



ANNUAL REPORT

Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

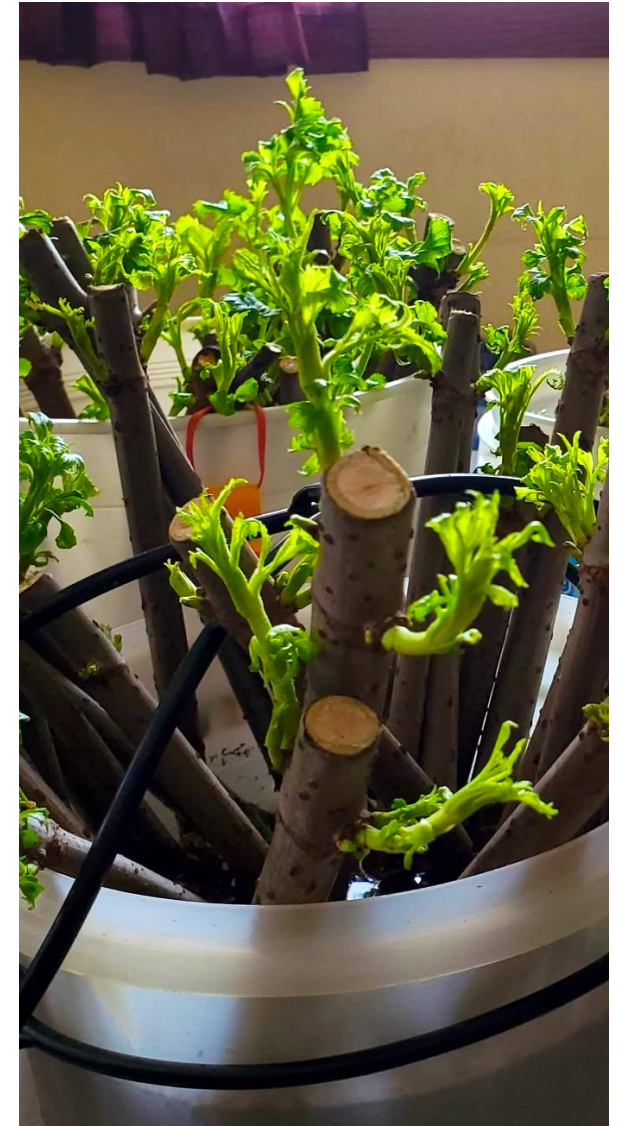
2021

MISSION & VISION

"Cultivating a sustainable future from a sustainable environment rooted in our culture and a thriving wild salmon ecosystem."

The Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition was founded in 2004 by a diverse group of people living and working in the Skeena River watershed. Our board of directors and membership reflects the broad interests of the people in this region. We are united in understanding that short term industrial development plans, even 50 year plans, will not benefit our region in the long run if they undermine the social and environmental fabric that holds the watershed and its communities together. Our range of activities all reflect this vision. They include:

- Informing our membership on proposed development plans that may compromise our vision of a sustainable regional economy.
- Working to develop long-term stewardship plans for the Skeena Watershed
- Organizing information meetings between regional/provincial governments, corporate developers and local communities
- Contributing to baseline research of wildlife, water quality, and cultural heritage resources in the Upper Skeena Watershed
- Developing sustainable employment opportunities that are compatible with the globally significant values of the region
- Providing educational programs for the region's children and youth (school programs and a summer conservation camp) to learn about the values within the Skeena watershed
- Sponsoring gatherings for stories, music, and art celebrating the Skeena Watershed



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Board Members

Todd Stockner - Board Chair
Cathy Sims
Brad Wilson
Roy Henry Vickers
Harriet Hall
Wade Davis
Gene Allen

Chicken Farm

Tim Butement - Solar installation
Billy Gunanoot - Construction
Nate Combs - Skeena Valley Farm
Jolene Swain - Young Agrarians
John Stevenson - Ministry of Agriculture
Reginaldo Hasquett Maroquin - Terry & Debbie Brexson - Good Neighbours
Jim Allen - Chicken rescuer/raiser
Youth Chicken Wranglers: Riley & Owen Stoeppler, Grant & Sara McPhail

Staff

Shannon McPhail - Executive Director
Brian Huntington - Associate Director
Kathy Stockner - Office Manager
Derek Ingram - Chickeneer/Energy Researcher
Kesia Nagata - Chickeneer
Jennifer Bulleid - Chickeneer/Social Media
Firyal Mohamed - Community Economic Development
Jesse Stoeppler - Project Management

YOUTH ON WATER

Simon Stockner - Raft Guide
Travis Pete - Raft Guide
Shania Rayne-Michell - Raft Guide
Harper Johnston - Raft Guide
Kaleigh George - Raft Guide
Chris Zazula - Support Team
Nancy Hubbard - Support Team
Ray Mulligan - Support Team

Contractors

Kenny Rabnett - Secret Weapon
Amber McGrath - Logistics
Brett Vidler - Trails & Camp Work
Pansy Wright Simms - Wilp Luutkudziiwus
Rhoda Quock - Klabona Keepers
Incite Media - Film/Media
Holly Arntzen - Up Your Watershed
Kevin Wright - Up Your Watershed
Leah Pipe - Data Visualization



PEOPLE & PLACE

Shannon McPhail - Executive Director

The Skeena watershed is British Columbia's second largest freshwater ecosystem. At more than 54,000km², the Skeena is a key driver of the northeast Pacific Rim salmon communities, one of Earth's most productive biological systems. With BC's largest intact estuary (~1,500km²) and a sprawling 24,300km² roadless headwaters landscape, the scope of the Skeena's biodiversity and abundance distinguishes it from other North American continental-scale watersheds. This isn't just another river - the Skeena is a globally significant system.

From a water, land and salmon perspective, the general health of the watershed and its communities are at immediate risk from the ongoing pressure of landscape-level industrial development proposals across the region. There are also ever growing concerns about climate impacts on water quality and quantity in our productive, wild salmon spawning and rearing rivers. The potential of transformative social and ecological impacts of multiple proposed oil and gas developments is increasing community level stress and conflict. In spite of these threats, our program results over the last 18 years indicate that the Skeena remains one of the world's most feasible temperate regions to achieve conservation of biodiversity at an ecosystem scale.

Project activities for this year were broken down into three distinct, yet interrelated areas:

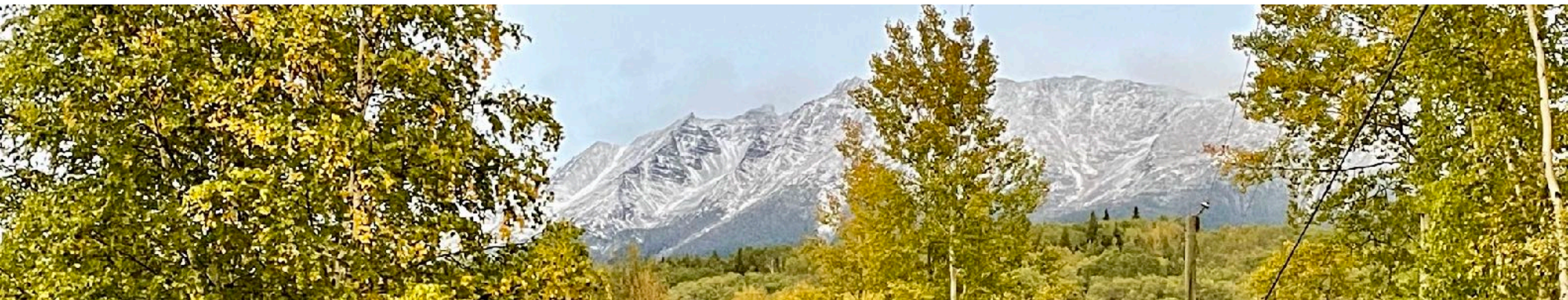
LAND: Ongoing Protected Area and Territorial Management Planning Processes

COMMUNITY: Connection to land, history, culture and each other

ECONOMY: Community Economic Development Initiatives

Partners and collaborators in the Skeena region have been working hard to support and facilitate land use planning and practices that build a strong, local economy that is socially, culturally and environmentally just. It doesn't mean we always agree - it simply means that when we disagree, it's important to still be respectful and to always be good neighbours. If there is any place in this world that we can figure out a way forward together for the betterment of all - it's right here in the Skeena.

SWCC's leadership is changing and it's my pleasure to write that Jesse Stoeppler & I will be sharing the executive director position!





YOUTH ON WATER

Brian Huntington - YOW Program Director

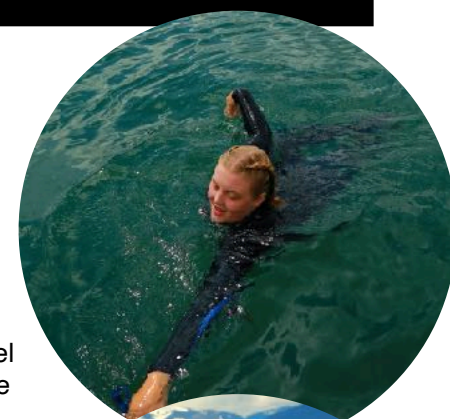
Nearly everyday during the summer of 2021, SWCC rafts were floating on our rivers while the water level changed below them and the colour of the river changed around them and stroke by stroke, the sound, the current, the temperature, the air above and the fish inside of them changed. And in those rafts was an ever changing collection of people from the Skeena; young, old and in between, each one of them transforming during the course of their trip.

We've been running community river trips since 2009 and the program too is changing. Every year has it's own distinct flavour based on weather, trip planning, guides and participants. It is safe to say that SWCC has never had a summer of rafting like the summer of 2021.

Our community rafting program provided a much needed recreational and restorative activity as we collectively emerged from an isolating and uncertain time of Covid restrictions. There was a stretch in July and August where we had a schedule of 33 trips in 31 days. In total, we ran 90 trips between June and October on the Skeena, Kitimat, Wed'zin'kwa and Kispiox rivers; supporting 680 individual participants. This is nearly double the previous high for # of rafting participants in a summer which was 366.

In addition to our participants, the program provides an amazing (and deeply challenging) personal and professional growth experience for each member of the guide team. There are many tangible examples of each guide advancing skills over the course of the summer; like delivering the safety talk, guiding the lead raft, taking guests on the inflatable kayak or guiding specific sections with higher class rapids. All of these are tremendous and hard earned achievements.

Whether our guests are 13 or 86, many people experience the river for the first time on these trips. Anxiety can be quite high for participants or for their families dropping them off at the riverside. Our young guide team manages all of this as well as the work of actually guiding the rafts on a daily basis. Day after day they are seen and heard as leaders and depended on for guidance and safety. Our 2021 guide team shined and through their efforts, hundreds of Skeena families were able to see their rivers, see their village from the water and see their home in a way that changed them forever.



ON THE YINTAH

Gidimt'en Checkpoint

Gidimt'en is one of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation. We maintain full jurisdiction under our law to access, use and occupy our traditional territory. Lhudis Bin, one of the Skeena watersheds most productive natural ecosystems has been utilized by our people for thousands of years and that relationship is alive on the land today.

Lhudis Bin contains critical habitat for fish and wildlife populations. It also showcases a kaleidoscope of cultural sites which provide tangible, real life evidence of our history on the land. It is a place where our people can see the pits dug by our ancestors, taste the berries at the village site and place our feet in the imprints left behind on ancient and story filled trails through the forest.

In 2021, Gitimt'en members continued our unbroken relationship with our traditional territories through year round activities on the Yintah. Many of these activities are threatened and restricted by the destructive forces at work to support the construction of CGL's pipeline. Despite the deeply traumatic effect of CGL's unauthorized presence on our territory, Lhudis Bin remains a place of cultural resurgence and strength.

Many of the activities we organize on the Yintah are traditional, based on ancient practices and knowledge of the land and seasons. Recent history has developed an urgent call for Gitimt'en members to witness what is happening to our territories. The activity of bearing witness and observing what is happening on the land, even if it is simply being there to see or listen, is necessary for the informed land-use decision making that is our responsibility and our ours alone.

Some of the activities from 2021 include - Building and completing the tiny homes on the ancient village site of Tsel Kiy Kwa (Lamprey Creek) was completed during the time before covid restrictions opened things up again. These tiny homes are designed to allow Gitimt'en and all Wet'suwet'en members to have a space outside of the original village site to be on the land and have access to traditional practises on Lhudis Bin territory and surrounding communities. There are now three completed, and fully solarized tiny homes for our membership to enjoy.

Gidimt'en checkpoint hosted a fish camp and utilized Woos's smokehouse along the banks of the Wedzinkwa, teaching our people to prepare salmon for storage throughout the winter for camp and community members. Salmon was canned and smoked and distributed. Our elders who lived out on the yintah taught people how to prepare the salmon. We also utilized this opportunity to smoke a spring bear in the smokehouse and have people camp out by the river to smoke the spring bear meat.

We worked with SWCC and our chiefs and other clans to host raftings days from the headwaters of Wedzinkwa to the Unistot'en Healing Centre. We hosted a day for Gitimt'en clan members and chiefs and had our matriarch Timberwolf and urban Gitimt'en attend the day. We made stops at the ancient village site and visited the CGL pipeline right of way and the smoke house. This was an essential opportunity to get our matriarchs and chiefs on the territory to see the salmon spawning in the river, to drink directly from the headwaters and to see what is at risk if projects like CGL were to have impacts on these systems. The feedback we received from our matriarchs was critical to the ongoing support of our reoccupation. We also hosted days for Parrot Lake village site (Likhts'amisyu Clan), and Unistot'en Healing Centre.

We also did major infrastructure work on the cabin at Lhudis Bin which has been the longest stranding infrastructure on Gitimt'en yintah. This was a private project paid for by Molly and Cody but involved volunteer support and organizing from Gitimt'en checkpoint and critical training and experience building on the land. We had a professional log builder come and teach people how to fall logs from the yintah, and prepare the logs for the build and then to construct the log build. This was critical training and learning for the feast hall build of 2022.

Throughout the spring and summer, we led and harvested traditional medicines, foods, and berries on the yintah—preserving and drying medicines, making teas and salves and gifting berries to the matriarchs.

Throughout the winter months we maintained snowmobile trails and made trails to be utilized for trapping and snaring and monitoring the yintah and the effects that CGL was having on our territories.



PEACE & UNITY

Jesse Stoeppler - Program Management

The Peace & Unity Summit impacted the Bioregion by facilitating space to diverse leadership, hereditary, elected and provincial government as well as broader community members. The combined viewership reached over 7k witnesses in the first week, face to face, via livestream as well as pre-recorded messaging due to pandemic related restrictions. SWCC collaborated with partners like Salmon Nation, Skeena Wild, Dogwood BC and David Suzuki Foundation in support of the Office of the Wet'suwet'en as event host.



Peace & Unity as a movement built a major support Network to amplify these voices and serves as a reminder to keep elected officials accountable.

Speakers included representatives from 12 nations including Wet'suwet'en, Gitanyow, Gitksan, Gwich'in, Haida, Haisla, Nuxalk, Secwepemc, Tla-o-qui-aht, Tsimshian, Tl'amin, Tsleil-Waututh and Yupuk. With focus on relationship building based on alliances in the mutual vision to fight climate crisis, uphold/promote Indigenous sovereignty and address police violence attached to large scale industrial projects. Product of the work performed was a declaration signed by all 231 attendees.

Originally planned for December 2021, the summit had to postpone for January 15th 2022 to be followed by a much larger Summit held at the summer of 2022!





COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Firyal Mohamed - Program Lead

2021 was the first full year cycle of the CED role.

It was an opportunity for me to orient to the work and the people doing the work- SWCC, and the other local non-profits the position supported- The Learning Shop and Upper Skeena Development Centre (Senden), along with familiarizing and establishing relationships in community, specifically those interfacing with local food work.

It was an opportunity to orient to process- processes I could facilitate to support those doing the work to address barriers/ gaps/needs as they had identified.

I brought a business modelling process to The Learning Shop's social enterprise, Youth Works- leading the core Youth Works team through bi-weekly gatherings for a one-year period. This was a place to unpack, deep dive and organize elements of focus for the program. The result was the completion of the three business planning canvases, the development of a marketing strategy, a 12-month cash flow, along with scenario development on the opportunities for strategic direction of the program.

I led the deliverables process for the Upper Skeena Food Hub grant under the direction of the Upper Skeena Development Centre- completing a network analysis for the food hub; implementing several of the findings of the Food Hub report (which I co-led the research for in previous years). I prepared communication documents for the Food Hub, identified a Food Hub Coordinator that was hired to work at Senden, and developed an engagement strategy for the season's work that focussed on distribution of food grown at Senden, co-led community engagement tours and a few workshops within the confinements of pandemic realities; granting writing and reporting.

We initiated a business modelling process with the Chicken Project team attempting to map out key areas of development, partnerships, funding and objectives to support the work of chickens for the year, and beyond. I accessed farming resources, like the Young Agrarians to gain knowledge and insight into farm and financial planning. Processes were parked when real life hit us with a flood at the chicken coop- we moved to all hands-on deck to ensure the remaining chickens we had a home, and all they needed to thrive for the remainder of the season! I supported as a farmhand and in the sales of chickens.

In addition, we hosted at least 2-3 CED Core Group meetings in 2021 that invited potential new members into space, discussed aspects of the CED Core Group's function and structure, and supported a community forestry survey. I also participated in Storytellers Foundation – Settler Dialogue Series which held a focus on gathering those engaged in local food work on Gitxsan territory.





TREE-GENERATIVE CHICKEN

Chickeneers: Derek Ingram, Firyal Mohamed & Jennifer Bulleid

2021 showed us the might of the Skeena River! On June 3rd - about 3-weeks after welcoming our second flock of 1500 birds - amid heavy rain and rising water levels, our chicken coop at the *Anloo* farm site was flooded out. An emergency evacuation of the chicks from the coop was supported by the tremendous efforts of many staff and community members - saving most of the freedom ranger chickies who were then just a few weeks old!

The team recovered as much as we could from our *Anloo* site after the flooding- feed, infrastructure and supplies/equipment, and we refocused our efforts on building up an adequate site location in the Kispiox Valley to raise the surviving chickens. Dozens of community members purchased chickens at-cost from SWCC and to raise on their own. And at our newly established *Hummingbird Rest Farm* site, we managed to go on to raise, sell and distribute the remaining 400 chickens to community members, with minimal casualties and interference in the flock post-flood, relocation and an extreme heat wave event that followed!

On the operational side, energy was invested into business planning processes to map our project, and to understand the aggregate system of poultry production in the Upper Skeena. We shifted our focus to transferring our knowledge of this regenerative poultry model to support those attempting to raise their own flocks, including building out a chicken manual; coordinated community engagement opportunities to other regenerative farms in the area, like 6S Family Farm; and worked to support the development of farming systems and infrastructure at the *Hummingbird Rest Farm* site.

2021 was a year that showed us our persistence and commitment to feeding ourselves and our community, even through the most trying of times!



SACRED HEADWATERS

Rhoda Jakesta - Spokesperson, Klabona Keepers

2021 has been a difficult year for me and my family not only dealing with COVID, I'm also still grieving a huge loss, my mothers passing! We lost many other family and community members as well. I was in Vancouver for 4 months due to my daughter's pregnancy complications, my grandson was born premature which caused a lot of health issues for him. He had to stay in the hospital till May.

Even though I was faced with all the obstacles, I still wanted to see the Tlabona (Klappan - Sacred Headwaters) protected. I want my children to be able to be on this land without having to fight industry in order to do so. We've been through so much already. This past year, I worked on the film with Tamo Campos, director; and I'm grateful for that experience because I learned so much about how to take our story to the world. We incorporated so many different aspects including

- animation
- interviews
- reviewing the clips
- talk with elders of what should be in the film or taking out
- multiple zoom calls
- Discussing the process for making a film about Tahltan and creating a new model for others to use or pull from

We are still working towards permanent protection with an Indigenous Protected Conservation Area (IPCA) that was preapproved by both the Province and Government of Canada. As the spokesperson for Klabona Keepers, I attend IPCA meetings, but because of COVID there wasn't many as a lot of meetings got put on hold! We will not stop until our lands are protected. This isn't just for Tahltan, it's for all those who live in the Skeena, Nass and Stikine watersheds - we do this to protect all of us. Thank you to all those who continue to support us.



W I L P G W I N I N I T X W

Simogyet Gwininitxw (Yvonne Lattie) - Hereditary Chief, Maxhla Didaat & Galaanhl Giist



Gwininitxw operations for 2021 focused mainly on Slamgeesh Salmon Fence repairs and operations and saw the initiation of the Anklha Village Rebuild project. In August 2020, due to extreme precipitation and upstream beaver dam failures, the counting fence was destroyed. While the abutments remained solid, and fence truss and panels were recovered, the fence foundation was destroyed. Funding from Pacific Salmon Foundation assisted us in flying in the materials and completing the fence rebuild. Slamgeesh Salmon Fence operations were able to move forward, with minimal disruption during the rebuild.

Wilp Gwininitxw Land and Resource Management Society continued transitioning into their own non-profit society; establishing financial track records and building ongoing relationships with funders. Gwininitxw was successful in an application to First Nations Health Authority through the Indigenous Climate Health Action Program, this funding supported food security activities engaging youth and Wilp members, and the development and building of a cabin at Ankhla, an ancient village site of Wilp Gwininitxw. High costs of fuel and Covid related issues prevented the cabin build from being completed, FNHA extended the project deadline for completion in the summer of 2022.

Gwininitxw began preparing for a planned Gwalx ye'enst Liliget, with the purpose of declaring Gwininitxw territories as an Indigenous Protected Area within Gitxsan Law and witnessed by community and local politicians. Working with SWCC staff and Wilp members, Gwininitxw started drafting the declaration and preparing to host the feast in 2022.





M A D I I L I I

Gaypaygw'm Ganauu - Pansy Wright-Sims Spokesperson for Luutkudziwus, Charlie Wright

Aside from members of the wilp working to find a new normal post Covid; the effort to continue to live life according to the works of our ancestors evolved and created connections through food sovereignty and food security. Survival and reliance on our traditional food sources became more prevalent as inflation soared through our territories in the Northwest. The costs associated with feeding families became unmanageable and stressful on those who work within society and on the territory to make ends meet. This dramatic increase in the cost of living made our position to care for the territory a priority as the industries of Pipeline, mining, and forestry still initiates their projects and positions to carry forward with their agendas of development. Our wilp is still holding steadfast to protect our laxyip from destruction of our natural resources. We rely on our salmon, moose, deer, berries, and medicines; they sacrifice their life annually so that we may continue to live ours. We have assisted over 150 families this year through our fishing holes. Gwalxyee'enst is alive and well with our leaders of our wilp; Transferring knowledge through fish camps and working with family and friends as we transfer teachings from our ancestors to the youth, children, and families that travel from near and far to gain this experience. We will host a hunting session with wilp members; particularly the young people to teach them on the laxyip. Through these efforts another generation will learn about our boundaries, rivers, creeks, and natural resources available to us on the laxyip. Our Language sharing is also another priority where we are communicating through media with wilp members to inspire and encourage the use of our language with one another. As we develop a connection with house members, we hope to create an interest, willingness, and an attachment to our laxyip as we continue to move forward in occupying and utilizing our territory to its fullest potential. Our DNA is a part of every living thing on our Laxyip. Our ancestors continue to live through our memory cells from time immemorial. Let us continue to model love, respect, compassion, honesty and honour all that sustains us, this includes one another.

😊 In the spirit of Love and Unity



FORESTRY

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Shannon McPhail

The goal for 2021 was to work with local groups and community leaders to complete a current status assessment for the Kispiox watershed that considers Wild Salmon Policy habitat indicators in order to better plan for a sustainable future in forestry.

This work included:

- Facilitating the Forestry & Carbon Working Group (FCWG) and related activities including carbon strategy in land use planning and in forestry planning and operations.
- Facilitating the Talkin Loggin Working Group (TLWG) and related community-based activities with a focus on improving forestry practices in ways that better supports the health, wealth, and resilience of our forest sector and communities.
- Examine the principles of UNDRIP and DRIPA and how it relates to the way we conduct resource extraction.

Ways we worked to achieve this:

- Talkin Loggin Working Group submitted their thoughts and ideas to the Kispiox Timber Supply Review public engagement process
- Completed a watershed assessment of the Kispiox Forest District that examined how forestry permitting and tenuring impacts wild salmon.
- Joined the board of Unlikely Allies whose mission is “To support significant forestry reform so that fish, wildlife, communities and economies can thrive together.”
- Exploring the idea of producing and manufacturing birch water as a health beverage with Gitxsan Huwilp and local farmers.
- Hosted a webinar on mycoremediation and mycorestoration

| Income/Revenue | |
|--|--------------------|
| Grants (foundation, corporate, government & other NGO's) | \$841,235 |
| Donations (individual & corporate) | \$205,369 |
| Fundraising (merchandise, fee-for-service, etc.) | \$35,604 |
| Total 2021 Income | \$1,082,208 |

| Expenses | Project Expenses | Staff Payroll |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Admin or Operations | \$50,939 | \$47,000 |
| Community Building/CED | \$62,506 | \$90,001 |
| Sacred Headwaters | \$60,000 | \$55,000 |
| Skeena Energy Solutions | \$12,683 | \$75,000 |
| Upper Skeena | \$161,934 | \$112,000 |
| Youth on Water | \$49,221 | \$100,589 |
| Non Charitable/General Purpose | \$0 | \$0 |
| Skeena Projects | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total 2021 Expenses | \$397,283 | \$479,590 |
| Grand Total | \$876,873 | |

