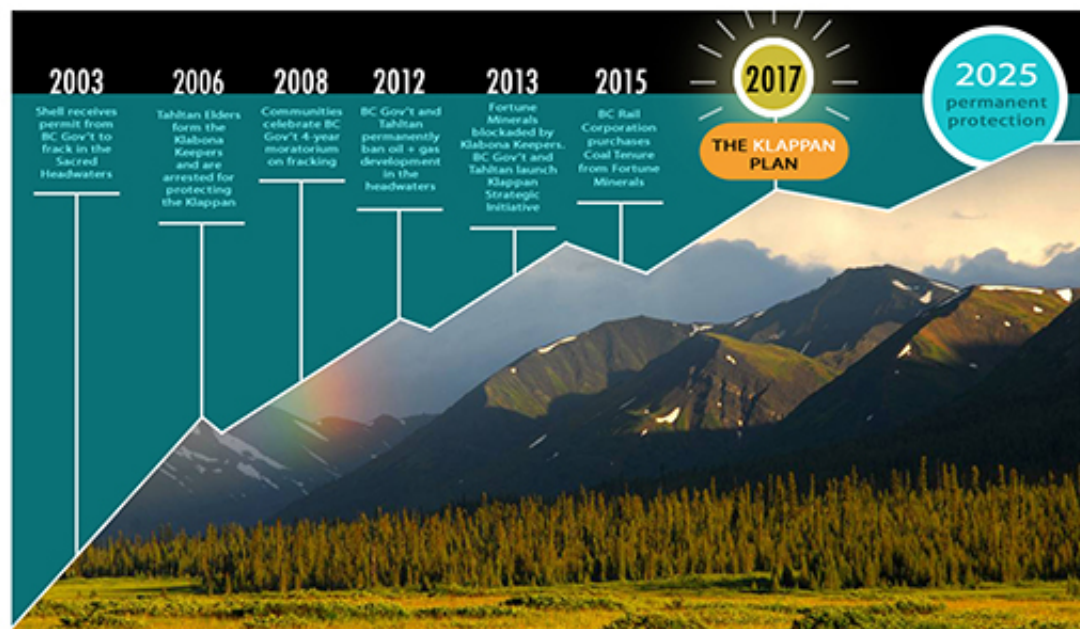
Gitksan worldview tells us that all women are mothers and grandmothers because their responsibility is to nurture all life forms. This includes not only human life but also the lands, rivers and all species dependent on a healthy ecosystem. Thanks to a generous donation from LUSH Cosmetics In 2017, SWCC joined Storytellers' Foundation and the Gitksan mothers and grandmothers (The Ganoonaxxu'm) in hosting a powerful gathering of women to discuss the ways Big Industry uses the "divide + conquer" approach to advance their projects. It was a huge success with over 500 women who contributed to amazing conversations that centred on how to manage the pressures currently being placed on our communities and how they would like to move forward.



### Sacred Headwaters



A tremendous and consistent campaign effort over the past several years at regional and national levels has finally resulted in a giant step towards long term protection of the Sacred Headwaters – birthplace of the Nass, Stikine and Skeena watersheds. In early 2017, the BC Gov't and the Tahltan First Nation announced the **Klappan Plan**: a 20yr industrial deferral for 756,000 ha. of the Sacred Headwaters! This awesome announcement has created the space for long-term land planning. What better way to kick that off than by spending some time in the very place you're working to protect? Reps from the BC Government, Iskut community, SWCC and funding foundations had the chance to tour the Sacred Headwaters and meet with Elders and community members. From that meeting, the Iskut Community Advisory Council was formed to provide input to the planning process. The future of the Sacred Headwaters is looking bright – a far cry from just 6 years ago when it was the focus of Shell's plans for 3000-10,000 fracked gas wells.





# Take Me to the River:

SWCC ACHIEVEMENTS 2017 PART TWO

## The Invisible Migration

Each spring, at least 300 million baby salmon migrate to the Skeena estuary on the west coast near Prince Rupert, hidden from view within the brown, swirling rivers ("invisible"). SWCC and Lake Babine Nation Fisheries host a major celebration at the birthplace of where most of our sockeye come from – Lake Babine. The event draws people from all over the region to honour this great journey and learn more about the fisheries program at Babine Lake. There is a smolt release ceremony, boat tours of the fish fence and data station, a salmon BBQ and kids having the time of their lives. This event is gaining more popularity, participants and activities each year and is quickly becoming one of the best annual events in the north. An event is also hosted at the halfway point of the migration in Hazelton. Participants engage in all sorts of activities and food during the day and when it gets dark, release lanterns down the river at the confluence of the Bulkley and Skeena Rivers at Ksan.



## PNW LNG Cancelled

Malaysian national energy giant Petronas and its partners in the Pacific Northwest LNG terminal pulled the plug on their \$36B LNG project. We were thrilled! This project jeopardized B.C.'s second largest salmon run and blew provincial climate targets off the charts. The victory was met with complex feelings as this project created painful divides within our communities. This divide, however, sparked a new chapter for SWCC! We embraced a new take on conservation that incorporates jobs and economic development as one of its main, guiding principles.





# Swimming Against the Current

**BRIAN HUNTINGTON**

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



**Q. What was one of your most inspiring moments in 2017?**

**A. Witnessing the 20th Anniversary of the Delgamuukw/Gisday'wa Court Decision**

2017 marked the 20 year anniversary of Delgamuukw vs. British Columbia, a ground breaking ruling by the Supreme Court, defining the content of Aboriginal Title in Canada. It set a precedent for indigenous rights around the world and the use of oral testimony in Canadian courts. This Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en land claim was the longest running First Nations land claim court case in Canadian history and made history by changing the way Canadians understood indigenous rights.

A celebration feast was hosted by the Laksilyu Clan in Hagwilget Village on December 9th, 2017. SWCC was invited to attend; it was a true honour to witness the last surviving plaintiffs and those who supported them in the case as they celebrated this landmark event. The room was filled with true cultural heroes and knowledge-holders whose hard work created a lasting change in how Canada views oral history and cultural identity. From a Canadian perspective, this case acknowledged traditional values, traditional lands and culture within the national judicial system. But, listening to the participants in the case speak, it was clear that the impact on our communities was even greater. They talked about how the case forced them to master and expand their grasp of the language, clarify how the names and stories related to the land and find the inner strength to stand together.

The participants reflected on how they often spoke about "the future" at the time of the case. How they envisioned this case setting new law that would empower and strengthen the communities and territories that their grandchildren and great-grandchildren would inherit. They envisioned a new generation of fluent speakers and knowledge holders with active relationships to the land. Amidst the recollections of the massive amounts of work and courage that was called in to support the case, visions of our present-day came to mind.

**"I'm right here in front of you. Look at me, listen to me talk. How can you deny that I exist when I am right here?"**

**- Dora Wilson**

There was an understanding, in the hall, that we are now living in "the future" that the participants in the Delgamuukw/ Gisday'wa dreamed of 20 years ago. This was a challenging realization. While the feast was a celebration of this monumental achievement, there was a sense that the work isn't done yet. There is still so much to do to make their dreams come true. We owe it to them for what they accomplished on our behalf. What I witnessed at the hall re-affirmed the value of our work (SWCC) in supporting the First Nations, who hold land titles in our watershed, to continue protecting our watershed from harm and to continue to breathe life into the relationships between our land and people.

I work and play with many Gitksan youth who don't really know to which Wilp they belong or where their territories are. There is still a disconnection between the day-to-day lives many of us lead and our relationship to the land. Witnessing the 20th Anniversary of the Delgamuukw/ Gisday'wa Court Decision helped me appreciate that we are actively creating our future right now. How we live and the decisions we make is the evidence that will define our legacy. The values and principles that guide SWCC's collaborations in our communities are helping to build a legacy, and I am inspired to be a small part of that legacy.



# Bigger Fish to Fry

TODD STOCKNER / SWCC BOARD CHAIR



**These are interesting times for us here in the Northwest.**

With the volatile battle over the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline and tanker project raging to the south of us, we can not only give moral support to our southern friends, who are embroiled in that fight, but we can take some time to reflect on what we have accomplished here in the Northwest. We can remind ourselves that people across the province and indeed across the country share our values of healthy watersheds, coastlines and communities.

We've been so busy, for over a decade, putting out fires – all hands on deck – dealing with the great, impending industrial mega-projects that were direct threats to the vision that the people of the Skeena watershed have for their lands and waters. Now, with those issues pretty much in the rear view mirror, we can re-focus our attention on that vision of our home and use this time to really develop our ideas, and put them into action.

So, we now find ourselves in a bit of a quiet reprieve. A moment of repose, big development and industry are not banging on our doors and breathing down our necks. This is an opportunity for us to channel positive initiatives, share progressive ideas about communities and connect with our watershed in new and creative ways. We have fertile ground to till – a chance to do the deep work that instills true and lasting change.

**But what is that vision? What are we trying to do here?**

Now is the time to have those conversations, those dialogues amongst ourselves, our communities, our governments and even with industries. This is when we can build solid relationships, connect youth to the land, develop new economic strategies, help our communities become healthy and wealthy and further commit ourselves to a stronger, better vision of our beautiful watershed.

It is time to take another look at the roadmap we drew all those years ago and see if it holds true now, and if not, then we need to redraw the map to take us in the direction we want to go in. The people of the Skeena watershed are creating their own reality. As watershed residents, we are a part of that process and have the capacity to add to that conversation. So, let's sit around the campfire, have those conversations, see where we want to go from here on, what makes sense, and what doesn't, make some plans and then get to work.





# changing tides

LEAH PIPE / CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS



**Q. Any paradigm shifts in 2017?**

**A. Yes, that art can build bridges!**

At SWCC, we've been using art and design to connect people, communicate with our communities and convert science into tangible, emotional human stories. But in 2017, through some cool collaborations, I learned that art can do so much more. I've long believed that art can help the average person understand complex data and science, but I didn't realize that graphics can actually help our government, our leaders – the decision-makers – to understand them as well. The work we did with Lake Babine Nation and the Village of Gitanyow showed me that both cultural leaders and government reps need these concepts transformed into art images in order to connect with each and to better understand the issues. There's an assumption that decision-makers are fully-equipped and perfectly informed on the challenges our communities face ... but they, too, benefit greatly from the artful conversion of science into visual stories. Everyone seated at decision tables are humans after all, and all of us, including leaders, relate and connect through the heart.



# Testing the Waters

KESIA NAGATA / SKEENA ENERGY SOLUTIONS



**Q. What was the biggest success from 2017?**

**A. The Sik-e-dakh earthship-style greenhouse.**

Getting the Sik-e-dakh earthship-style greenhouse finished and operating last summer felt like a big success. It's now being used to start seeds for the Band's community garden, and will be chock full of tomatoes all summer for the band to distribute, process and store.



**Q. Was there a powerful or important connection made last year?**

**A. There were many, but the most valuable one was...**

Engaging with Gitwangak and Gitanyow hereditary chiefs over sustainability and food security has been one of my favourite developments from 2017. Witnessing brave and innovative plans develop for the well-being of these communities has been humbling, exciting, and inspiring.

**Q. Did anything make you view your work differently?**

**A. Regenerative Agriculture has been a game-changer.**

I started exploring Regenerative Agriculture in the fall of 2017 and this year it's at the top of my project list. This approach has got me thinking about creating sustainable, cyclical systems of support rather than small, isolated projects; building change rather than pushing it.



# a rising tide floats all boats

## YOW + WOW

ANISSA WATSON

YOW ORGANIZER

We had another successful season with YOW (Youth on Water) and WOW (Women on Water)! With a solid team, the programs ran seamlessly in 2017. We had great leadership and guides, full boats every week and a great increase in community engagement. After all of the past seasons, the YOW and WOW programs have come to a definitive and mature point where they, as programs, better support our communities.

We expanded local relationships, improved our connections and thereby increased our network to include Senden Agricultural Centre Youth Group, Skeena Supported Employment Society and Storytellers' Foundation (Youth Works) and other community and youth groups. In 2017, YOW and WOW really focused on building a strong, local skill-base with increased capacity for youth. As a result of this work and these networks, YOW and WOW will be employing local youth entirely in 2018! This is a first! All guides will be from our own area and each one is a former participant that we trained and mentored.

Full boats.  
Full hearts.  
Full capacity.







# THE SWCC TEAM 2017

## BOARD

Todd Stockner (Chair)

Wade Davis / Gene Allen / Roy Henry Vickers / Cathy Sims / Brad Wilson

## STAFF

Shannon McPhail / Executive Director

Brian Huntington / Associate Director

Kathy Stockner / Office Manager

Leah Pipe / Communications

Anissa Watson / YOW Organizer

Kesia Nagata / Skeena Energy Solutions

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Sheldon Johnson, Monty Stevens, Peter Schultz and Anna Pyplatz

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Kenny Rabnett - Secret Weapon

Taylor Bachrach - Web Design Coordinator // Incite Media - Animation + Film Editor

Skyla Lattie - Upper Skeena + Gwininitxw // Richard Wright - LNG Organizer

Tania Millen - Economy Revitalization // Deirdra Oud - SWCC Intern

Billy Gunanoot - Sky High Greenhouse

Ken + Nikita Campbell - The Invisible Migration

Raj Bhatti - Bio-resource Engineer, Summer Intern

Trevor Jang - Communication Development for Communities

## YOW + WOW

Anissa Watson, Zofia Smeja, Kolin

Sutherland-Wilson, Louis Hnidan, Kim Hoekstra, Senden

Agricultural Centre Youth Group,

Storytellers' Foundation, Upper Skeena Development

Centre, Skeena Supported Employment

Society (Bakery), Bryan Frith, Aidan Murphy,

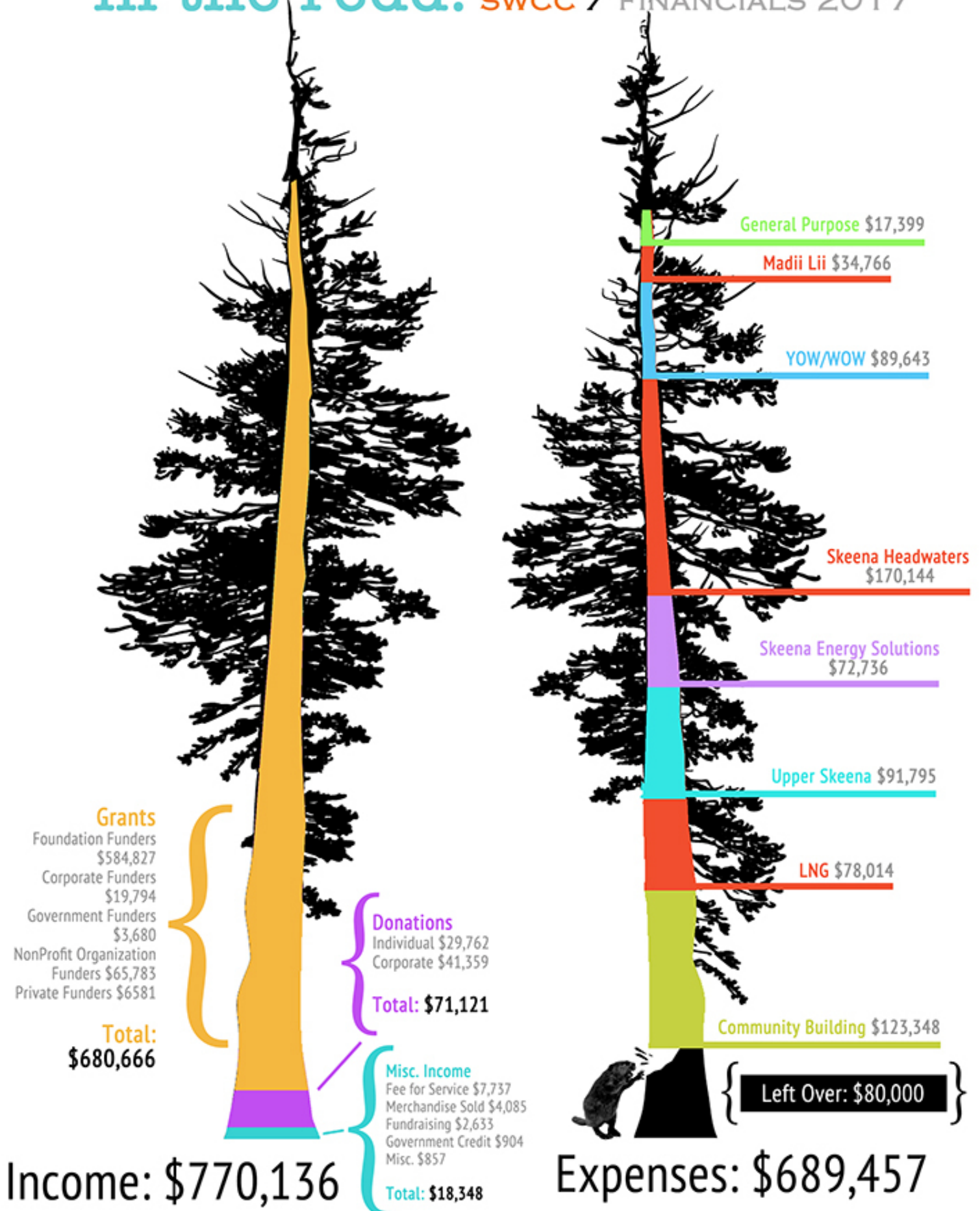
Jesse Plummer, Josiah Hunter, Travis Pete

and Will Rogers

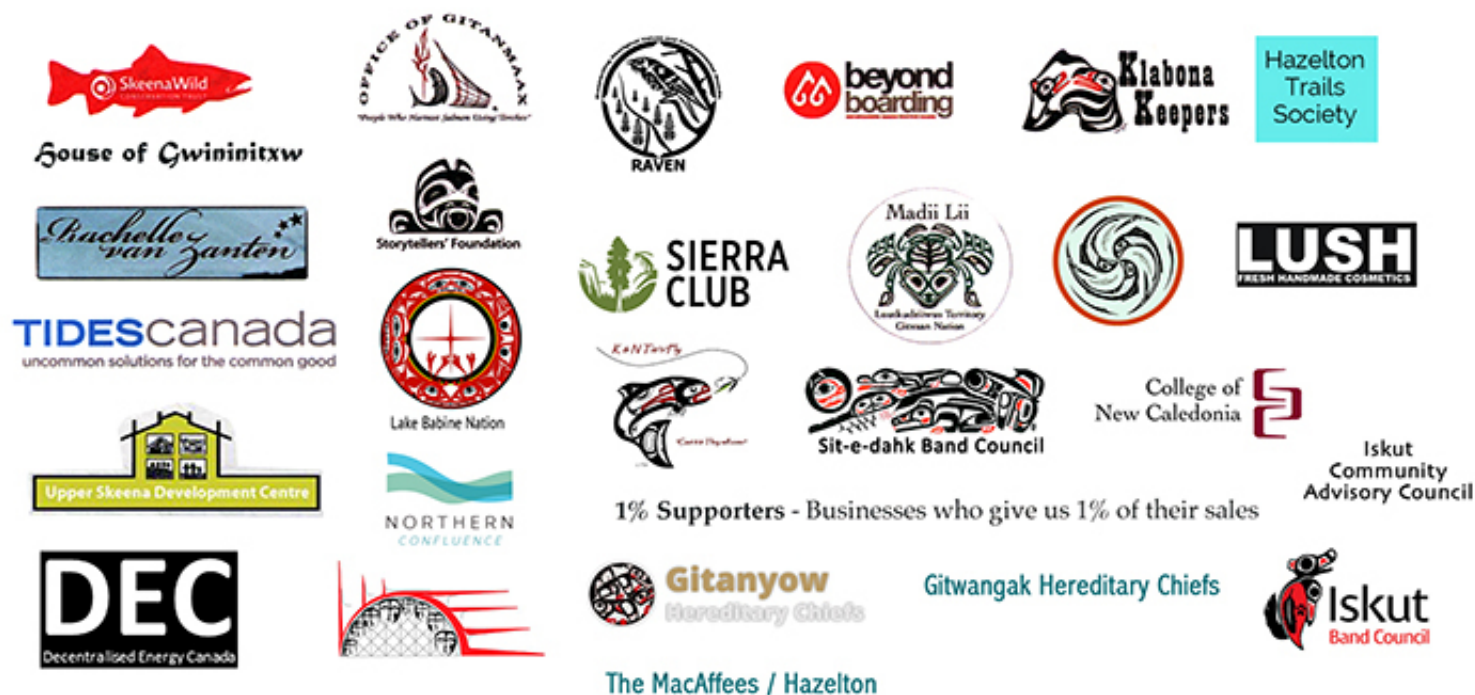
# A River Runs Through It



# in the redd: SWCC / FINANCIALS 2017



## SUPPORTERS: People we do projects with



## FUNDERS: Businesses + foundations, etc. who give us money



## CONTRIBUTORS: Businesses or people who donate their money, services, time, business, transportation, accommodations + advertising, etc.

