



Spring Trout Fishery

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The big yellow school bus lumbers down the trail as the sun sparkles through the trees over Tkeyilstem (Heffley Creek). The doors crack open and bright green and red shirts pour out as students, parents and supervisors make their way out of the bus. Councillor Ed Jensen (T'k'emlups te Secwepemc) is there waiting with his snare in hand and knowledge in heart.

Everyone looks on in excitement as they see the trout darting in the creek. The trout have come up the creek to spawn and leave their legacy in the creek beds. Everyone gathers around while Ed explains how this area is an important trout fishery and that the trout fisheries are unique opportunities which only exist in select environmental conditions which are tailored to suit specific runs of fish. He relays the importance of the trout fisheries as the first source of protein for Secwepemc after winter and how this protein would sustain us until the salmon begin to run.

In his hand is a long, limber birch pole which he has carefully selected. He explains that the pole must be long enough to allow the fisher to remain unseen and carefully fastens a copper snare wire to the end. Once constructed the snare is used to "lasso" the trout out of the creek. This method allows for the least amount of damage or impact to the creek and the spawning beds. The long poles allow the fisher to stay farther back from the creek banks, while the snare wire does not disturb the creek bed in the same way a net might.

"Before we take we must give", he bestows on his audience. Prayers and tobacco offerings are given before anything is taken from the creek. Then the fun starts! The snare is dipped into the water and slowly worked downstream around the trout and then out the trout comes with a swift yank! The children shriek, clap and whoop as the trout flops about in protest. Ed and Nacoma George (Tk'emlups) each take a small group down sharing their knowledge and passing on a tradition that has lived for centuries. The children pack sticks filled with fish and Ed explains that now the real work will begin. These fish are all destined for smoking.



Photo: Little Fawn Nursery students, parents & supervisors watch Ed and Nacoma cleaning Trout





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Spring Trout Fishery Revitalization con't

They also have a special guest for this trip, Ugo Lapointe from Mining Watch. They hope that these 'on the land' experiences he witnesses over the day will give him an appreciation for the Secwepemc values associated with the trout fishery areas.

In the afternoon the group is joined by Chief Ron Ignace (Skeetchestn) and Councillor Marshall Gonzales (Skeetchestn) for a special trip. The group travels to a historic trout fishery site at the creeks which enter (Jacko Creek) and exit (Peterson Creek) Jacko Lake (Pipsell). This site has been monitored for weeks in anticipation of the trout run. The group walks the creek and see that the run is beginning, the trout are just beginning to enter the creek through the spillway coming out of Jacko.

Snares are poised and technique is critical because with the run just starting the trout are

wary. In preparation the trout splash and swim up and down the spillway into the creek where they wait to spawn. We all bear witness to the trout being snared out of the creek, providing essential proteins at a critical time.

The group conveys to Ugo the importance of Pipsell and all its connections to the land, water and air. This area is included in the proposed Ajax Mine Project which is the reason Ugo is visiting Kamloops. The Ajax project proposes to alter and divert Peterson Creek and forever remove it as a trout fishery.

This project's proposal comes at a time when revitalization not eradication of our trout fisheries is needed. Preservation of the trout fishing sites and passing this knowledge to the generations to come will always be a top priority for Stk'emlupsemc in our responsibility as yecminme7. ***



"We do not have a mandate, we have a responsibility We are yecminme7"

