



Ribbon Cutting: Grand Opening

From left to right: **Lisa Montgomery-Reid**, Regional Vice President of Operations, First Nations Health Authority; **Dr. Mark Masterson**, Vice President of Medicine for Interior Health (IHA); **Adam Nicholas**, Core Services Director at Ktunaxa Nation Council (behind Dr. Masterson); **Wayne Price**, Mayor of Cranbrook; **Darrin Jamieson**, CAO of Ktunaxa Nation Council (KNC); **Diane Whitehead**, Collaborative Health Coordinator, IHA; **Dallas Cardinal**, ʔaqam Councillor; ʔaqam Nasuʔkin **Cheryl Casimer**; **Debbie Whitehead**, Social Investment Advisor at KNC; KNC Chair **Kathryn Teneese**; ʔakisqnuq Councillor **Janice Alpine**; **Jared Basil**, Ktunaxa Cultural Framework Ambassador; **Sheila Muxlow**, Director of Social Investment Sector at KNC; and **Jason Andrew**, ʔaqam Councillor. *Mural by Darcy Roshau.*

Health Centre opens

May 8, 2025

Many gathered in ʔa·kiskaqʔit to mark the opening of the Ktunaxa Nation Regional Health Centre.

Located in downtown Cranbrook at 32 9th Avenue South, the new centre is a hub for health and wellness services for Ktunaxa members, their families and other Indigenous individuals who are living in ʔamaʔkis Ktunaxa.

The celebration was heralded by the singing and drumming of **Eagle Bear Spirit Drum Group**, led by Moose Luke, with Bertha Andrew, Deanna Eaton, Joe Pierre and Pete Sanchez. Their songs included an Honour Song.

Jared Basil was emcee. He said, “We appreciate everybody for being mindful of Ktunaxa protocol. Everything we do we, do in line with our values and our beliefs.”

Joe Pierre shared the opening prayer, asking Creator to bless the gathering and those present with open hearts and open minds during the day, and to look into the lives of those who may not

have been able to come to the opening due to health issues. He shared his gratitude for many things, including the women and mothers of the Ktunaxa Nation. He then sang a song to complete the prayer.

“It’s critically important that we can create safe spaces for our people — not just Ktunaxa, but all Indigenous people,” said ʔaqam Nasuʔkin **Cheryl Casimer** during her remarks.

Casimer said she was happy to be there and to see so many who came to join in the opening. She acknowledged Joe Pierre and Eagle Bear Spirit.

“As I was listening to those songs this morning, I was thinking, ‘When was the last time that this space—here—heard the drums? When was the last time they heard our songs?’ Because this used to be one of our main areas, ʔa·kiskaqʔit, this was a main area we would gather before reserves.

“It makes me happy knowing that we as a Nation are starting

to reclaim spaces within our territory. These places that haven’t heard our language and our songs for so long are starting to have that happen again. It’s important. And it’s important today that we can talk about this centre, which will provide a quality level of health care for our people, which is sorely needed.”

Casimer summed up what the new health centre offers: “The best care, that is culturally based, for people to come in and access services.”

The health centre represents the culmination of decades of healthcare capacity building, as **Debbie Whitehead** outlined in her remarks.

“The St. Mary’s Band, now called ʔaqam, had Community Health Representatives in each community dating back to the mid-70s,” she said. “Florence Alexander taught me how to navigate patient support and wellness: How to access a doctor, public health and other pathways to wellness.”

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#UMAYITNAMU • SPRING 2025

**Ktunaxa
Citizens’
Excellence
Awards
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Front row, left to right: Holly Obee, Troy Hunter, Dee Dee White, Chris Joseph, Doreen Alexander, Gloria Hunter, Tabitha Capilo, Andrea Alexander, Jenny Fisher. **Second row, left to right:** Claire Peyton, (LSV team), Laine Twigg, Shelley Sebastian, Sherry Sebastian, Kristen Whitehead (LSV team), Darcy Fisher, Pete Sanchez, Julian Griggs (LSV team), Maureen McEachen. **Third row, left to right:** Bryan Evan (LSV team), Seb Martinez, Bertha Andrew, Natasha Burgoyne and son, Doreen White, Naya Duteau (LSV team), Tyson Cristales. **Back row, left to right:** Joann White, Roberta Gravelle, Max Andrew, Marisa Phillips, Kris Belanger (LSV team).

Introducing... the ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa Land Stewardship Vision Initiative

KNC Land Stewardship Vision Support Team

Since time immemorial, Ktunaxa ʔaqʕsmaknik have been stewards of ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, as outlined by ʔa-knumuʕtiit (Ktunaxa Law). The ʔaqʕsmaknik have a sacred responsibility to care for the land: yakaʕ hankatiitiki na ʔamak: “Our people care for the land, the land cares for our people.”

For many years, Ktunaxa have been considering how a territory-wide approach to stewardship might benefit our Nation and strengthen our ability to fulfill this sacred responsibility. Such an approach would be grounded in a vision for how we want ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa to be looked after, now and into the future.

In January 2024, the Ktunaxa Leadership directed the KNC Lands and Resources Sector to start comprehensive community engagement and technical work—in close collaboration with each Ktunaxa First Nation—to draft a Land Stewardship Vision for ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa.

What is a Land Stewardship Vision?

A land stewardship vision can help to identify broadly what makes each part of ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa unique and give direction for what kinds of activities can happen in what parts of the territory under what conditions.

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Health Centre Opens, From Page 1

“This was done with kindness and respect, incorporating cultural ways. Many times, meeting with families could be in the parking lot, inside a car or out in front of someone’s home.”

“Today, KNC Health serves more than 1,400 patients, including over 400 Ktunaxa and Shuswap citizens attached to our nurse practitioners,” Whitehead said.

The centre houses the Ktunaxa Nation Health Clinic (which was formerly located in the Ktunaxa Nation Council Government Building).

It connects people to a range of services

through the Ktunaxa Nation Council and partners like Interior Health.

The centre uses a “circle of care” model that brings together a range of health professionals to support clients’ physical and mental well-being.

This team includes Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Outreach Licensed Practical Nurses, Foot Care Nurses, Counsellors, Mental Health and Addictions Support Workers, Social Workers, and Physiotherapists. Clients also have access to specialist providers, including an Internal Medicine Physician and a Psychiatrist.

The team will also provide outreach to

help individuals and families navigate the health care system and connect with services.

The Ktunaxa Regional Health Centre has been supported through partnerships with the First Nations Health Authority, Interior Health, East Kootenay Primary Care Network, and with support from Indigenous Services Canada, Elk Valley Resources, Canfor, and other community collaborators.

Said Whitehead: “This is more than a facility—it is a commitment to our people and is a step forward in realizing our collective vision of ‘strong, healthy Ktunaxa citizens and communities.’”

Eagle Bear Spirit Drum Group shared songs at the grand opening.



LAND STEWARDSHIP
VISIONING
Community Meetings

May 27-30 2025

Ƴaǻam | Yaǻit Ƴa·knuǻi'it | yaqan nuǻkiy | Ƴakisǻnuk

Join us to learn about the Land Stewardship Vision project, hear about past research on Ktunaxa values, and help to identify key areas within ƳamakƳis Ktunaxa that are important to you

MAY 27

Ƴaǻam- Dan Joe Memorial Gym

10 am- 2 pm

MAY 28

yaǻit Ƴa·knuǻi'it- Gym

10 am- 2 pm

MAY 29

yaqan nuǻkiy- Round House

3:30 pm- 6:30 pm

MAY 30

Ƴakisǻnuk- Lions Hall

10 am- 2 pm

Lunch and door prizes provided

For more information contact:
LandsCommunityEngagement@ktunaxa.org



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A clear vision for the B.C. portion of ƳamakƳis Ktunaxa would also enable us to decide how best to balance the need for conservation, restoration and the responsible use of areas of land or resource values for economic development.

A Ktunaxa Land Stewardship Vision enables us to describe—for ourselves and for others—how we wish to see ƳamakƳis Ktunaxa managed now and into the future. Our vision will fundamentally be an expression of our cultural values and bring to life our cultural perspectives on how the lands and waters across our homeland should be respected and used wisely.

This work will be informed by the many years of past work undertaken with Elders and citizens. It will draw on the many past studies and reports that have been completed to support our collective efforts.

In all aspects of this initiative, the need to protect and manage sensitive or confidential information will be respected.

While the precise format of the land stewardship vision has yet to be determined, it is anticipated that it will be map-based with Ktunaxa stewardship areas, spanning the entire 8.3M hectares of ƳamakƳis Ktunaxa in B.C.

The work needed to develop a Ktunaxa Land Stewardship Vision assumes that when the land is healthy, there are also healthy opportunities for Ktunaxa social and economic well-being.

Why is a Ktunaxa Land Stewardship vision needed?

Since the time when settlers first arrived, our territory has faced many pressures from development and use. While we have generally been supportive of responsible economic development that respects our culture and values, the pace and scale of resource extraction in ƳamakƳis Ktunaxa has often been of concern.

Across many different parts of our territory, land and waterways have been impacted in

many ways, for example through the cutting of our forests, the loss of habitat for wildlife, and the pollution of lakes and rivers from mining or residential development.

Ktunaxa have been active in managing these development pressures as best we can.

For example, we have responded to referrals from B.C. which are triggered when a development proponent applies for an authorization from a provincial agency.

Ktunaxa representatives have also engaged directly with industrial proponents to discuss ways to mitigate impacts from individual development projects.

We have cooperated with provincial agencies and local governments to develop stewardship plans or conduct monitoring.

We have also been working to strengthen our role in decision making within our territory and ensure that we benefit from development projects, by negotiating government-to-government agreements with B.C., or Impact Management Benefit Agreements (IMBAs) with industry.

Despite these efforts, it is often expressed that we are in constant struggle to protect our land and our culture.

In the face of development pressures across the landscape that takes many forms, there is a risk that ƳamakƳis Ktunaxa will suffer ‘death by a thousand cuts.’

A Ktunaxa Land Stewardship Vision will enable our nations to shift from being defensive to being more proactive.

It will help us go from dealing with individual development proposals or impacts on a case-by-case basis to a more strategic approach which covers larger areas of ƳamakƳis Ktunaxa.

How will Ktunaxa First Nations be engaged with this initiative?

Ktunaxa Leaders have been clear in their direction to the project team that the development of a Land Stewardship Vision must include comprehensive community engagement and that any products must reflect community interests, values and objectives.

The Ktunaxa Land Stewardship Vision will be developed through engagement with citizens and in close collaboration with staff and advisors from each Ktunaxa First Nation.

Once completed, a Land Stewardship Vision would enable us to engage with greater confidence in any joint planning in different parts of the territory in collaboration with B.C., or with industry, or with other prospective partners.

In addition to the review of past surveys and interviews with Ktunaxaniñtik, and the review of past studies that reflect the views of Ktunaxa citizens and communities, the approach for community engagement includes:

- A series of community events through 2025 including in-person meetings in all four KFN communities and ƳukiniƳiti-yaƳa (One Heart) sessions on specific topics related to the land stewardship vision.
- Information sharing with ƳaǻismakniƳ through newsletters and through the Hakǻyit website.
- Close liaison and cooperation with the Lands Directors and their staff from each Ktunaxa First Nation.
- Regular updates and discussions with the Lands Advisory Working Group (LAWG).

As the work moves ahead, the project team is committed to being transparent and inclusive of the communities and welcomes all your input to ensure the vision is Ktunaxa led and reflects Ktunaxa values.

The Land Stewardship Vision will be a living product, meaning it isn’t the only or final representation of Ktunaxa stewardship. As new information is collected, circumstances change, and conditions arise, the vision can be updated and evolve to meet Ktunaxa needs

Gathering on April 8-9

All Ktunaxa ƳaǻismakniƳ were welcome to join a Nation-Wide Gathering in Cranbrook on April 8 and 9, 2025.

Forty-two Ktunaxaniñtik and five KNC staff and contractors gathered to contribute to the creation of a Ktunaxa-led, territory-wide approach to stewardship that can benefit our Nation and strengthen our ability to care for the land.

There were presentations, lunch, and open dialogue.

Upcoming Meetings

Ktunaxaniñtik are invited to attend Community Meetings coming up at the end of May. Please see the poster on this page for details.

Stay tuned for information on an person event in Vancouver in August 2025 to reach Ktunaxaniñtik who live in that area.

For questions or comments about the Land Stewardship Vision please contact out Engagement Team at LandsCommunityEngagement@ktunaxa.org

Brandon Alpine Memorial Bursary



Brandon Alpine was the only Ktunaxa member of *CMAW Local 2300* in his lifetime, but, through his bursary, future Ktunaxa tradespeople will follow in his footsteps—ensuring he is remembered as the first, not the only. (Photo and story courtesy Janice Alpine)

Any Indigenous student of College of the Rockies who is pursuing education in the trades (in particular in the construction trades of Carpentry, Electrical or Engineering) may apply for the **Brandon Alpine Memorial Bursary** to help with tuition and other costs related to working in the trades.

The Brandon Alpine Memorial Bursary was launched on his birthday December 28, 2023. It was inspired by Brandon’s willingness to share his work with his relatives.

Though it remains painful, his mother Janice Alpine joined forces with his union (Construction Maintenance and Allied Workers Local 2300 of Cranbrook B.C.), Aecon, and the College of the Rockies to establish the bursary.

Brandon was the only Ktunaxa registered with CMAW Local 2300.

Brandon began his construction journey in the oil fields of Alberta, namely in Fort Mackenzie. His friend Ted Foss suggested he join him in Alberta to explore the oilfields. He came home to take training that was offered by the Ktunaxa Nation Council’s Employment and Education services (offering 20 certificates in the field) and off he went to begin his career in the oilfields.

Brandon began as a Roughneck, making his way to becoming a Driller. Overall, he worked on the oil rigs for eight years. He decided it was time to come home and, upon returning, enrolled in trades training at the College of the Rockies in the Carpentry Program

After completing his Level 3 he began his construction journey as a third-year carpentry apprentice and eventually enrolled in the union.

Once in the union, he landed himself many jobs in the Kootenays, in the mines and on dams, roads and bridges.

Eventually, he was called to other areas in B.C. and Alberta. Every chance he had, he invited his cousins to work with him.

“Brandon was one of the first Indigenous union members and, at the time of his passing, the only Ktunaxa Nation member to belong to CMAW Local 2300 in the Kootenay region,” recalls Mark Miller, CMAW Local 2300 representative. “Brandon was a trailblazer who was proud of his Indigenous heritage and was never afraid to try something new.

“His passion for the trade led him to work on many projects throughout his career, including the Waneta Dam expansion, the Sparwood Coal mines, several bridges, and many framing projects.

“Brandon was an easy-going guy with a love for the trade and a good sense of humour, creating nicknames for everyone he met. **Our hope is that through this bursary his spirit will never be forgotten.**”

Brandon was full of energy and laughter and enjoyed his work immensely.

He shared his knowledge with anyone who would listen and work with him.

You can go to the College of the Rockies Entrance Bursaries and Awards website <https://cotr.bc.ca/student-services/student-support/financial-aid/entrance-bursaries/> to find out more.

The Brandon Alpine Memorial bursary is available each spring, so check it out. Huyas!

Every chance he had, he invited his cousins to work with him.

Ktunaxa First Nations oppose proposed Bill 15

Use the QR codes to read the full news releases

Yaƒit ʔa-knuqʕi’it First Nation Opposes Bill 15

MEDIA RELEASE: EXCERPT

Nasuʔkin Heidi Gravelle states that Bill 15 seeks to undermine the work in progress and could have an adverse impact on work and relationships with BC and Industry.

The only path forward for current and future resource projects in ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa and throughout the rest of B.C. is working in collaboration and engagement with First Nations, upholding and respecting the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)* passed in 2019.



ʔaƒam Oppose Proposed Legislation Aimed at Fast Tracking Projects – Demand Immediate Withdrawal

MEDIA RELEASE: EXCERPT

“*The Declaration Act* is a key part of a principled framework for the Province of British Columbia and First Nations to navigate and effect true reconciliation. This Bill presents a different process that sets us back decades and has the potential for months or even years of conflict,” said Nasuʔkin Cheryl Casimer.

“While the Premier’s recent public statements suggest projects won’t proceed with out affected First Nations’ consent, that is not expressed anywhere in the draft legislation.

“A ‘trust us’ model does not work and the Province needs to implement its Interim Approach with respect to this proposed legislation to ensure it aligns with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, as per its legal commitments.”





Above, from left: The IJC’s team of Kerry Killoran, the centre’s first point of contact; Ali Black, a staff lawyer; and Shelley Bergeron, a resource and support worker; plus Sarah McCoubrey, Director of IJC Transformation, who attended the opening in January. Visit: bcfnjc.com/cranbrook-indigenous-justice-centre

New Indigenous Justice Centre is now operating in Cranbrook

The Indigenous Justice Centre (IJC) has officially opened in Cranbrook, marking a significant step toward accessible and culturally appropriate legal support for Indigenous people.

The Indigenous Justice Centre (IJC) in Cranbrook offers supports to Indigenous people – First Nations, Métis and Inuit – dealing with criminal and child protection matters who otherwise cannot access help through legal aid.

There are plans to expand services to areas like housing and employment law.

Sarah McCoubrey, director of IJC Transformation, described the centre’s opening as “the starting line, not the finish line,” highlighting its mission to provide free legal representation, wraparound services, and culturally informed alternatives to the colonial justice system.

Cranbrook IJC offers:

- Meetings with the staff lawyer
- Advocacy and support for dealing with the Ministry of Children & Family Development
- A liaison to help you get support from your First Nation
- Supports accessing housing, treatment, social services
- Access to culturally relevant supports

The first step for anyone seeking help is to stop by or call. Staff will work to help you decide what services are appropriate for you.

Monday - Friday
8:30am - 4:30pm
44 12th Ave S. Cranbrook
Call 259-420-0202

Report from the IMBA

By Alexis Martig

Ktunaxa Nation Council and Elk Valley Resources (EVR) have an Impact Management Benefit Agreement (IMBA). Part of the agreement entails working groups which involve both Ktunaxa citizens and representatives from EVR.

Update on the PTG: Procurement Task Group

The PTG is making strides to strengthen economic opportunities for Ktunaxa businesses through strategic procurement initiatives.

This helps ensure Ktunaxa businesses have access to contracts and economic partnerships with EVR.

The task group operates under the Procurement & Employment Operational Working Group (PEOWG), following a 10-year strategic plan developed in 2017.

The group meets regularly to:

- Discuss contracting opportunities at EVR
- Improve collaboration between Ktunaxa businesses and EVR
- Review procurement trends and business performance
- Support a business environment where Ktunaxa businesses and Ktunaxa entrepreneurs can succeed

Ktunaxa businesses benefiting from EVR contracts

A key part of the task group’s work is ensuring that Ktunaxa-owned businesses benefit from procurement opportunities at EVR.

These businesses provide a range of products and services, from construction to industrial safety and hospitality.

Ktunaxa companies currently providing products & services to EVR include:

Construction, Environmental & Safety

Kettle River Contracting
TMM Projects Inc.
Yaqan Nukiy Dent LLP
Nupqu Resource LP
Ka-kin Chemco Corporation
ProActive Safety
Big Chief Industrial

Other Sectors

St. Eugene Resort
Ktunaxa artisans
Caterers

The Procurement Task Group expands Ktunaxa business opportunities with EVR

Tracking growth and direct awards to Ktunaxa companies

Since 2018, the task group has tracked direct award contracts and overall contracting revenue for Ktunaxa businesses.

While progress has been made, the PTG continues to push for *increased direct award opportunities*, particularly in environmental, reclamation, and mine closure projects.

What’s next? Priorities for 2025

As part of an IMBA 5-Year Review, the Ktunaxa Nation Council Economic Sector identified key areas for the PTG to improve in 2025, including:

- **Formalizing the direct award process**
Establishing clear guidelines on *when* and *how* contracts are awarded to Ktunaxa businesses.
- **Defining Ktunaxa Businesses**
Aligning definitions between IMBA agreements and Ktunaxa Nation policies.
- **Assessing Economic Impact**
Measuring how IMBA contracts contribute to the success of Ktunaxa businesses.

Improving Communication & Reporting

Providing better transparency on contract performance.

Clarifying the PTG’s Role

Ensuring the work aligns with broader Ktunaxa Nation economic strategies

A Path Forward

With a focus on economic self-determination, the Procurement Task Group is committed to increasing Ktunaxa participation in EVR projects.

By advocating for fair procurement practices and ensuring businesses are equipped to succeed, the PTG continues to build a stronger, more inclusive Ktunaxa economy.

For more information, contact Jose R. Galdamez, Ktunaxa Nation Economic & Investment Sector by emailing him at JGaldamez@ktunaxa.org.

To learn more about Ktunaxa Business Certification or the IMBA, please visit ktunaxahakqyit.org

These are Ktunaxa-only projects; site registration is required to view and participate.

Our communities have the answers

Showing up to shape a Nation-Wide Healing Strategy

The toxic drug crisis has deeply impacted Ktunaxa communities.

Families are grieving lost loved ones and those living with addictions face deeply personal challenges.

In 2021, the governments of the Ktunaxa Nation—ƚaqam, ƚakisq̓nuk, yaqan nukiy and Yaqit ƚa·knuq̓ti’it—declared a crisis, a mental health state of emergency within ƚamakʔis Ktunaxa. The crisis has roots in colonialism, systemic racism and other barriers to healing. It is fed by a toxic drug supply and continues to hurt Ktunaxa families.

In response, and after much deliberation and input, KNC Social Investment Sector has launched an initiative to develop a Nation-based, Nation-Wide Healing Strategy.

This work follows clear direction from Ktunaxa Nation Leadership, who have emphasized the health and wellbeing of Ktunaxa people must remain at the centre of all efforts.

Therefore, the strategy development will depend on close collaboration between the four Ktunaxa First Nations and as many Ktunaxanintik as can participate.

Ktunaxa voices leading

To support the work, Ktunaxa Nation Council has contracted **Urban Matters**, a social enterprise that collaborates with communities across western Canada.

ƚakisq̓nuk member, Martina Escutin (nupqu nana), is the lead on the project and works with Urban Matters as an Indigenous wellbeing practitioner. Martina and her team bring considerable experience working on complex social issues and will coordinate engagements with Ktunaxanintik.

“We want to bring people together, build real connections, and support communities to find their own paths to healing,” said Martina.

“Each Ktunaxa community is unique, with its own history, strengths and challenges. Our job is to facilitate these conversations, listen and elevate the good work already happening.”

Seen, heard and valued

“The more disconnected people feel, the more vulnerable they become,” Martina said. “Our goal is to cultivate spaces where people feel seen, heard, and valued.”



Martina Escutin is the project lead, and following the guidance of Ktunaxa Leadership and citizens.

Upcoming engagements will support ƚaq̓ts-maknik to share their voice towards developing community-based and Ktunaxa-led solutions to support healing across the Nation.

There may be successful Indigenous-led models from across the country to learn from, while ultimately ensuring strategies remain locally rooted.

“We’re not here to reinvent the wheel,” Martina said. “We’re here to amplify what’s working, identify gaps, and help build momentum for long-term change.”

With projects like Complex Care Housing, the Seven Nations Soaring Eagles Treatment Centre, and the Ktunaxa Nation Regional Health Centre already in motion, the Ktunaxa Nation has been making progress on different aspects of health, wellbeing and healing for communities.

The Nation-Wide Healing Strategy will enhance these projects and will serve to bring people together to share space with one another, allowing for grief, hope and personal stories of healing to open the way for a unified response, grounded in collective responsibility.

“Our communities have the answers,” Martina said.

“The toxic drug crisis has affected all of us in some way, and this is a good moment to step forward and share your voice. While the goal is to develop a Nation Healing Strategy, the success of that strategy is dependent on each of us doing our part to support each other.”

Origin & approach

The Nation-Based Healing Strategy was proposed by Ktunaxa Nation Council’s Social Investment Sector and approved by Leadership in December of 2024.

It has four phases:

- 1. Relationships & Exploration (January - March 2025)**
Building connections and gathering insights.
- 2. Community Involvement (March - May 2025)**
Engaging Ktunaxa First Nation Health Teams and holding Healing Circles with community members who are interested in being involved.
- 3. Community Engagement & Strategy Development (May - August 2025)**
Further engagement with Ktunaxa Citizens and informing a comprehensive healing strategy.
- 4. Presentations & Finalization (September - October 2025)**
Presenting back to communities for a final round of input and finalizing the strategy.

Interested? Email nation.healing@ktunaxa.org
<https://ManyWaysofWorkingOnTheSameThing.com/researchprinciples/>

ƚitqawxawiq̓ikimik

Everyone Holds This Belief Together

Follow QR code for pronunciation resources and more information



Guiding Principles for Research and Engagement Within the Ktunaxa Nation

These guiding principles have been identified through the ongoing ƚaq̓ts-maknik research project, which centers on Ktunaxa knowledge, philosophies and intellectual traditions. While developed in the context of research, these principles hold relevance across problem-solving and engagement activities for all non-Ktunaxa people working within ƚamakʔis Ktunaxa territory. Furthermore, they offer insights that can inform other collaborative endeavors that engage community partners and knowledge systems—with proper contextualization and local consultation.

When working on research and engagement within the Ktunaxa Nation, there are no prescribed steps or shortcuts. It is necessary for researchers to engage in meaningful reciprocal relationships, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to maintaining good relations. These principles are offered as an invitation for initial reflection, which should always come before pursuing research and engagement activities within the Ktunaxa Nation.

Please direct any questions or feedback to both:
Dr. Christopher Escutin: chrisescutin@ktunaxa.org
Research Co-Lead & Community Knowledge User
Dr. Sara Shahrar: sara.shahrar@ubc.ca
Research Co-Lead & ƚit Embedded Health Equity Scholar

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WITH THANKS TO THESE FUNDERS





From left to right: Vickie Thomas, Bonnie Harvey and Mara Nelson presented Lifetime Achievement Awards to “Gina-ology” Clarricoates, Moose Luke, Juanita Eugene, Mary Mahseelah and Lillian Rose. Not pictured are recipients Elizabeth Ignatius and Laura Birdstone.

On May 13, Ktunaxa Nation Council hosted the annual May Building Celebration to mark 13 years of occupancy in the KNC building in Cranbrook.

This year, ʔakisq̓nuk Nasuʔkin Don Sam welcomed everyone with a speech and prayer. The Ktunaxa Citizens’ Excellence Awards were then presented, including awards for language learners. Then everyone shared a feast catered by Lucky Star.

Nasuʔkin Sam: “The times are changing. But the strength of the

Ktunaxa, that’s been here over 10,000 years, and will continue.

“There’s no ‘one person.’ Our strength is in ‘all of us.’ We have relatives on both sides of the border. International borders cannot divide us. While we’re celebrating the bricks and mortar that’s brought this building, we also celebrate the hearts and minds and wisdom of the Ktunaxa each and every day.

“Each and every day, how do we honour that? We lift each other up. Lift up your spouse, your partner, your siblings, your children, your

parents, your co-workers and your chief and council, lift them up, too.”

Sam formally announced that Adam Nicholas is now recognized as the Ktunaxa Nation Flag Bearer, as per a discussion by leadership. He expressed gratitude for Nicholas accepting this responsibility on behalf of KNC for KNC events. Being the Nation Flag Bearer means Nicholas is responsible for ensuring the Nation eagle staff is present at all Nation functions and is done in accordance with protocol.

Ktunaxa Citizens’ Excellence Awards

Lifetime Achievement Awards 2025	
Gina Clarricoates	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Rudolph John Luke	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Lillian Rose	Arts and Entertainment
Laura Birdstone	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Mary Mahseelah	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Elizabeth Ignatius (Hillie)	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Juanita Eugene	Cultural Knowledge and Language

Excellence Awards 2025	
Robin Louie-Flatbow Culture	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Trina Williams	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Mara Nelson	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Martina Escutin	Cultural Knowledge and Language
Yhance Sebastian	Business and Career
Nakita Sebastian	Education
Troy Sebastian	Author
Ashley O’Neil	Business and Career
Gwen Phillips	Business and Career

Ktunaxa ʔa·kʔukaq̓wum learners celebrated

By Mara Nelson

This year we were able to celebrate our many Ktunaxa ʔa·kʔukaq̓wum learners.

We recognized 37 individuals who regularly attend weekly language classes on both sides of the line.

Learners were gifted medallions, designed by Darcy Roshau, in three categories: Seed, Bud & Bloom.

The categories are set to reflect the hours of learning put in. Seeds have a minimum of 100 hours, Buds are learners who have a minimum of 300 hours and Blooms have spent a minimum of 500 hours learning our beautiful language isolate.

We were also able to recognize Chrystal Williams and Aiyana Twigg.

Both ladies have completed 900 hours of the Mentor - Apprentice Program. An incredible accomplishment that will carry Ktunaxa ʔa·kʔukaq̓wum for generations to come.

Congratulations to the teachers, mentors and students that continue to dedicate their time learning.

We recognize, with gratitude, the many considerate and talented beaders that made these gifts possible.

Designer & beader, Darcy Roshau.

Beaders; Michelle Basil, Blaine Burgoyne, Sammie Coates, Rhoda Couture, Paisley Couture, Amanda Davidge, Marion Eunson, Anna Fidork, Cami Kenmille, Caytlyn Luke & Caitlin Phillips.

Without your time and care, these beautiful & meaningful gifts would not have been possible.

If you are interested in starting your language learning journey, reach out to Mara Nelson at Mara.Nelson@Ktunaxa.org

100 hours	300 hours	500 hours	900 hours
Joyce Green	Arwen Buckman	Lillian Antelope	Aiyana Twigg
Loretta Wingo	Niobe Buckman	Brian Birdstone	Chrystal Williams
Ɔusmukusam Lucous Joseph	Rosemary Caye	Juanita Eugene	
Sukitqa Kanuhus Kyaq̓nukat PaƔki- Arabella Nicolai	Consuelo Cutsack	Bonnie Harvey	
ƆuƩwa Hannah Medina	Emaline Manuel	Alexis Johnson	
Watakna Caroline Hewankom	Holly Merrigan	Holly Merrigan	
Na-kyu PaƔki Lah Tai Finely	Pete Sanchez	Mara Nelson	
Areanna Burke	Eldene Stanley	Wilfred Kenmille	
Kanuhus ʔamak Lucinda Michelle	George Stevens	Wayne McCoy	
Kamnuq̓tu qayaqatar̓ Byron Johnson	Samantha Sutherland		
NukƆaq̓tiƩ paƔki-	Vickie Thomas		
Mu-qni	Tony Grant		
Ɔaquna Kitku PaƔki-			
KƩiukxu			
Sharissa Couture			



For the fish

The Ktunaxa Nation and Government of Canada are advancing a co-developed approach to allocate \$58 million in funding to deliver projects that restore, enhance, and conserve fish and fish habitat in British Columbia’s Kootenay Region, focused on benefiting Qukin ʔamakʔis (Elk Valley).

The funding comes from a 2021 landmark penalty paid by Teck Coal Limited to the Government of Canada’s Environmental Damages Fund (EDF).

This approach includes non-competitive, project-based funding of

up to \$30 million for each Ktunaxa First Nation and Ktunaxa Nation Council, as well as up to \$6 million each available for other Kootenay Region First Nations, namely, Shuswap Band and Okanagan Nation Alliance.

In addition, \$16 million (see below) will be available to fund projects through an open, competitive call for applications co-developed by Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Ktunaxa Nation.

“This partnership recognizes the Ktunaxa Nation’s stewardship of Qukin ʔamakʔis. It’s a first, and it brings the spirit of reconciliation alive in action. We value being able to work together as true partners to protect the land, water, and all living beings in our territory.”

Kathryn Teneese, Chair, Ktunaxa Nation Council

“We have the opportunity now to guide the direction, to lead, and to collaborate with all of those who want to be a part of the solution to fix our waterways and heal what has been damaged. As ʔa-kanuxu-ʔnik, we have an inherent respon-

sibility to be a part of the process that’s going to heal our water and to heal our lands.”

Nasuʔkin Heidi Gravelle, Yaʔit ʔa-knuqʔit

“This funding is a step toward redressing the impacts of mining on Qukin ʔamakʔis, restoring our fish habitats, and healing the land for future generations.”

Nasuʔkin Cheryl Casimer, ʔaqam

“The Environmental Damages Fund will support environmental remediation efforts that mitigate impacts to ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, aligning with our traditional stewardship values as Ktunaxa people.”

Nasuʔkin Donald Sam, akisqʔnuk First Nation

Details

The call for applications will be administered through the Government of Canada’s Environmental Damages Fund. Applications will be jointly reviewed by Environment and Climate Change Canada and Ktunaxa representatives to ensure that projects chosen to receive funding maximize environmental benefits and align with Ktunaxa

stewardship values and principles.

First Nations may choose to advance projects independently or in collaboration with partners.

To support the Ktunaxa Nation’s full participation in the joint review of the call for applications, and to advance the development of Ktunaxa-led projects, up to \$3.25 million of the \$30-million allocation will be made available to Ktunaxa First Nations and the Ktunaxa Nation Council to support administrative and technical capacity within their organizations.

Funding will be disbursed in a manner that advances Environment and Climate Change Canada’s and Ktunaxa’s shared priorities and interests and ensures strong results that benefit the environment.

Qukin ʔamakʔis

The Elk Valley is part of qukin ʔamakʔis in ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa (Ktunaxa homelands). It is an area of conservation significance with important flora and fauna and is a critical north-south corridor for animal migration.

Recognizing the impacts to the Ktunaxa, the mechanism for allocating the funding in Qukin ʔamakʔis was developed collaboratively with Ktunaxa Leadership.

Background

The Teck Coal Limited penalty is the highest ever imposed for pollution in violation of Canada’s Fisheries Act, and the second largest award directed to the Environmental Damages Fund.

Created in 1995, the Environmental Damages Fund is a Government of Canada program administered by Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Fines imposed as penalties under environmental legislation following prosecutions are credited to the Environmental Damages Fund, which ensures that environmental good follows environmental harm.

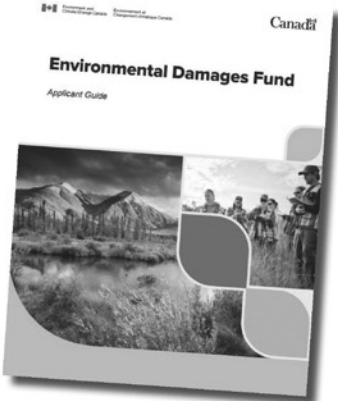
The Environmental Damages Fund ensures that fines collected from environmental infractions are used to support projects that protect nature, restore habitats, and preserve wildlife populations.



\$16 Million Available for Conservation & Restoration Projects Environmental Damages Fund (EDF)



Use the QR code to get to the online project page



Step 1: Reach Out
Submit a Letter of Intent
Deadline: June 12, 2025

Letters will be reviewed jointly by the Ktunaxa Nation and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Projects will be evaluated based on ecosystem health, interconnectivity, and the well-being of ʔakxamis ʔapi qapsin.

You will be notified if you can move on to submit an application.

Step 2 (If approved)
Submit an Application

Log in to the Grants & Contributions Enterprise Management System (GCEMS). Review the *Qukin ʔamakʔis Applicant Guide* for detailed instructions on eligibility and Fund Use Requirements.

Apply for funding to support projects

That are related to the **conservation, protection or restoration** of fish and fish habitat.

That are in the **Elk Valley** and in the immediate **downstream** area (within Canada)



Qukin ʔamakʔis

Visit us at
www.ktunaxa.org

Questions?
Email: fdeouestnord-edfwestnorth@ec.gc.ca



**KTUNAXA
NATION**



swadmu
LANDS &
RESOURCES



By Jaime Vienneau

The KNC Lands and Resources Sector team gathered together on April 24, 2025 at the base of ʔakinmi to promote team building and connection to the Land.

Highlights from the day included an archaeological presentation highlighting assessments and artifacts that have been found in the area during some recent developments, Ktunaxa cultural teachings, followed by a little friendly competition.

This photo captures the building of our team fire, which was started with kindling contributed by each manager representing the projects/initiatives each team is involved in.

Once the fire was started, each team member individually shared what they committed to bringing to the team this upcoming year and added their piece of wood to the collective fire.

Photo by Troy Hunter



Shell-cebrating Kaxax

By Caytlyn Luke

Western painted turtle (AKA Kaxax) makes its home in ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa. Curtis Luke, Andrew Fletcher, Caitlin Phillips and Caytlyn Luke attended the 2025 Turtle Day at Elizabeth Lake in Cranbrook on April 22, 2025.

As Ktunaxa ʔa·knusti, they were there to share about what they do for their jobs with students from ʔaḡamniḡ, Steeples and Pinewood schools.

The students also got to hear a Ktunaxa legend shared by ʔa·knusti team manager, Caitlin Phillips.

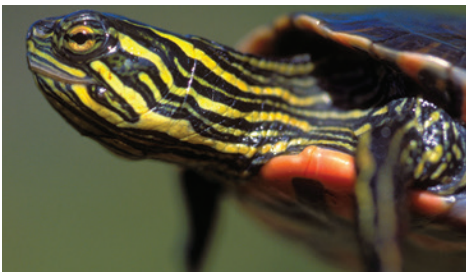
Ktunaxa ʔa·knusti admin Caytlyn played a key role at the main booth, sharing fascinating turtle lore and scientific insights while carefully handling the turtles and ensuring each student had the chance to hold one.

“It’s my favourite day of the year,” said Caytlyn. “I got to work with Western Painted Turtles when I was 16, and all of the knowledge I gained from those experiences I get to pass on to these students.”

“I enjoy seeing all the kids smiles, their excitement about how little the turtles are, and especially their silly faces when I tell them facts like the turtles breathe through their butts, which is really known as their “cloaca.”

Turtle Day is an opportunity for the Ktunaxa Nation, local Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) and Rocky Mountain Naturalists to share the importance of habitat conservation around our area.

There were educational activities such as learning about the habitat that Kaxax thrive in, holding the baby turtles, and what to do when you see a turtle outside of their natural habitat! There was also opportunity for the public to purchase Turtle Day shirts that directly go towards supporting the local conservation efforts.





Floodplain Reflections

In 2017 Lower Kootenay Band began planning the restoration of a number of wetland impoundments created in the late 1960s to mid 1980s. Here's an update on what's been done.

Story and photos by Norman Jr Allard

This spring, we reflect on the journey of restoring this 517-hectare floodplain over the past eight years.

Our work has been tested by the realities of climate change—severe droughts, diminished snowpacks, intense wildfires, and, in contrast, overwhelming surges of water from heavy spring runoff.

Each of these events has challenged the resilience of the wetlands we are bringing back to life.

Yet, through it all, **the re-naturalized wetlands have held strong**, demonstrating the power of ecological restoration when guided by nature itself.

We are now just over half way through this restoration process, and along the way, we have learned invaluable lessons—many of which echo the wisdom of our ancestors.

These lessons teach us that **everything in nature is connected**. We are seeing firsthand that **wetlands cannot exist in isolation**.

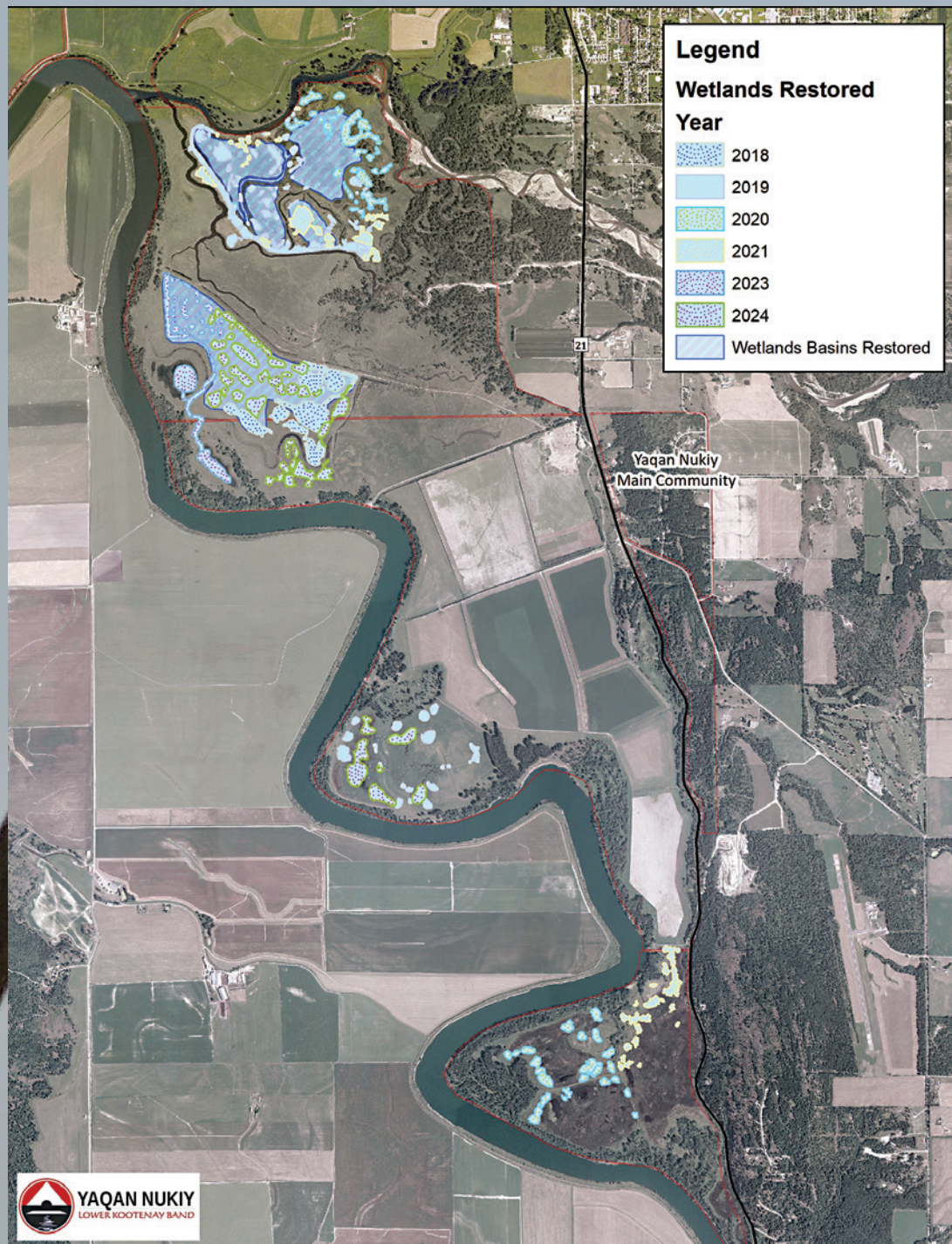
Wetlands are part of a much larger system, and their restoration is only the first step toward a truly holistic approach to healing the land.

At times, the challenges ahead seem daunting.

Yet, through traditional knowledge and the teachings passed down through generations, we are reminded that **caring for the land means caring for all life**, including ourselves.

I urge everyone not only to acknowledge the wisdom of Indigenous peoples but to actively include us in the process.

Our deep knowledge of the natural world extends beyond living memory, and, by working together, we can ensure that wetlands—and the ecosystems they support—continue to thrive for generations to come.



Ktunaxa Nation statement on CRT ‘pause’

March 19, 2025

Despite the United States pausing its participation in talks for a modernized Columbia River Treaty, the Ktunaxa Nation continues to work in good faith with the governments of British Columbia and Canada on domestic matters related to the treaty negotiations.

“We remain committed to ensuring the CRT is updated to address our rights and will continue to work with our First Nations partners, B.C. and Canada to improve the treaty,” said Kathryn Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation Council Chair.

Sooner or later

“It was good to reach an agreement in principle last July,” Teneese said. “The reality is that both countries—and all parties—need a modernized treaty, whether it happens sooner or later.”

Ktunaxa ʔamakʔis, the Ktunaxa Nation homelands, are at the headwaters of the Columbia River.

The agreement in principle (AIP), which was signed by both Canada and the United States, is not a new treaty. It is a map to get to a new treaty and represents years of technical input and negotiation. The AIP outlines key elements of a modernized treaty, such as **ecosystem health, salmon restoration** to the upper Columbia River, **reduced water-level fluctuations** in reservoirs, and **better control over river flows**.

The AIP also recommends an **Indigenous/tribal advisory body** and a **transboundary working group**.

Recognizing rights and title

“A modernized treaty would recognize and honour Ktunaxa rights and title as stewards at the Columbia Headwaters,” Teneese said. “The current pause in the treaty’s renegotiation provides our Nation with a critical opportunity to advance domestic discussions and address longstanding grievances stemming from the treaty’s historic impacts.”

When the current treaty was established in 1964, Ktunaxa were not consulted, nor were any other Indigenous nations. Long term environmental effects weren’t fully factored in, and the proliferation of dams and flooding of former habitat negatively impacted lands, waters and cultural heritage in ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, the Ktunaxa homelands.

In addition to its involvement in the treaty modernization, the Ktunaxa Nation is a proud partner in the Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative (CRSRI).

“Salmon was a cornerstone of Ktunaxa diet and culture,” Teneese said. “Dam construction severed this connection, resulting in a deep cultural and ecological loss that goes beyond the treaty itself. We have been working collaboratively for years to seek redress for the damage caused by these historic projects.”

“We are at a pivotal moment where we can address the historical injustices caused by the Columbia River Treaty and contribute to a modernized treaty that enhances ecosystems and the power infrastructure that depends on these ecosystems. We look forward to a finalized agreement,” Teneese said.



Ktunaxa Interactive game is live!

This a Ksanka-led project: The first interactive language learning adventure game for Ktunaxa.

SkinkuꞤ Ꞥ Kulilu (Coyote and Butterfly) is a make-your-own-adventure game with audio and images in which the player makes important choices that drive the story forward.

The story is set on the Flathead Reservation in and around KwaʔáꞤnuk (Polson) and Kupa-wiꞤꞤnuk (Elmo).

You play a young person who just finished high school and visits their aunty for the summer, preparing to go to SKC (Sanʔa-nana-Ksanka-College, a fictional college in the game, based on the real-world Salish-Kootenai-College).

Then you meet SkinkuꞤ and Kulilu and the adventures begin...

Go to the website to play:
ktunaxa-interactive.com

Kaʔas kiʔin ka·kayukanaʔa?

From Page 12

ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ 6 - 9: International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation (ICLDC). “Navigating new realities in diaspora communities.”

Imagine going to university for three days, attending almost 20 possible classes a day and not being able to see all that is offered? That was the immense opportunity that was the ICLDC.

The time I have spent learning our language has gifted me with many cherished relationships and exciting opportunities. One of them is a brief time with **Ktunaxa Interactive** and the many incredible people that made their video game dreams become a reality.

Imagine my delight when I met one of the creators of the game, Kathrin Kaiser, at her workshop where she presented some of the work that Randall Kenmille, Kayla Ridgley, Liz Torres and others have done.

Ktunaxa Interactive video game, up on the big screen, our sounds alive - across the water, in places one only sees on TV or reads of in books. Our living, breathing language, inspiring many others to create as we have.

Technology will take us many places and sometimes it might just take us home, if only in thought, to where our words await our next exciting endeavor.

ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ 10 - 11: Ke Kula ‘O Nawahiokalani’opu’u Iki Public Charter School

Apre-K to Grade 12 school on the Big Island of Hawai’i. I waited in anticipation the first morning as the bus was coming to get us and take us to the place where we were going to be able to see thought and desire put into action. And what incredible action it is!

There will always be a place in my life for education. Working with youth of any age is a privilege I have never taken lightly so to be given the opportunity to walk the outdoor halls with young adults showing us around their community left me in awe.

There is a hurried pace as the sudden rains rush us from room to room, each student as intent on doing their work as we are on seeing it.

Every classroom contains a framed photograph of all of the students grandparents. A constant reminder that they are never alone, and that the work these students are doing is supported by their family. It is also a beautiful way to look ahead, to see your grandparents looking at you daily allows you to see the direction you can take, the path to whom you are to become. That is pretty special.

One more note of importance, the Indigenous Peoples of Hawai’i worked for decades to be allowed to speak their language fully and completely in a school where no other words should flourish.

They do not allow teachings of the English language until the students are in the fifth grade, then and only then, do they receive any instruction that is English based. And even *then*, to permeate how foreign the concept of English words is on their tongues, the have mandated a hat rule.

When students are in the English Language Arts class, **they wear hats.**

Not traditional headwear or baseball caps but bucket hats or panama hats, but hats that remind them it is not customary, **it is an odd thing, the notion of English...**

As odd as wearing a hat inside a classroom!

I used to work at a high school, where many students from many countries attended and they wore hats of many kinds. I wonder if they would keep them off if they were able to speak their Indigenous languages. It made me think, as a language learner, that struggles to frame myself in speaking only Ktunaxa, “Where is my hat? What do I need to do to remind myself that English shouldn’t be spoken? Kaʔas kiʔin ka·k ayuka? Kaʔas kiʔin ka·k ayukanaʔa?” I will forever be filled with gratitude at what I was able to garner. My commitment to carry forward appropriate teachings will be life long, and as I have witnessed, that is a beautiful blessing to hold.



Ktunaxa art synergy at Banff

By KNC Staff

Ktunaxa Nation artist Lillian Rose has turned what started out as a personal connection to the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity into shaping an Indigenous arts program open to artists from around the globe named after Ktunaxa natural law: Aknumustit̓is.

She is the lead faculty of “Aknumustit̓is: Ecological Engagement Through the Seasons 2025,” a five-week hybrid residency designed for 12 visual artists whose practices encompass land-based themes, environmental sustainability, Indigenous narratives of the land, and the use of natural materials.

“In this program, my contribution is to concentrate on weaving, baskets, and other materials using roots and fibres from plants,” Lillian said. “Things like using cattails and all sorts of local, abundant materials, taking it through a process, dyeing it, making paper, and then the other part that I’m interested in is the tool making: Awls and needles for weaving natural fibres.”

This is the sixth iteration of the program, which runs this year from September 2 to October 3, and Lillian has been busy collecting natural materials all spring to be available to artists in the residency.

Lillian’s first brush with the Banff Centre was as “Elder in Residence” in a business-related faculty several years ago.

“People were coming to me as if I was a counselor; they wanted me to smudge and lay tobacco,” she said. “That’s not who I am—I’m a contemporary elder. And I make baskets; that’s my therapy.”

At the centre, Lillian saw groups come in looking for Indigenous arts programming. To her, the programming was more “U.N.” than Indigenous and was not representative of the Ktunaxa presence at all. “Groups were coming in from all over the world. So I started offering resources. Two days a

week I would drive from ʔakisq̓nuk.”

When COVID-19 hit, Lillian’s contract at the centre wasn’t renewed. Instead, she got a call from Dr. Renelitta Arluk, the centre’s Director of Indigenous Arts, asking her to help build a program for artists.

“So we talked, and I said ‘well, in Ktunaxa we have what’s called aknumustit̓is, a natural law that covers everything including harvesting of materials, and timing, and the process.’”

During their early talks, Lillian said “We recognized two things: One, our place in the Banff area has always been part of our traditional territory (for example, the paint pots), and two, there’s so much of our history on that side of the mountains that gets ignored.”

As Lillian developed the program with the centre, she has been able to represent the Ktunaxa Nation. “They are looking to increase their relationship with Ktunaxa, and they recognize the area as part of our homelands, as well as the Blackfoot.”

Lillian is excited about what this program will bring and describes a studio setting that not only makes space for Indigenous artists to practice and learn, but also to network.

“They come, they’re so humble,” she said. “They don’t think that they’re really accomplishing much. But when you have 12 of them there the synergy that gets created is amazing and it’s always like an instant connection. All of a sudden, you’re feeding each other. The network that you’re building is spiritual, interacting with Indigenous artists from around the world who are bringing amazing passion to the table.”

The 2025 program application has closed, but visit www.banffcentre.ca/programs/indigenous-arts to be updated on next year’s program, or reach out to Lillian: Lillian.rose@ktunaxa.org

That’s *Dr. Vi* to you!

Vi Birdstone was awarded an honorary doctorate (a UBC Doctor of Letters) from the University of British Columbia (UBC) during its spring convocation on May 23, 2025.

This prestigious recognition honours Birdstone’s decades of tireless work preserving and teaching the Ktunaxa language and her invaluable contributions to linguistic research and education.

A fluent Ktunaxa speaker from ʔaq̓am, Vi has served as a consultant for UBC’s Linguistics department since 2011, guiding students in fieldwork and co-authoring multiple academic presentations and papers.

“15 years, working exclusively with the Ktunaxa language, is a long time,” said Margaret Teneese, who helped kick start the process for Birdstone to receive this honorary doctorate.

Since 2018, Birdstone has also been teaching free weekly Ktunaxa language classes, which have expanded online since 2020 to reach learners from across Canada and the United States.



Her commitment to sharing her knowledge has not only supported language revitalization efforts but has also fostered deep connections between students, researchers, and the Ktunaxa community.

“Her dedication and connection with the students is remarkable... and the fact these students are from all over the world... they take a little bit of our language with them.” added Teneese.

Suknikitnaławasni!

Annual General Assembly

July 16 & 17, 2025

Hosted by ʔaq̓am

Save the date!

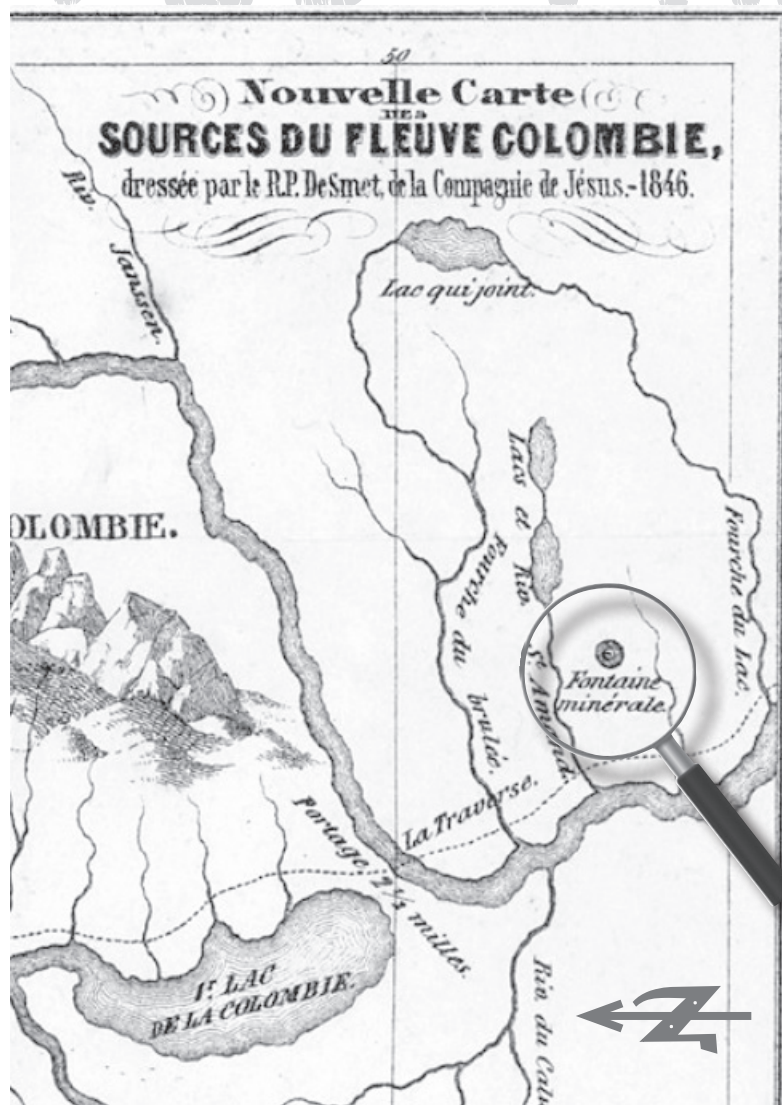
All Ktunaxaniñtik & guests are encouraged to attend.

This Year’s Theme:
Ktunaxa Sovereignty -
Affirming Our Inherent Rights

Registration forms and agenda will be available soon.

Visit us at www.ktunaxa.org

ʔa·qaʔpaʔniʔnam



By Troy Hunter

The Top of the World is a plateau in ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa (Land of the Ktunaxa). On this plateau there are many Ktunaxa archaeological sites including the source of Top of the World Chert. It's a sacred place to us Ktunaxa.

This area has been bristling with ʔaqʔsmaknikmaʔnam (paths, travel corridor trails) used by Ktunaxa since time immemorial.

We can look to some early settler/explorer maps that bear this out, in particular, the maps made by Father De Smet, who consulted closely with Ktunaxa and Francois Morigeau as he made his maps.

Ktunaxa guides

In late August 1845, two young Ktunaxa men and a skilled hunter and translator from the ʔaqʔsmaknik (Kootenay) started from Tobacco Plains.

They were going to guide a man named Pierre-Jean De Smet to Blackfoot country. It took De Smet and his group five days to travel from Tobacco Plains to where the Columbia River begins.

They followed an old ʔaqʔsmaknikmaʔnam (Indigenous trail) that went along the bottom of the Top of the World Plateau in the Rocky Mountain Trench.

De Smet wrote that the trail from Tobacco Plains to the start of the

“Top of the World” — Maps follow trails

Columbia River was easy to travel on. It was on this trip that the Top of the World Plateau was first drawn on a map.

Father De Smet had just arrived to visit the Ktunaxa Nation in 1845. He had traveled by boat up the Columbia River, starting at the river's mouth near Fort Astoria.

He went past Kettle Falls, then crossed over to the Lower Kootenay area, and then up to the Upper Kootenay area, mapping along the way.

Top of the water people

Some Salishan people around the Kettle Falls area, maybe the Sinixt, had a special name for the Ktunaxa Nation. They called us the *Skalzi* or *Skalesi'ulk*.

In their language, that meant “the people of the headwaters,” or “those at the very top of the water,” like the Upper Kootenay River and likewise, the Upper Columbia River.

De Smet called the Bull River *Fourche du lac*, which means “Fork of the Lake.” That makes sense because Munroe Lake (the one in the Rockies at the top of Bull River, not the one by Moyie Lake) was a major hub in our trail network.

akaʔsimuq

As Ktunaxa, we have our own name for the place where the Bull River starts: *akaʔsimuq*.

From *akaʔsimuq*, there are mountain paths, called ʔaqʔsmaknikmaʔnam, that go to the upper Elk Valley and all the way to Alberta.

Today, you can get to the lake —“Munroe Lake”—at *akaʔsimuq*

two ways, from Canal Flats via Whiteswan Lake Forest Service Road, and from Jaffray, via Bull River Forest Service Road.

In other words, these ancient and well-used Ktunaxa trails were later developed into roads.

Rocky Mountain passes

The trails at the time were mostly used by the ʔaqʔamnik and ʔakis-qnuknik, but other Ktunaxa used them, too. The ʔakanuxunik' people often traveled to the prairies using the Little South Fork or South Kootenay Pass, and sometimes other Ktunaxa went with them.

1846 map

The 1846 map (on this page) shows the Kootenay River and Columbia Lake.

The dotted line is the Ktunaxa trail for traveling north and south through the Rocky Mountain Trench. The map depicts the White and Bull Rivers flowing into the Kootenay River on the Top of the World Plateau.

A few years after Father De Smet traveled through the area, an engineer named Walter Moberly was near Kinbasket Lake.

He also noticed that the Ktunaxa people knew every single valley.

Ancestor knowledge

When I study these old maps, I'm amazed at how much our ancestors knew about the land that they passed on to De Smet and others.

Our ancestors' trails existed before the maps, and, in fact, were the basis of the maps being made at this time. Without the trails, fewer of the other features would have been known or mapped so quickly.

“Explorers” would have had to make their own trails!

At any rate the trail up the Trench along the east bank of Kootenay River crossed the river at Yaqa'n Nukiy (the one now called 'Canal Flats').

Then it continued along the east side of Columbia Lake (Kin-qnuknik) all the way over through the narrow canyon to where Radium is now.

It continued to the upper Kootenay River, Kootenay Crossing and the Paint Pots, making its way to places such as Yakʔiki (Jasper), Ktunaxa nuqʔiʔit (Kootenay Plains), yaqanuqminaʔki kyaqnu-kat (Banff), ʔaknuqtapʔik (Elbow a.k.a. Calgary), and other plains areas.

Reports of hot springs

I used to wonder why De Smet put the Lussier River Hot Springs on his map, since he didn't write about visiting them. Then I realized: He probably learned about them from someone who knew the area really well.

On his 1846 map, De Smet wrote “Fontaine minérale” (mineral fountain) for the hot springs. But on his 1851 map (next page), he called them Sulphur Sp. (Sulphur Springs) and placed them between the Kootenay River and White Swan Lake. So, he was talking about the hot springs near Whiteswan Lake.

I surmise he learned about them from either his Ktunaxa guides or from a French-speaking settler, Francois Monrogeau (Morigeau.)

Continued on the next page



Niᑭkuᑭap: Ktunaxa arrowheads. These are made from the distinctive chert material that is found near akaᑭsimuq. The word *niᑭkuᑭap* contains the word *niᑭku*, which means money.

When Father De Smet visited the area, he spoke with Francois Morigeau, as they were both French speakers. Then he developed the maps in French.

As De Smet made the maps, Morigeau likely talked about the trails, hot springs, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, and mountains that he had heard of from the Ktunaxa.

De Smet’s maps weren’t perfectly accurate in size and shape, but they were still very helpful.

Trail network usage

The ᑭakisᑭnuknik would have traveled along the east side of Columbia Lake (ᑭinquᑭanki), cross the Kootenay River, and then go up the Kanukᑭunmituk (White River).

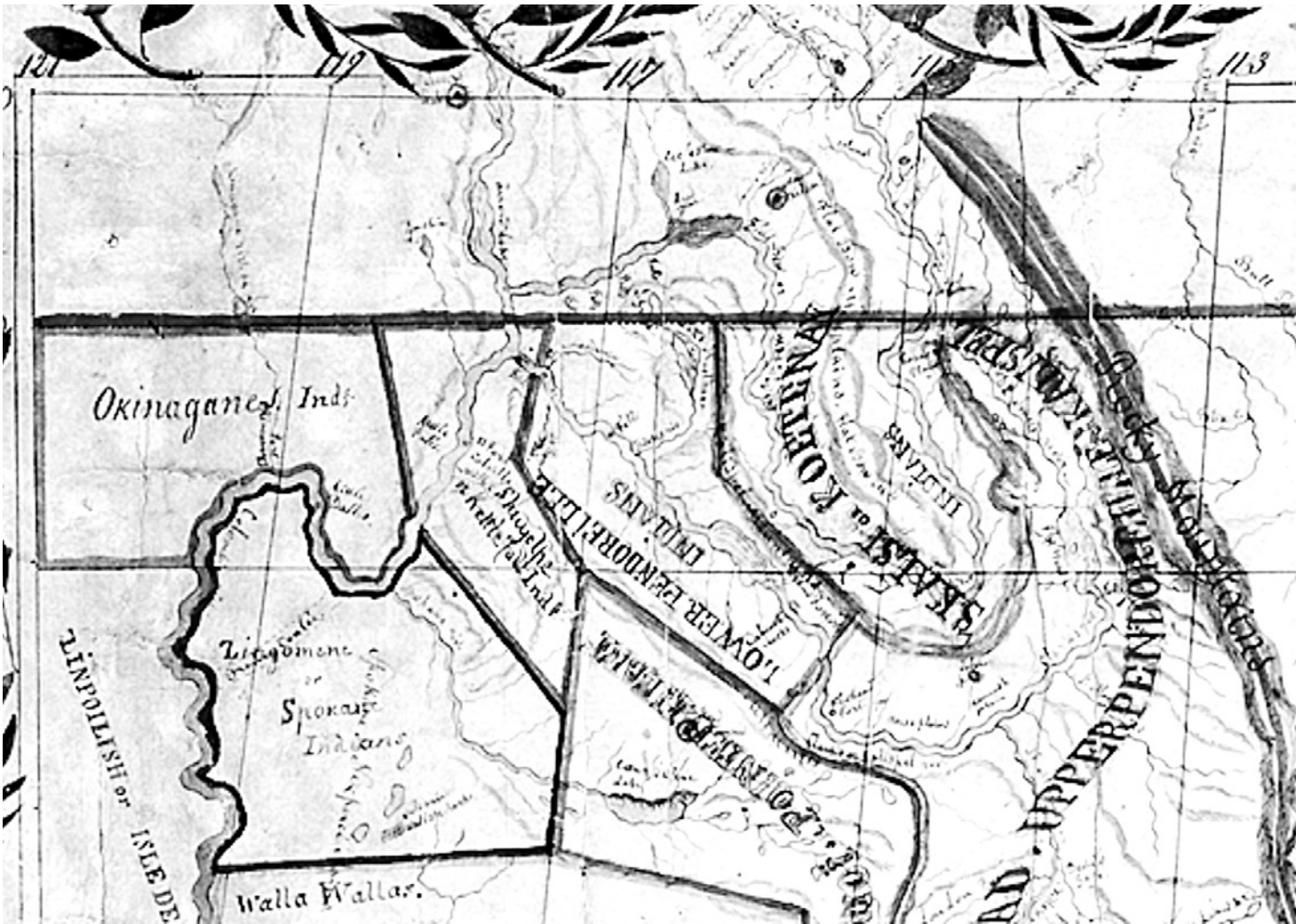
They’d pass by akaᑭsimuq and keep going until they reached qukin ᑭamakᑭis (Land of the Raven), just north of Elkford, by way of Crossing Creek and a place called ᑭakamina ᑭaᑭknuᑭᑭit (Round Prairie).

From Round Prairie, they could either go through Tornado Pass to the prairies, or they could travel south to haᑭᑭumᑭu ᑭaᑭkuᑭnuk (Grave Lake) and then down to ᑭaqawakanmituk (Michel Prairie).

ᑭaqamnik could either travel up the niᑭsik ᑭaᑭkaᑭit (Bull River) or head north and then from ᑭaᑭqanmaksuk (Skookumchuk) travel up river to Kaᑭintak ᑭaᑭuknuk (Whiteswan) via Lussier River and onward to the White River.

The reason for all this travel is written in our lineage of seasonal rounds and trading with our neighbouring tribes.

It’s remarkable to realize how well our Ktunaxa ancestors knew the homelands—including the extreme mountainous terrain within akaᑭsimuq.



Here’s a piece of a map Father De Smet made in 1851. It shows where different Indigenous groups lived. You can see the Okanagan people; as well as the Shuyelpe (or Kettle Falls Indians, also known as the Sinixt); the Lower Pendoreille people; the Ktunaxa (Skalsi or Kootenay, Lower Kootenay were also called Arcs-a-plats (Flatbow) and sometimes, Lakes Indians); and the, Salish Flathead, Upper Pendoreille, and Kalispel people.



March Trails Training: Over the past year and a half several ᑭaᑭknusti (Ktunaxa land guardians) have been learning about horsemanship from Alfred Joseph. Their knowledge and skills will be put to good use toward The Trails Project, which is a multi-year initiative to map Ktunaxa trails, including the Spirit Trail along the east side of Columbia Lake. From left to right: Levi Soles, Jared Cayenne, Laine Twigg and Curtis Luke, with Alfred in front. Blaine Burgoyne photo. **Learn more at www.ktunaxahakqyit.org/the-trails-project.**



Nasu?kin Cheryl Casimer congratulates Rosemary Phillips on her retirement from Ktunaxa Nation Council in April. Casimer was presenting to staff at KNC during a “Ktunaxa Talks” series. Phillips was most recently Communications Advisor at KNC, but her work with the Nation council spans three decades and also includes a recent stint as CAO.

Interested?
Fill out the
application form
below!



Deadline to apply: June 4

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**SEVEN NATIONS
SOARING EAGLE
TREATMENT CENTRE
SOCIETY**



Seven Nations Soaring Eagle: Construction proceeds apace

By Shane Stewart

Construction is progressing well. Greyback construction and King Creek Construction continue to do a great job.

Currently the lodge is being roofed in and the four dwellings are being dry-walled.

Mechanical workshop framing is complete and ready for roofers.

Ktunaxa Nation Council are going to be project managing the existing house renovation on behalf of Lower Kootenay Band.

The house renovation consists of new siding, new roof, new kitchen, new bathroom, new flooring, removal of the carport, and back deck. This will be in keeping with the rest of the dwellings and lodge.

Greyback should have the large dwellings and workshop complete by October or November.

The house renovation will be complete by the end of October.

The KNC are also organizing all of the furniture and fixtures for all buildings including the house renovation and will be organizing all of the furniture and fixtures in November and December.

The Seven Nation, Soaring Eagle Treatment Centre Society staff will get to use the facilities in early 2026 to be ready for clients in April of 2026.

**For further information
visit: www.7nsetc.com**

WHO ARE THE SEVEN NATIONS?

Dăkelh Dené

Ktunaxa
ktunaxa.org

Nlaka’pamux
nntc.ca

Secwépemc
tkemlups.ca

St’át’imc
statimc.ca

Syilx
syilx.org

Tsilhqot’in
tsilhqotin.ca





Crest of the *Project on
Indigenous Governance and
Development at Harvard
Kennedy School*

From Beads 'n' Bites to Harvard U:

**Jordan Sam talks about his trip
with Sophie Pierre this spring**

By **Jordan Sam**

My experience with the Harvard Project first began in January, 2025, when I was approached by a member of the Education and Employment sector while attending a 'Beads-n-Bites' workshop at the Ktunaxa Nation building.

It was there I heard about Chief Sophie Pierre's accomplishment with the Harvard Project, and the conversation shifted towards me possibly accompanying her at her inauguration ceremony in Boston.

This had me shocked at first from both the feelings of excitement and disbelief. I felt honoured that Chief Pierre recognized something in me enough to want me to accompany her and I knew this would be an unmatched learning experience.

As a Finance Intern at Ktunaxa Nation Council, as well as a fourth-year Business student at College of the Rockies, I am always eager to learn and to put my academic knowledge to test. And what better way to expand my education than to visit one of the prestigious and renowned academic institutions in the world—Harvard University?

I have known Chief Pierre for many years, albeit through a distance. Our experience with each other grew more when we were both part of the Finance Board in 2021 when I first began learning and working in finance.

During this time, I learned more about Chief Pierre's extensive background with Ktunaxa economic development and financial history.

It was educational at the time to learn about these aspects, but I never had a full-on discussion with Chief Pierre. This changed during the week we had in Boston.

Each day of the Harvard University trip, I distinctly remember a moment where I learned something new, and incredible, about Chief Sophie Pierre's involvement in Ktunaxa Nation governance, development, and leadership.

With this amount of knowledge and expertise in Ktunaxa affairs, I felt perfectly content with simply attending events with Chief Pierre to absorb all the knowledge I could.

This was indeed the role that I assigned myself for the most part, visiting and networking with the hosts we had at Harvard University while allowing Chief Pierre to tell her story.

And while I would have felt satisfied with this being my entire learning experience for the Harvard Project, Chief Pierre had something in store for me.

During one of the scheduled sessions with a Nation Building class, I was given the opportunity to co-host a presentation with Chief Pierre on the history of the Impact Management Benefit Agreement (IMBA) with Teck (now Elk Valley Coal) and how it came to be.

While I had experience with presentations and guiding discussions in the past, nothing could have fully prepared me to talk in front of Harvard University students and faculty knowing that each of them was a member of such a prestigious school.

Nonetheless, I feel confident that I gave an informative presentation along with Chief Pierre about the IMBA and its importance to the Ktunaxa Nation with regards to mining in traditional territories and I am happy I was given this opportunity.

In my preparation before the trip, I researched many individuals who we would meet with to be aware of any background information if it came up in discussions. There were many noteworthy people I had the privilege of meeting during the week in Cambridge, but perhaps one of the highest esteemed individuals was Jeremy Weinstein, the Dean of Harvard Kennedy School.

I found his accolades to be exceptional and it was amazing that he spent time with Chief Pierre and I to discuss various Indigenous topics within governance and leadership.



Even stepping into his office with all of the history seen on display was incredible, and an experience to remember.

During the week, I also had the opportunity to attend a lecture for one of the one-week intensive Indigenous studies courses that is offered.

This course centred on Nation Building and how, since the 1980s and 1990s, some First Nations have thrived with the resources they have through great self-determination and governance. I found this to be very relevant to my capstone project that I'm working on for my bachelor's degree, and through just one lecture, I was able to gather useful information for part of my research.

During the reception on the first night, it was a great experience to meet so many of the young Indigenous professionals who were taking this course and to each share who we are and where we came from.

This was similar to when Chief Pierre and I were invited to HUNAP, the Harvard University Native American Program, where we shared the Ktunaxa creation story with HUNAP students.

Some students chose to share their own creation stories with us and it was amazing to hear them and the different cultures that make up HUNAP. And, like all of the sites we visited and fantastic hosts we met with, Chief Pierre and I made sure to give a gift each time.

For HUNAP, we brought a copy of *q̓ap̓k̓* as well as MMIW and Orange Shirt Day t-shirts for students to choose from.

It was an incredible opportunity to be a part of Chief Sophie Pierre's introduction as the Inaugural Senior Fellow in Indigenous Governance and Leadership at Harvard Kennedy School.

I learned so much over the course of the week in Boston from our talks with prominent Harvard University figures, to pre-



sentations by Chief Sophie Pierre, to the lecture I was able to attend. I feel inspired to be more active in shaping the future for the Ktunaxa Nation.

Since coming home, I have inquired about becoming part of the IMBA task force committee. Even if that does not work out, I am happy to continue with being part of the Finance, Audit and Investment Committee at ʔakisq̓nuk in any way I can.

Not only did this opportunity allow me to learn from a great leader within the Ktunaxa Nation, but it also gave me a glimpse into post-undergraduate academics.

As I come closer to completing my bachelor's degree, I am increasingly wondering what's in store for the future. Navigating through Harvard University and seeing what life is like at such a renowned academic institution has given me inspiration to academically apply myself even further, this time at a larger school. Graduate school is certainly not out of the realm of possibilities, and possibly, even at Harvard University. No matter what's in store for the future, I feel grateful to complete part of my post-secondary education locally. I would like to thank each of those who encouraged me to complete my education at College of the Rockies and I recognize how education has allowed me to participate in opportunities such as this one. I thank Chief Sophie Pierre for allowing me to join her in Boston, and I thank the Education & Employment sector for encouraging me to pursue this opportunity to broaden my educational perspective and experiences.

Pow Wow announcement

The 2025 Yaqan Nukiy Pow Wow was a resounding success.

By Jared Basil. Photo: Yaqan Nukiy Pow Wow Facebook

Thank you to everyone on the committee, security, the LKB community, our MC and Arena Director, Host and Honour Drums, visiting drums, dancers, spectators, sponsors... you all made this weekend one to remember! We are so honoured for every single one of you who joined us or helped us make this Pow Wow such a success! We hope the next year is filled with positivity and love for each and every one of you, and that we all come back stronger in 2026 to celebrate together once again. **hu sukiᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ.**



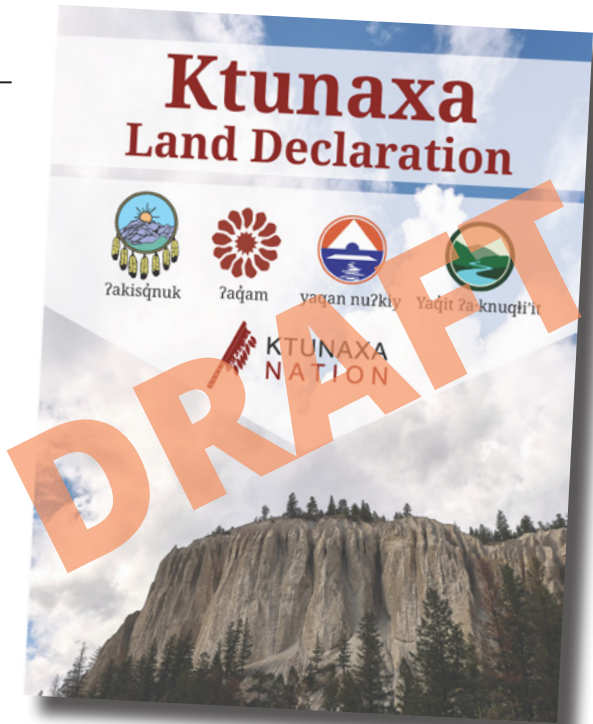
Ktunaxa Land Declaration draft shared at 2025 Yaqan Nukiy Pow Wow

By Ray Warden

After numerous engagement sessions with Ktunaxa Elders, Leadership and Ktunaxa people here and abroad, the **Ktunaxa Land Declaration** was approved by Ktunaxa Nation Leadership on April 23, 2025. Planing is underway to make the grand announcement at the July KNC Annual General Assembly. As a primer, the Declaration was announced at the Yaqan Nukiy Pow Wow on May 17 by nasuᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Jason Louie, with Ktunaxa leadership and dignitaries in attendance.

Left to right: Cherie Luke (yaqan nuᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ), Alfred Joseph (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ First Nation), Yaᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Nasuᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Heidi Gravelle, Chris Luke, nasuᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ Jason Louie and Robin Louie (yaqan nuᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ), Julie Birdstone and Jason Andrew (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ), Pete Sanchez (Yaᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ), and Dallas Cardinal (ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ).

We look forward to sharing the *Ktunaxa Land Declaration* on July 17 at the AGA at ᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ.



The 2026 Yaqan Nukiy Pow Wow is coming up in 11 short months! Get in early by following Yaqan Nukiy Pow Wow on Facebook, or by emailing powwowyaqannukiy@gmail.com.